

Books to Build Your Innovation Power

by Eric Sommer

I have read more than 100 books on business and a similar number on creativity and innovation, and these are some of my personal favorites - the ones that did the most to engine my creative and business abilities

What sets these books apart from many other books in the creativity and innovation genres, is that each of them provides clear detailed methods - and not just entertaining stories or inspiration - for boosting your creative powers when facing problems or invention tasks.

I have personally used the methods in these books to help create new kinds of software, new kinds of social organization models, and much else.

If you apply the methods in these books - and don't just read about them - you will slowly 'rewire' your mind; you will become a person who generates new ideas, and who looks first for the merits in new ideas, rather than immediately criticizing them, as the majority of non-creative people do.

People often believe they are 'open-minded' and creative when in fact they are not. Before looking at the book list below, here's a quick test to see how creative you are.

Suppose I said to you: "Why don't you quit your job - or leave school if you're in school right now - and move to France with me."

Would your first response be: "I can't do that because of such-and-such (fill in the blank with your reasons here). Such a negative initial response is how the overwhelming majority of people respond to **any** really new idea, whether its a proposed invention, a new business, or a new way to change or improve the world.

So how would the truly creative person respond to 'Let's move to France'?"

The truly open and creative person might say something like: "What do you have in mind? What's the upside? What exciting or interesting or profitable things would we do there?" Or, if they instantly love the idea: "I'd love to move there. There are some obstacles such as (fill in the blank) but how can we overcome those obstacles." Note that the creative person does **not** immediately say: "There are these obstacles and that's why we can't do it."

Do you think this 'move to France' test is too tough? That no-one wants to just up and leave whatever they are doing? Well, from my perspective, anyone who will not consider, or at least play with such a possibility, is probably not going to be open to other new ways of doing, being, or inventing in the world.

Here are the Books

Now to the books. You can find all or most of these books in Amazon.com, and order them online from them if you have a western credit card like visa or mastercard:. Joyo, the Amazon.com affiliate in China stocks at least some of them in both Chinese and English editions. You can also search for them elsewhere online in either English or Chinese. Many are available in PDF's.

'Edison On Innovation: 102 Lessons in Creativity for Business and Beyond' by Alan Axelrod. This book gives you much more than 'just another book on creativity'. It is, just as the title says, a series of rather detailed lessons on how to invent like Edison, and the methods unveiled can be applied to invention or innovation in any field, including both physical and social invention.

http://www.amazon.com/Edison-Innovation-Lessons-Creativity-Business/dp/0787994596/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1290357187&sr=8-1

'Serious Creativity' by Edward De Bono

This is perhaps the best, and most comprehensive, of De Bonos' books on how to both invent and to supersede your present approaches to intractable problems you cannot resolve with the present direction of your thinking.

http://www.amazon.com/Serious-Creativity-Lateral-Thinking-Create/dp/0887306357/ref=sr_1_8?ie=UTF8&qid=1290356816&sr=8-8

'Six Thinking Hats' by Edward De Bono

A powerful method for group thinking and group creativity; this method is widely used in Japanese companies and also in large western organizations. It segments the different modes or styles of thinking, so that the group thinks sequentially in 'creative brainstorming'; 'logical', critical, and other approaches, such that one approach does not get in the way of another.

'Precision: A New Approach to Communication: How to Get the Information You Need to Get Results by Grinder and McMaster. I've read a ton of business books, but this is the best and most useful book I have ever read on a methodical, super-practical approach to solving problems, creating innovations, and getting adequately precise information to make quality decisions - and avoid costly mistakes - in a business environment. The super-flexible method of communication frames, question-asking, and problem-solving in this book can be applied to *any* communication or problem-solving context when two or more people are involved. A computer programmer I was working with commented that - though I knew little about the detailed programming problems he was encountering, "you" - as he said - "have a way of asking questions which redirects me to ways to solve the problem". What he was noticing was, in fact, my use of the frames and 'precision questioning' approaches derived from this book. You really need to read - and apply - the methods in this book to experience the new power for group problem-solving and creativity which it offers.

<http://www.amazon.com/Precision-Approach-Communication-Information-Results>

[/dp/1555520499/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1290357592&sr=8-3](http://dp/1555520499/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1290357592&sr=8-3)

'Creative Problem Solver's Toolbox: A Complete Course in the Art of Creating Solutions to Problems of Any Kind by Richard Forbes.' Probably the most comprehensive - and accessible - guide to practical creativity *for any purpose* which I have encountered. I often carry it around with me as my 'creativity bible'. When I'm stumped about something, I just open this book - and bam - I often see a method which helps me solve the problem or create what I need. Methods

like 'How to think first of the merits of any new idea to avoid tossing it out prematurely'; 'eliminating possible solutions to your problem *while* extracting valuable elements from each one'; 'using visual thinking to go around obstacles', and much, much, much more make this an outstanding work. This great book is available in a number of languages, including Chinese and English.

http://www.amazon.com/Creative-Problem-Solvers-Toolbox-Solutions/dp/0963222104/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1290358037&sr=1-1

The Triz method of inventive problem solving: For engineers and scientists, the 'Triz' method of creative problem solving is definitely worth a look. It uses the world patent database to mine out approaches from one scientific or industrial area and enable you to apply them to problems or inventions in another area. This method is extensively used by engineers in western companies and is also beginning catch on in Asia. There are many books and articles, and online information, about this method

Well, that should do for a start But here's a final word on creativity and innovation methodologies: Don't be boxed in - even by 'think outside the box method! The great songwriter/singer Bob Dylan said this best - a long time ago - when he was asked about another song writer, a man who, unlike himself, wrote his songs while doing a self-disciplined 9-to-5 regime each day in an office. The interviewer perhaps meant that the other songwriter was 'too unhip', 'too square', 'too routinized' to be able to produce quality songs while doing nine-to-five in an office. But here was Bob's reply: **"Whatever works is legal"**.

All the best, Eric