

Resolving Wicked Business Problems



At the ACDM 2014 Conference, the ACDM Conference Committee invited **Peter Cook** and **Steve Gorton** from Human Dynamics and The Academy of Rock to present a creativity masterclass and facilitate a large group event to explore the future of clinical data management.

Strategic issues like this are characterised by their complexity, interconnectedness and differing viewpoints on what the real issue is, what it is not and so on. It's what Peter termed a "wicked problem" after the work of Rittel.

It was particularly interesting and exciting for me as I had already witnessed Peter's presenting skills at the 2013 ACDM Conference and remembered his dynamic and musical approach which immediately

captured the audience.

Human Dynamics specialise in applied creativity to come up with ingenious resolutions to wicked problems and innovative strategies, products and services. We sampled some of Peter and Steve's creativity at the Conference. The normal approach to such matters is to apply creativity techniques and tools to such topics, but we were very short of time at the conference. So, rather than providing us with a lengthy toolkit, Peter and Steve offered

us a guided opportunity to immerse ourselves in three 'creativity principles'. These were skilfully illustrated with musical demonstrations to ensure the concepts stayed with us for much longer than a PowerPoint slide! All good proprietary creativity techniques are based on some underlying 'states of mind', which occur naturally when people are in the mode of ideation and Peter took us directly to those states via the three creativity principles illustrated below. We found these to



be easier and quicker to access than the recipes for creativity offered by the product based creativity consultancies such as Six Thinking Hats, TRIZ, et al.

We used these creativity principles to examine the broad topic "The future of clinical data management". The first step in any approach to a wicked problem is to break it down into some more manageable chunks, given the short time allocation. This is how we ended up redefining this huge topic into some more discrete areas, which could be treated independently.

From here, we were guided through the three 'creativity principles' from Human

from the reversal principle - this produced a rich seam of ideas, some of which have real value to the participant's own company if developed further within each company concerned.

Most unusual: For example "Redefine and develop the CDM brand so it remains current and up to date (like the annual Formula 1 team rebranding)" - developed from the projection principle. This pointed CDMs to consider ideas in the arena of PR (Public Relations) and marketing, not natural areas of strength for the profession.

Whilst these require further development (and the groups went on to develop a broad range of more specific ideas within the event) the aim was/is to get people thinking wider from at least two perspectives and come up with some really practical and pragmatic ideas that generate traction.

Systematic application of divergent and convergent thinking with skilled facilitators enables people, teams and

organisations to stand back from the "wickedness" and begin to separate "the wood from the trees" and disperse the fog of confusion. Importantly, it is about creating value to help things happen quicker, for less investment and more satisfaction within the role.

If you see Peter Cook's name on an event, make sure you attend his session - I am sure you will enjoy his style. It is also worthwhile picking up one of his books to enjoy at your leisure - I am now in possession of a signed copy of "Sex, Leadership and Rock'n'Roll".

Jean Cornhill - ACDM Conference Delegate & ACDM Newsletter Chair/Editor



Creativity Principles

Small Thinking
Start and Write
Human Dynamics
and
The Academy of Rock
www.humdyn.co.uk
+44 (0) 1133 883267

+++ COMBINE

→ PROJECT

↺ REVERSE

www.acdm.org.uk
info@humdyn.co.uk

Dynamics' extensive expertise in this area, to develop a range of novel options to address the issues identified. These were crudely evaluated within the short time available, using two initial screening criteria:

Most interesting: One example developed from the question "What would be the outcome if Clinical Data Management were to go on strike?" - developed

Peter Cook leads Human Dynamics - Business and organisation development, training and coaching and The Academy of Rock - Keynote events with a difference. Working all over the world, their clients include Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson, Roche and many others. Contact via peter@humdyn.co.uk or +44 (0) 7735 927585. Find out more about their work by getting hold of copies of the books "The Music of Business", "Sex, Leadership and Rock'n'Roll", "Punk Rock People Management" and "Best Practice Creativity".

