



# Read: Divergent Thinking – Opening Idea Spaces

Often referred to as lateral thinking, divergent thinking is the ability to create multiple ideas or solutions to a given problem. It's about questioning preconceived notions and searching for what might be missing—instead of only seeing what already exists. Leaders who can generate a wide range of ideas are better equipped to find unique solutions and address challenges effectively. Furthermore, leaders who embrace divergent thinking create an environment that encourages their team members to contribute their diverse perspectives and ideas. This fosters collaboration and helps them make better decisions. Through identifying alternative approaches, leaders can pivot when necessary and navigate uncertainty with agility. In Gerard Puccio's book *Creativity Rising*, Puccio presents four key principles for divergent thinking which we present here:



Defer Judgement means to hold evaluation until a later time

Deferring judgment requires the ability to suspend scepticism and to entertain the potential value of every alternative you might generate. This can be more difficult than it sounds (not that we're saying it sounds easy in the first place). Particularly in Western cultures, we are not taught to suspend judgment. We are taught to be decisive, which people generally take to mean: decide immediately. While there are many cases where a quick decision is required, premature judgment is the enemy of creative thinking.

To go for quantity is to be a fluent thinker, generating many ideas, options, and alternatives

Quantity breeds quality. The more alternatives we generate, the more likely we are to find a promising option and, ultimately, produce a creative breakthrough. We can think of quantity in two ways: in particular and in general. In the particular, it is beneficial to seek a quantity of ideas when engaged in divergent thinking; that is, when addressing a particular problem. In general, a habit of divergent thinking leads to a quantity of ideas, which means we have more possibilities to play with in our lives.

To make connections is to combine things that had not been combined, or to draw inspiration from one thing when working on another

Making connections is essential to the creative process. New thoughts or ideas are very often a combination of previously unrelated thoughts or ideas, which assume a new form as they intersect or are looked at from a different perspective. Most new consumer products are the combination of different parts that, when put together, create a new whole.

To seek novelty is to pursue the goal of originality.

There is no creativity without originality. Thus, the guideline "Seek Novelty" is both a reminder and an encouragement to generate options that are new and unusual, options that go beyond the obvious and the familiar.

Creativity is not just originality, of course; creative solutions must also be useful, valuable, and appropriate. But that determination comes later. The divergent phase is the time to pursue novel responses.

You will find resources on nexus (<https://nexus.lh-innovationhub.de>) that will help you to enhance your divergent thinking skills and expand your thinking beyond conventional boundaries.