

# UNIT V: IDEAS



*We must become the change we want to see.*

-Mahatma Gandhi

## UNIT V Section 1

**OBJECTIVE:** To describe an idea and relate it to the nature of innovation.

### **Instructional Notes**

What is an idea? How is it different from an opportunity? The problem or need identified in a situation may be considered an opportunity and a solution to the problem may be identified as an idea.

A good idea matches an identified opportunity and can be economically produced or developed for a proven market. An opportunity is usually associated with change and ideas are based on the opportunity. An opportunity may change with time and new ideas must be addressed to regenerate and redevelop the opportunity. One opportunity and idea(s) can lead to others.

Where do ideas come from? Ideas can seem like "a dime a dozen" but good ideas must be simple and must be matched to an opportunity. Students may find generating good ideas to be difficult.

Ideas can come from observing the obvious. This may be done in the classroom. For example, a student recently responded to a contest by suggesting that a "white-out" cartridge become part of the basic ballpoint pen. Whether identified ideas are marketable or not must be explored. Students may make use of an existing infrastructure to come up with ideas. Students are encouraged to keep their eyes and ears open at school, at home or in the community for opportunities and ideas.

Why is innovation important to the economy and society today? Innovation is necessary so that society can respond to changing tastes and preferences. Business encourages their employees to generate ideas (intrapreneurship) to increase revenue, increase productivity, to improve the company image, and to become more competitive in a global economy.

Training employees to be creative thinkers can be a great asset to companies.

### **Suggested Instructional Approaches and Assessment Techniques**

Advance Organizer. Generating ideas is step 3 in the entrepreneurial cycle. If the entrepreneurial process is product- or service-driven, step 3 may need to be completed first. If the entrepreneurial process is market-driven, generation of ideas always follows the selection of opportunities. The first five steps of the cycle must be completed prior to step 6--the venture plan.

Given a situation and opportunity, students may determine what ideas entrepreneurs have developed that match the opportunity. Case studies that have been previously studied/viewed may be revisited, especially those that students may relate to easily. As students identify ideas, they may be asked to write a sentence about how they see the idea as being innovative. From the written responses, teachers may assess content and student ability to apply ideas to innovation.

Students may role play a variety of real-life situations that can provide an introduction to identifying opportunities and ideas. For example, role-play situations may address financial restraints at home, school, or for community projects; environmental concerns such as the pollution of surrounding waters; or social concerns such as unemployment and a perceived need to stay in the community for family support. The role-play situations can involve the audience in determining the opportunity(ies) and idea(s) that may result from the situation. This activity may assist students in understanding how the origination of ideas may be generated from real-life situations. A reflective discussion may be used to follow up on the innovativeness of the opportunities and ideas identified by the students.

### **Resources/Teacher Notes**

Encourage students to reflect on their entrepreneurial characteristics and skills and the entrepreneurial process being followed.

The *Entrepreneurship: The Spirit of Adventure* (video series) profiles a number of entrepreneurs that may be used.

Reminder:  
Encourage "more than one right answer/more than one good idea".

**Game - Find the Example or Non Example:** For best results, an unusual object or gadget that is not easily identifiable and whose uses are not immediately evident should be used. In groups of four, students may be shown an unusual object and asked to determine two examples and two non-examples of uses for the object. Within the examination process of the unusual object, groups would be asked to relate the object to innovation. Assessment data may be collected on a checklist with criteria focusing on knowledge, cooperative group skills, and process skills. Peer, self and teacher assessment may be used.

The game may be expanded to have students prepare a radio script to promote the innovative idea.

## UNIT V Section 2

**OBJECTIVE:** To compile a variety of entrepreneurial ideas related to entrepreneurial opportunities using various techniques.

### Instructional Notes

Before beginning to generate ideas, students should be reminded of the difference between an invention and an entrepreneurial venture. Review these concepts. Entrepreneurship does not necessarily involve making something new and unique--it may simply be viewing and/or using an existing service or product in a different way. Students should be aware that the more ideas generated, the better. Although a single good idea may be suitable, a single good idea can easily fail. A group approach for the generation of ideas is desirable. A student may hear and discuss an idea and be able to build upon that idea. Spontaneity and humor encourage innovation. The classroom climate should facilitate creativity and cooperation in students. Students should be in an environment that is comfortable and exudes confidence.

Where do ideas come from? They can come from anywhere in everyday life. Some suggestions may include: lifestyle analysis, trade shows, public library (books, newsletter, magazines, newspapers), or the Yellow Pages.

Ideas can arise from two processes:

1. Problem -- identify opportunity -- develop an idea  
(Market-driven entrepreneurship)
2. Idea -- identify opportunity -- seek market  
(Product- or service-driven entrepreneurship)

Provide students with examples of both.

In facilitating the generation of ideas, the use of a variety of methods is desirable to suit the variety of student learning styles. Using several methods for idea generating will allow students the ability to determine a method that is particularly suited to them.

Use the *Venture Idea Worksheet* to help structure ideas.

After an idea-generating session, students may analyze the situations in which they came up with the best/most ideas. How did they come up with ideas? When and where do they feel the most creative? What environment stimulated creativity for the student? Is it possible to be innovative in the traditional classroom setting? How creative could one be in the workplace?

Teachers and students may need to be reminded to reflect on the learning environment and resource materials used to encourage "idea generation" and make the required adjustments to suit the individual needs of students.

## Venture Idea Worksheet

1. Describe your venture idea. What skills do you bring to this venture?
2. How will this venture benefit your community or school?
3. What are the first five steps you need to take?
4. What is your long term vision for this venture? Will it still be going in two or three years? If so, what will it look like? Will other students be running it? How will you prepare them to do so?
5. What is a possible name for your organization?

## UNIT V Section 3

**OBJECTIVE:** To analyze obstacles and explain how these obstacles may impede creative thinking and generation of new ideas.

### **Instructional Notes**

What inhibits creative thinking and generation of new ideas?

The most significant factor inhibiting creative thinking is the belief that each person is not creative. People may have "blinders over their eyes" or experience "tunnel vision" (tend to follow traditional thinking patterns). It is extremely important that students realize they can learn to be creative through some of the techniques practiced in the previous learning objective.

Blocks to creative thinking may be classified as: perceptual blocks, cultural blocks, and emotional blocks.

**Perceptual blocks** may be overcome by "opening your eyes and your ears." An example may include how one pays little attention to the world in which we live. What is happening in class, in school, at home, in the news, in the community? Can anything be done to change those activities? Yesterday's solutions may not solve tomorrow's problems. A lack of facts and information may block one from becoming creative. Also, when being innovative and generating ideas, students should be encouraged to not look for a right answer but a multitude of possible answers.

**Cultural blocks** include the belief that "it has always been done that way, so why change?" Present trends will not necessarily continue. Teachers encourage students to move to a mind frame where they have established enough confidence to be inquisitive, to doubt some established patterns, to ask "Why?" as they may have done when they were very young. Encouraging students to look at the "big picture" as opposed to a small segment of a situation may assist to break cultural blocks. Cultural blocks may also

include racial and gender stereotyping such as, "girls are naturally bad at mathematics and science."

**Emotional blocks** may be overcome with greater self confidence and self esteem. Fear, distrust, desire for security, and the inability to change may prevent students from generating creative ideas. The personal skills of flexibility and adaptability are of great use to overcome emotional blocks. Students may be encouraged to evaluate and accept change as a positive factor and to look continually at situations in new ways. Students should be encouraged to have a sense of humor and to expect to succeed in all endeavors.

### Suggested Instructional Approaches and Assessment Techniques

Given a current case study, students may categorize some of the blocks (perceptual, cultural and emotional) they feel may impede creative thinking. An issue such as providing a free service to the elderly or analyzing a recent decision about a problem in the local community may be used. What blocks do students feel exist? Are these blocks created by the students, the teacher, a community member, by society in general? Teachers may assess how well a student was able to analyze and categorize the different blocks that were identified in the case study through a written extended-open response question.

**Journal writing.** Talk about your "blocks". How do students feel about themselves? What block(s) do the students perceive about themselves when trying to find a solution to a problem? Students may prepare their own lists. After a period of time, students may refer to the journal writing to assess whether they have tried to overcome some of the creativity blocks they have identified about themselves.

Buzz groups or brainstorming activities may be used to enumerate obstacles to creative thinking. Remember that time is an obstacle too. Obstacles that are identified could be written onto chart paper and then posted in the classroom, resulting in a reflective discussion. Teachers may assess students' participation and their ability to process the brainstormed information, to draw conclusions about similar and different responses, and to contribute other obstacles to the lists. Anecdotal notes may be used to record the information.

Students may spend some time in the elementary school, at a day care, or a pre-kindergarten school observing the inquisitive nature of young children. Students may be asked

### Resources/Teacher Notes

"Stretch" minds and continue to encourage many answers. Selecting current case studies dealing with the school or local community may generate more interest or a vested interest in students.

Students may reflect on past activities and experiences to identify obstacles they feel may have impeded their creativity.

to record at least one observation of each of the "blocks" - perceptual, cultural, and emotional - and compare and contrast their thinking to that of the young children. A reflective discussion may be held with students sharing their conclusions.

*Assessment:* Recorded observations and written conclusions may be assessed for content and process skills. Data from the reflective discussion may be recorded too.

## UNIT V Section 4

**OBJECTIVE:** To evaluate ideas related to an opportunity and devise alternatives to support or reject the idea based on an appropriate set of criteria.

### **Instructional Notes**

The purpose of generating ideas is to think laterally and to come up with as many solutions to the problem or as many ideas for the opportunity as possible. As not all ideas will be used, how are ideas evaluated?

Some suggestions that may be used for evaluating ideas are given below: Using Edward de Bono's six thinking hats, students may work through ideas with the black hat (arguing against an idea) and with a yellow hat (looking for positive outcomes). Roger von Oech's "judge" role can be used to determine if an idea is any good.

Have students examine ideas by adopting different points of view. For example, students may be asked to determine reasons why an idea may be unsuitable, to determine the positive outcomes of the idea, or to give their inner thoughts and hunches about the viability of an idea.

Students should be aware that each product and service goes through a life cycle. The four essential stages in the life cycle are: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. Can the students predict, using intuition, comparisons, and statistics, how each idea they examine may adapt to this cycle? Some examples to study may include the hula hoop, compact disc players, tanning salons, or popular toys.

Some suggestions of criteria for evaluating an idea may include:

- **Cost:** investment requirements, initial startup and continuance funds (marketing, labor). Are new people or new expertise required?
- **Opportunity Cost:** cost versus benefit. Are there resources available to support the idea? Can a successful pilot translate into a successful enterprise/project? To what degree is the risk worth the benefit?
- **Time:** When can the results be expected? How long will it take to get the product/service in place?

- **Purpose:** Does the idea involve a product or service that supports and need or want? How does this influence the short-term? long-term?

### Suggested Instructional Approaches and Assessment Techniques

In small groups, students may examine and explore an idea by taking various "different points of view" or "roles" for thinking, such as the "hats" suggested by Edward de Bono. The idea to be examined may be assigned by the facilitator or students may generate their own. Each student in the group may be assigned a role. Any object such as a bead or a button may be passed among the members of the group. The group member that holds the object would be entitled to speak and present his/her point of view. Roles should be rotated so that each member of the group has an opportunity to participate in each role. Teachers may assess students' attitude and cooperation in completing the activity. Peer or self assessment of the cooperative group may also be done.

Students may conduct a market survey to evaluate their best ideas matched to an opportunity/need. The purpose of the survey is to ascertain customers' preferences and to identify the target market. Use the activity *How Can I Plan My Sales Program?* Included in this unit.

A rating scale may be prepared for students to assess ideas. The criteria suggested in the Instructional Notes of this objective may be adapted for use. Students may rank their ideas on a scale such as the example below:

1= copied idea

2

3

4= excellent new idea

### Resources/Teacher Notes

Refer to Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats*. More than one good solution may be evaluated.

Roger von Oech's judge role could be used here.

Students may reflect on the entrepreneurial skills developed here.

The facilitator should approve questions prior to their use.

Students may list their ideas and the criteria to assess the ideas, on a grid such as the sample shown in [Appendix H](#) and then proceed to rank each idea.

## How Can I Plan My Sales Program?

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**Activity:** Practice in Planning a Marketing Program

Fill in the following chart. For each business, write down:

1. A description of the Target Audience (tell 3 things that describe them)
2. A list of Marketing Tools to be used to get customers
3. The reason for using each tool

**John's Shopping Service:**

Target Audience: 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Marketing Tool

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason to Use

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Homemade Pies Delivered to Your Door:**

Target Audience: 1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Marketing Tool

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason to Use

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_