

THE
DAVIS FOUNDATION

FOR PROVIDING
EMOTIONAL COMFORT

Letter of June 1, 2005

Dear Reader,

Can creativity be developed systematically? W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, authors of *Blue Ocean Strategy* (Harvard Business School Press, 2005), think so. They say that the majority of business enterprises operate with a “red ocean” (bloody) strategy, striving to prevail over competitors that produce the same goods and services. Blue ocean strategy seeks to discover a new market space in which a novel concept is offered.

They describe six paths by which one might come up with an innovative product or service. All of these paths involve looking beyond the assumptions of one’s industry. One may look at alternative products and take the best from each. NetJets created a blue ocean strategy with fractional jet ownership, avoiding the disadvantages of commercial airline travel and the expense of fully owning a jet. Or one may look at alternative assumptions within an industry. Curves, the women’s fitness company, realized that many women would prefer to work out in a space without men and with the economy afforded by more basic facilities. One can sometimes find a blue ocean by looking across the chain of buyers. Novo Nordisk, a Danish insulin producer, moved from marketing its product to doctors for its purity to providing it to patients by means of a convenient Novopen dispenser. One may look across complementary products and services by thinking about what happens before, during, and after a product is used. NABI, a Hungarian bus company, changed the material of its buses from steel to fiberglass. This decreased maintenance costs, made repairs less expensive, and cut fuel consumption and emissions. One may look across functional or emotional appeal to buyers. The watchmaker Swatch transformed a functional object into a style statement. One may look across time to detect trends that will grow, as Apple did in creating iTunes, an online music store.

How does one come up with a blue ocean idea? Kim and Mauborgne suggest making a graph that compares the characteristics of your enterprise with those of its competitors, then watching and talking with your employees to learn more about your operation’s advantages and disadvantages. From this data, you can decide which aspects of your product or service to emphasize, which to minimize or discard, and what new features to create. Although much of this work can be done methodically, developing the new features requires a creative leap. How does this occur?

As a stimulus is matched with a response, that sequence becomes locked in and a habit pattern forms. As it is repeated, its novelty wanes. To maintain an *optimal stimulus level*, the mental apparatus will cause habit patterns to become intensified or generalized and conventions thus become increasingly ingrained. This is why red ocean competition typically involves trying to do more of the same.



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Creativity, the bringing into existence of something new, occurs when we match a previously unrelated response to a stimulus. But this can occur only in the presence of a *complex stimulus*, that is, one that signifies two contradictory meanings simultaneously. When this happens, the mental apparatus is momentarily unable to match the stimulus to a response, causing a pause during which a new solution may be matched and locked in. The authors' exercise provides a complex stimulus: the graph that compares a company's system with that of its competitors. The mental apparatus registers the opposing systems simultaneously.

After a new solution is matched with a problem, the new habit pattern must recur repeatedly until its novelty has waned enough to enter awareness. In the authors' system, there is abundant repetition as the participants create their graphs, study their employees, and experience the *disequilibrium* that results from seeing the faults of their current system. Disequilibrium causes further repetition, and reverberation, of a new idea, expediting its entrance into awareness.

The authors developed their principles for creating blue ocean ideas before the new theory of mental functioning was known; yet they have serendipitously produced an ideal exercise for generating creative ideas. Although they focus on blue ocean ideas in the business world, their system can be applied universally. This remarkable achievement will benefit everyone and I highly recommend their book.

Those of us who are doing self-hypnosis know that our Inner Guides, with their ability to access new solutions and bring them into awareness, are creating blue ocean ideas for us. All that we need to do is to practice self-hypnosis regularly. Our Inner Guides will do all the rest.

QUESTION:

If I listen to a tape while I do self-hypnosis, will I be defeating the purpose? Is it helpful or not helpful at all?

ANSWER:

Listening to the tape won't enhance self-hypnosis because all that your Inner Guide needs in order to do her work is the dominance that she feels during the self-hypnotic state. But the tape won't interfere with self-hypnosis once you have entered the state, and if it is enjoyable, then by all means do it. The way to do both things at once is to start the tape, then enter the self-hypnotic state. Once in the state, you are free to listen to the tape just as you are free to think whatever thoughts come to mind during self-hypnosis.

I welcome your questions and comments, and will publish as many of them as possible. I look forward to hearing from you, either by post or at info@davis-foundation.org. If you would like to be anonymous, just let me know.

Cordially,

Judith M. Davis

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