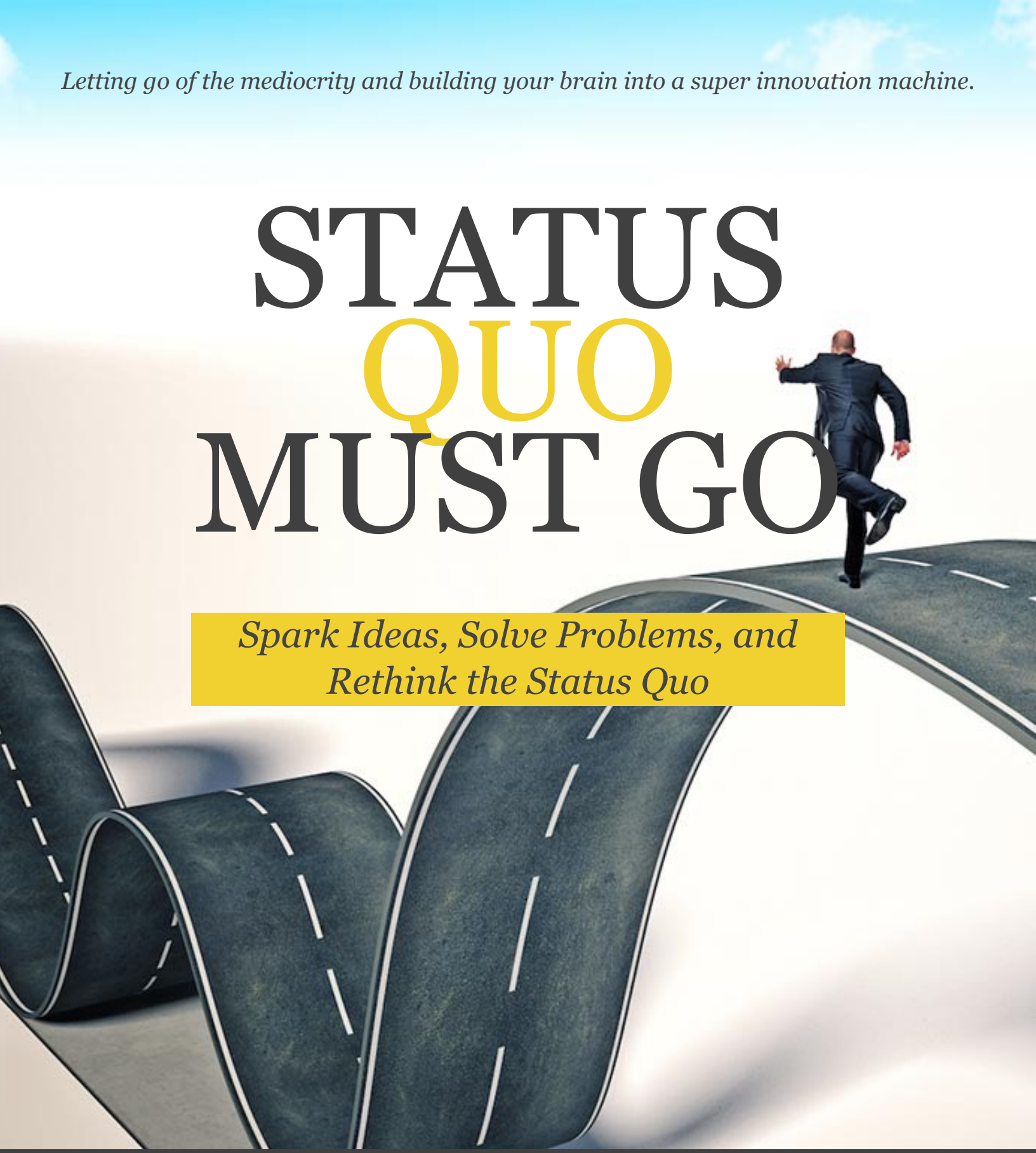
Letting go of the mediocrity and building your brain into a super innovation machine.

STATUS QUO MUST GO



Spark Ideas, Solve Problems, and Rethink the Status Quo

FRANK KECK, CSP
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1. Retrain your brain to creative thinking.
2. Look for the root cause and pattern disruption.

Are you ready to see something new?

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PEOPLE. CLARITY. PROSPERITY.

We'd love to hear your feedback on this eBook.

Email frank@yourexcellerant.com and let him know your thoughts or questions.

Here's to an aligned life!

Stuck in Neutral

How Innovative Is Your Brain?

Many of our brains get stuck in neutral. It's called adhering to the status quo. The status quo is usually something you don't have to think about, it's not particularly good, not incredibly bad . . . but somewhere in the middle, just north of *okay*.

I believe that good is the enemy of great. You see, **good** breeds comfort, comfort breeds **invisibility**. When something is comfortable, we don't notice it, we overlook it, or we ignore it. It does not make the top ten list of items our brain needs to focus on. And so we get stuck in mediocrity, sameness and, eventually, poor to awful performance.

This eBook is all about how to let go of mediocrity and how to build your brain into a super innovation machine.

Spark ideas, solve problems and rethink the status quo!

THE REPLACEMENT

Creative Thinking

Replace the Status Quo with Creative Thinking

What is creative thinking?

I believe Creative Thinking is best defined in three ways.

1. Creative thinking is looking at the same things and *seeing something different*.

2. Creative thinking starts with the *second right answer*. Think about Thomas Edison for a minute. It's said that he worked on his light bulb experiment and found many ways that it would work. But he kept going. He improved his invention, until he got it right. Perhaps Tom was a bit OCD, but he did create a life changing invention because he did not stop after the first right answer.

Many of us are conditioned in school that there is only one right answer for each problem. Then we get to the real world and we stop after the first solution we find. Why?

Because time is money and because we are conditioned to do that . . . without even being aware of it.

By definition, creative thinking is looking at something and seeing something different (seeing new patterns you have not seen before).

Funny thing. Our business culture seems to be very focused on the *time is money* belief. We do things faster and faster, only to have to go back and fix them later, which costs WAY MORE than spending the little bit of extra time up front. Faster is not necessarily better nor cheaper.

3. Creative thinking is nonsense. When something makes sense, WHY does it make sense? I ask this question to people all the time. I hear lots of stammering and see lots of eyes stare blankly. We know WHEN something makes sense, but we rarely think about WHY it makes sense. Many people will explain what *sense* is

with this definition, “Sense is when something is logical.” My question is then, “What makes it logical?” Response: “It makes sense.” A vicious cycle of catch 22 is on.

I believe something makes sense when it fits a pattern you have been exposed to previously. Your brain recognizes the pattern and thus, *it makes sense*. In other words, you are familiar with it.

By definition, creative thinking is looking at something and seeing something different (seeing new patterns you have not seen before). If it is a pattern you have not seen before, it won’t make sense. It will be *non-sense*. As you do some of the puzzles in this eBook and your brain starts to hurt, congratulations! You are thinking creatively. You are finding new patterns.

How do you find new patterns? You have to go looking for them. They are there. It requires adjusting your brain so it is open to SEEING something new.

Many of us are conditioned in school that there is only one right answer for each problem. Then we get to the real world and we stop after the first solution we find. Why?

Look at something and seeing something different.

Start with the second right answer.

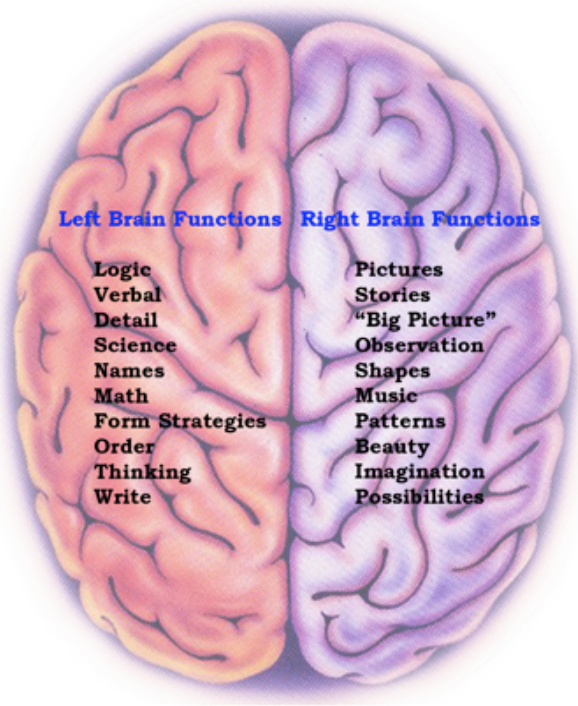
Engage non-sense ideas.

Right Brain!

Left Brain!

Whole Brain!

Why you think the way you do . . .



Neuroscience is changing every day. One of the things neuroscientists know now is that different parts of the brain are responsible for different activities. Left brain and right brain is an old philosophy, some neuroscientists still believe it to be true, some say it's not.

I believe it helps us to understand a few things. First of all, each of us have to utilize the whole brain to maximize thinking. We have to teach ourselves to go find things, patterns, that we have not experienced before.

When you see something you have never seen before, your attention is grabbed. You are experiencing a new pattern, *creative thinking*. When you hear a new song for the first time, creative thinking is from a listening perspective. We all use our creativity every day, in many, many ways.

The goal of these of puzzles is to TEACH your brain to start looking for things in new ways. They are practice in looking for NEW PATTERNS.

Puzzles can teach your brain to start looking for things in new ways. They can be practice in looking for new patterns.

Puzzles

Rebus Puzzles

The first puzzle type is called *Rebus Puzzles*. They represent sayings. Your job is to figure out what the sayings are.

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Lateral Thinking Puzzles

Puzzles can help you think laterally instead of vertically. Get past logic to see new answers. Teach your brain to look past the existing patterns.

Much of the time problem solving, or just thinking, happens in the Left Brain, the Logical Brain. When thinking logically, the brain follows a pattern of previously learned information. We move through things in a systematic, pattern-driven progression. This natural process keeps us from looking for things OUTSIDE of recognized patterns. Our brains end up "in the box." Lateral Thinking Puzzles will teach your brain to think differently, look for non-sensical answers, and find new patterns.

For more information, Edward DeBono is credited by many as the originator of Lateral Thinking and has written extensively on the subject.

Here is a description from rinkworks.com/brainfood, a great source for Lateral Thinking Puzzles.

"Lateral Thinking Puzzles, unlike most puzzles, are inexact. In a sense, they are a hybrid between puzzles and storytelling. In each puzzle, some clues to a scenario are given, but the clues don't tell the full story. Your job is to fill in the details and complete the story. Obviously, there is usually more than one answer to any given puzzle, but, in general, only one solution is truly satisfying.

When thinking logically, the brain follows a pattern of previously learned information. We move through things in a systematic pattern-driven progression. This natural process keeps us from looking for things outside the recognized patterns.

You can try solving these puzzles on your own -- that's certainly a legitimate way to go about this -- but usually you can have more fun if you involve other people. The way this works is, you look at the answer (maybe you want to try the puzzle on your own first!), then read just the clues to your friends. Your friends must determine

the answer by asking questions about it, which you may answer only with yes, no, or doesn't matter. You can adjust the difficulty of the puzzle by varying the initial clues, throwing in red herrings, and so forth.

Warning: For some reason, these puzzles have a tendency to be rather morbid.

The scenarios given on this page are realistic, if unlikely. The clues can all be taken at face value, although that's not to say their implications can't be misleading."

1. The Elevator
A person lives in a high rise building on the 25th floor. In the morning, when this person goes to work, they (I use they instead of he or she, only one person though) get on the elevator and take it to the first floor, where they then exit the elevator and go to work. When they come home at night, they take the elevator up to the 10th floor, where they walk up 15 flight of stairs to the 25th floor. They do this everyday, except on days when it rains. On days when it rains, when they come home, they take the elevator all the way to the 25th floor.

Why the odd behavior?

2. Body in the Field
There is a body laying in the field. Next to the body is a fully charged cell phone, a Twix candy bar, an unopened package, a canteen full of water and a knife.

How did they die?

3. The Hardware Store
A person goes to the hardware store to buy a specific item. As they pick up the item and hold it, a store employee (the clerk) asks them if they would like some assistance. The person asks, if I buy one of these, how much is it? The clerk responds, "three dollars." The person then asks, "Ok, if I buy 12, how much would it be then?" "Six dollars," responds the clerk. "If I buy 1,250, how much would it be then?," asks the person. The clerk replies, "12 dollars."

What is the person buying?

4. The Bicycles
Two people are in a room with 53 bicycles. One of the people is dead.

What happened, how did the person die?

Think laterally instead of vertically.

Get past logic to see new answers.

Teach your brain to look past existing patterns.

Creative Thinking Tools

Mind Mapping - A whole-brain approach to thinking
According to Wikipedia, a mind map is a diagram used to visually organize information. A mind map is often created around a single concept, drawn as an image in the center of a blank landscape page, to which associated representations of ideas such as images, words and parts of words are added. Major ideas are connected directly to the central concept, and other ideas branch out from those.

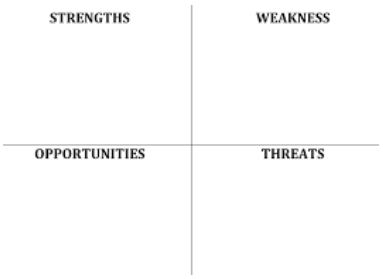
Taking Inventory - What do we know. What don't we know.
Write down everything that you know about the subject. Then begin writing down what you DON'T know.

6WH
Questions to start asking: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, HOW
Asking questions is a great way to find out what you know . . . and what you don't know. It is also a way to get MORE and DIFFERENT information.

Peel the Onion
Ask questions, then follow-up questions until you reach the core issue.
Don't just ask one question and then jump to another subject, or another completely different question. Follow the first question's path of thinking until you have gotten to a root cause. Follow-up questions typically are: Why is that? How does that happen? Tell me more.

50 Questions - A *Leonardo da Vinci* technique to round out your thoughts
Before you start on a project, ask 50 questions about the topic. The first ten questions, or so, are easy to think of and very basic. As you get further along, the questions become more difficult to think of (until you start to get some momentum) plus deeper and more specific in nature. Don't stop at 50; keep going! DaVinci had many notebooks full of questions he asked. What will be your first question?

SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
Make a plus sign on a piece of paper. Write down each of these words in one quadrant. List as many things for each quadrant you can. For example, what are the strengths of your team? What are the weaknesses? What opportunities exist for your team? What things, if left alone or unfettered, threaten the very existence of your team?



The Problem
- What is the unknown?
- What is it you don't yet understand?
- What is the information you have?
- What isn't the problem?

Phoenix Checklist
These are questions the CIA asks at the start of their problem solving. It's a great list to start brainstorming or problem solving. They are great questions to think about on a regular basis.

The Problem
·Why is it necessary to solve the problem?
·What benefits will you receive by solving the problem?
·What is the unknown?
·What is it you don't yet understand?
·What is the information you have?

- What isn't the problem?
- Is the information sufficient? Or is it insufficient? Or redundant? Or contradictory?
- Should you draw a diagram of the problem? A figure?
- Where are the boundaries of the problem?
- Can you separate the various parts of the problem? Can you write them down? What are the relationships of the parts of the problem? What are the constants of the problem?
- Have you seen this problem before?
- Have you seen this problem in a slightly different form? Do you know a related problem?
- Try to think of a familiar problem having the same or a similar unknown
- Suppose you find a problem related to yours that has already been solved. Can you use it? Can you use its method?
- Can you restate your problem? How many different ways can you restate it? More general? More specific? Can the rules be changed?
- What are the best, worst and most probable cases you can imagine?

The Plan

- Can you solve the whole problem? Part of the problem?
- What would you like the resolution to be? Can you picture it?
- How much of the unknown can you determine?
- Can you derive something useful from the information you have?
- Have you used all the information?
- Have you taken into account all essential notions in the problem?
- Can you separate the steps in the problem-solving process? Can you determine the correctness of each step?
- What creative thinking techniques can you use to generate ideas? How many different techniques?
- Can you see the result? How many different kinds of results can you see?
- How many different ways have you tried to solve the problem?
- What have others done?
- Can you intuit the solution? Can you check the result?
- What should be done? How should it be done?
- Where should it be done?
- When should it be done?
- Who should do it?
- What do you need to do at this time?
- Who will be responsible for what?
- Can you use this problem to solve some other problem?
- What is the unique set of qualities that makes this problem what it is and none other?
- What milestones can best mark your progress?
- How will you know when you are successful?

The Plan
- Can you solve the whole problem?
- What would you like the resolution to be?
- Who should do it?

THE PROBLEM

Root Causes

What's the Real Problem?

Most of the time, what we THINK the problem is, is actually a **result** of the problem or a **symptom** of the problem.

Next time someone says, "I have a problem," and he or she proceeds to tell you what it is, DON'T take the description of the problem as the real problem. Take it as the HYPOTHESIS of what he or she THINKS is the problem. This will save you time, money and aggravation!

If you always do what you've always done,
you will always get what you've always gotten.

If you always go where you've always gone,
you will always be where you've always been.

Think different.

Challenge your status quo, in different ways, at different times.

Get uncomfortable.

DISRUPT your thoughts.
It is the only way to IMPROVE your thinking!

Ready for the quick recap?

1. Retrain your brain to creative thinking.
2. Look for the root cause and pattern disruption.

Are you ready to see something new?

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