Creative Ideas Generator #3: The Complete Opposite

Background: Creativity, evolution of ideas and innovation are often linked together in people's minds as one and the same. They each have their place in the sequence, but they are not same. They form the stages of progression in finding and developing new ideas.

The Problem: How do we as individuals or team members generate new ideas from the existing ones we have – i.e. *evolve* our already formed ideas?

The Solution: Use the *Theory of Contradiction* – opposites do not attract, but they do create possibilities.

That's what we are about to do here with Idea #3: Flip things around and do the opposite.

Idea #3: The Complete Opposite

We all suffer from the standardised approach to ideas creation that produces the obvious answers we all tend to recognise. In creative terms these are called *commonly held beliefs*. They neither break the mould nor create anything new. If you are struggling for ideas that are outside the normal way of thinking then try the following exercise.

Look for things that counteract each other: polar opposites. For example think about the idea that nets hold huge amount of weight but are 95% air, sponges have a large number of holes but carry huge amounts of water. If you need more customers, then ask yourself "*why would customers not buy from us?"* Look at the list and consider doing the opposites and then apply *divergent thinking* for a list of possible solutions. Divergent thinking is thinking that creates a number of potential solutions, not just one.

Examples of contradiction thinking - taking away the essence of a product – think decaffeinated coffee, alcohol free beer, ice skating without ice (rollerblading), hands-free driving (automatic driving cars), online shopping (you actually never go shopping), non-sugar sweetener, mock-tails (alcohol free cocktails).

Takeaway: Focusing on the problem can be distracting and not productive. Concentrating on the opposite of what you are looking for can produce the results you want.