

# THE THINKER'S POCKETBOOK

By Angelena Boden

*Drawings by Phil Hailstone*

“Clarifies why some thinking processes are more effective than others and explains how the use of different thinking skills can help ensure efficient decision-making.”

**Marion Nixon, Tourism Manager, Derby City Council**

“Gives you that immediate, unexpected nudge to see things differently - to allow your brain to take off in a direction that can prove invaluable in seeing a ‘problem’ from a different angle, thereby coming closer to resolving it.”

**Geoff Pine, Principal, Woolwich College**

*Dedication: to my daughters Anousheh and Anisa who occupy many of my thoughts.*

# CONTENTS



## INTRODUCTION

What triggers thoughts and how thinking impacts on our lives

1



## POSITIVE THINKING

How it differs from negative thinking and how to be positive at work

7



## DISSATISFIED THINKING

What drives us to think that whatever we achieve is never enough and how to overcome this

17



## CREATIVE THINKING

Why in Einstein's words 'Imagination is more important than knowledge'

27



## LATERAL THINKING

Lateral thinkers are not born but made, as this chapter demonstrates

39



## LOGICAL THINKING

Why logical thinking is like climbing a tree and why we should be cautious

51



## BOTTOM-LINE THINKING

Providing reassurance in an uncertain, changing world

61



## OVER-THINKING & NON-THINKING

Thinking too much is bad; not thinking can be good

71



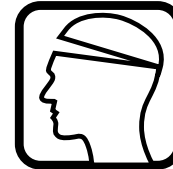
## INTUITIVE THINKING & MAGICAL THINKING

Don't underestimate hunches and think lucky and you'll be lucky (it's magic!)

81

## LATERAL THINKING

### OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

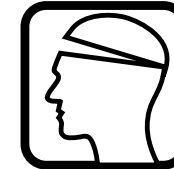


Lateral thinking is closely connected to creative thinking. It **generates** a wealth of ideas by pulling down the barriers defining a particular path. Lateral thinkers are prepared to wander into unknown territory rather than stick to an established route.

Lateral thinkers are like adventurous walkers. They don't follow the signposts which mark out a well-trodden route forward. Instead they cut new paths, leap ahead then backtrack, balance on a precipice or two and **eventually** reach their destination. Lateral thinking requires you to reach a conclusion but not necessarily in a logical, step by step manner.

## LATERAL THINKING

## LATERAL V LOGICAL THINKING



The key differences between lateral and logical thinkers are:

### Lateral

- Wealth of ideas important
- Looks for least obvious answer
- Seeks to challenge methods
- Thought processes take sideways moves
- Looks for as many solutions as possible

### Logical

- How solid are they?
- Focuses on most obvious
- Sticks to proven methods
- Moves vertically, step by step
- Uses judgement to select and reject ideas

Lateral thinkers are not born but made. This approach to thinking can be learned but needs to be practised regularly.

## LATERAL THINKING

### RE-SHAPING LONG-STANDING IDEAS



Lateral thinkers seek to challenge traditional approaches by dismantling the various elements and re-assembling them. For example:

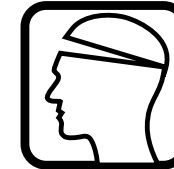
The average worker puts in 40 hrs/week, typically between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm. The introduction of flexi-time challenged this by allowing individuals to choose their own start/finish times within agreed parameters.

Lateral thinking would take this further, suggesting that a significantly longer working day be introduced with a commensurate reduction in the overall number of working days in a year.

The logical thinker will present practical objections to this idea but the lateral thinker is not interested in the soundness of his proposals at this stage, only in the possibilities arising from challenging traditional thinking.

## LATERAL THINKING

### KEEPING AN OPEN MIND



Lateral thinkers **generate** new ideas without judging their merits. Compare, for example, the logical and lateral thinkers when asked to generate new ways of using a square silk scarf:

#### Logical

- Headscarf/neckscarf
- Bandage
- Sling
- Padding
- Serviette
- Tray cloth
- Tea towel

#### Lateral

- The front part of a cushion cover
- Two dusters
- A doll's dress
- Part of a skirt
- Handkerchief
- A teddybear's hammock

**Logical thinkers** see the scarf as a) whole b) good quality c) something to be used purposefully.

**Lateral thinkers** see the scarf a) in several parts b) part of something else c) not something to be limited because it is silk.

## LATERAL THINKING

### IMPORTANCE OF NOT JUDGING



Tight schedules, pressurised lives, the 'need it by yesterday' approach to organisations drive us to think quickly, decide immediately, and then spend double the amount of time undoing the damage.

Ideas, however unlikely, need time to settle, germinate or die quietly. Lateral thinkers sleep on lumpy mattresses stuffed with unfinished, unconnected, undeveloped and even bizarre thoughts which they refuse to reject until the last possible moment.



## LATERAL THINKING

### USES



Lateral thinking can help you to:

1. Purposefully stimulate new ideas which can be developed creatively. Compare this to creative thinking which often relies on inspiration and is not necessarily structured.
2. Solve problems, requiring insight and a re-shaping of existing approaches.
3. Develop and improve designs.
4. Keep an open mind. The lateral thinker is consciously aware that things might not be what they seem. This does not mean constantly questioning or denying everything: 'Well, you say it's raining. But is this what we would define as rain?'



## LATERAL THINKING



## HOW TO ENCOURAGE IT

If lateral thinking is about rearranging information and looking at different ways of doing things, then there are several ways in which this can be constructively encouraged:

### **1. By reversing situations**

For example, students instruct teachers, customers help shop assistants, alimony is fixed before marriage. It doesn't matter how ridiculous the idea is; you don't know where it might lead.

### **2. By removing the dominant feature within an idea**

For example, money might be the dominant obstacle to developing a new product. Remove the need for money and continue the discussions without allowing money to be mentioned. A way round the problem might emerge once the problem no longer blocks the thought processes.

## About the Author

**Angelena Boden, BA (Modern Languages)  
M.Soc.Sc (Tourism) PGCE**

Angelena is a freelance trainer in customer service, language and culture, and people behaviour. She has written two other pocketbooks, *The Problem Behaviour Pocketbook* and *The Cultural Gaffes Pocketbook*.

During the course of her work Angelena meets many people who say "I'm so busy I don't have time to think!". She believes that quality thinking time is essential for good decision-making, problem-solving and positive mental well-being.

### Contact

Should you wish to talk to Angelena about her courses on thinking skills, you can contact her at: 63 Bunbury Road, Northfield, Birmingham B31 2DS  
E-mail: [peoplecomefirst@hotmail.com](mailto:peoplecomefirst@hotmail.com)

© Angelena Boden 1997

This edition published in 1997 by Management Pocketbooks Limited,  
Laurel House, Station Approach, Alresford, Hants SO24 9JH, U.K.

Tel: +44 (0)1962 735573 Fax: +44 (0)1962 733637

Reprinted 1999, 2000, 2003.

Design, typesetting and graphics by efex ltd. Printed in U.K.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Angelena Boden". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below the portrait photograph.

ISBN 1 870471 52 0