

Snapshots

30 years ago **Lynda King Taylor** had the privilege of having ABE's President as her mentor. Lynda still marvels at Edward de Bono's mentoring as she interviews him in his 75th birthday year.

Mentor means a trusted friend, counsellor or teacher. Edward de Bono is all three, and he never ceases to amaze. Whenever you meet this champion of creativity he exudes, energetically and enthusiastically, everything he has stood for or written books on.

In his 75th birthday year he remains bright as a button, committed to his creativity concepts and information innovation. Has his instruction in 'thinking' changed? "Living in an information age means we get as much information as we want! However he cautions: "Many organisations believe all they need to do is analyse the information enabling them to make decisions and strategies. That's a dangerous situation. We need *creative thinking* to look at information in different ways, otherwise we are just trapped in old concepts. We need creative thinking to design the way forward on how we use the information. Information skills and analysis are essential, however they are not enough. The fact we have more information makes thinking **more** not less important".

In a highly competitive world with China and India coming on stream as major manufacturing areas, he says: "there is more need for creativity to add value for the consumers. If whatever you are doing can be made more cheaply in those countries then why should people buy your product or service? That's another reason why creative thinking is more key today than ever before. There are certain people who have the habit, attitude, skills and motivation to be creative.

They really do turn out creative ideas from time to time. However, creativity is a skill that everyone can acquire, and use. They can learn it just as much as they learn mathematics. These are the processes of lateral thinking; these can be very powerful".

Today he states: "There is a need to make clear to executives an expectancy that they are meant to have new ideas. Most executives feel it is enough that what is expected of them is continuity and problem-solving – keep doing what you are doing and solve any problems that arise. This is certainly **not** enough. The CEO must endorse an expectation that people will have new ideas whether for simplifying processes and procedures, on market access, product

promotion, or on designing a product or service".

As such, in a competitive world where everything becomes a commodity available to everyone, there is a much greater need for creative know-how than ever before. "For so many reasons creative skills are no longer a bonus they are a necessity. Not everyone will be equally good at this skill just as not everyone is good at tennis or skiing but everyone can learn the skill and a useable level of the skill".

It has always been of interest to Edward that those sectors of society which have a bottom line – in other words **results** – are more interested in 'thinking' than others. "When I wrote my first book, business was the most interested as business has 'results' and no amount of argument can improve your sales figures. Same as sport". Today, other organisations have taken on board his teachings – for example: police forces.

His next challenge post 75? He admits we have done nothing on software for thinking for some 2,400 years since the Greek gang of three – Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. "The creative tools of lateral thinking are powerful. There's a need to look at areas and decide – here's a problem, we don't have a good answer; here's a problem we have an answer, however maybe we could get a better one; here's an area where we could simplify or improve things. One of the difficulties is we are so overtrained that we only look at problems; so, when something appears to be excellent, we never look at it. Yet when something is excellent very often it can be

greatly improved by some creative thinking. We must challenge even the most satisfactory concepts – saying "yes this is fine but let's step aside and see what are the alternatives and different approaches. This works well in policing as much as anywhere else. How are we doing today with a concept, and can it be delivered a different way?"

One of Edward's books *The Happiness Purpose* – is a superior source for those wanting new resolutions for resolving old problems. In it he explains that the essentials of 'thinking' are accompanied by 'humour' and 'humility'. ABE's President has all three – rare in current climates. Happy 75th birthday year Edward de Bono. Thank you for your laudable legacy and wordly wisdom from fans and friends.



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