

Creativity in Action

I was lucky to have a great boss midway in my career who was a former professional clown. I had to design a lateral-hire orientation program and was dreading it. To me, this had to be one of the most boring things a trainer could do: a training program focused on teaching how to complete forms and follow procedures. However, my boss, whom we will call Ringling, encouraged me to be creative and think outside of the box. He told me to take a day off – go to the movies, see a show, read a book, talk to my colleagues – just do something different! So I did. I went to the Broadway show *1776*. And I was inspired! I got the idea of using the drama as a metaphor for how challenging it can be to get newcomers to understand the majority's views. The training I planned used the movie *1776*, along with a senior officer doing role-plays with me about the challenges involved with bringing in mid-career people to an established firm. The lateral-hire orientation program ended up as one of my most successful projects, and to this day and it is still remembered by those who attended it over 10 years ago!

Exercise: Explore in Unusual Places

Now it is time to try the *1776* exercise for yourself. All you need is about an hour or two.

Goal

To do something that will stimulate creative, new ideas and approaches.

Directions

It doesn't matter if you have an immediate assignment that requires creativity or not. The key is to learn how to begin putting yourself in places that will stimulate new ideas. Review the list below, pick one that is outside of your usual realm of activities, and try it!

- Go to a “guy’s” movie like *Dirty Harry*.
- Go to a local museum and see an exhibit that grabs your attention.
- Go to a local department store and just wander around; bring a notebook and write down observations of people, trends, colors, designs, whatever.
- Go to a spot in your town or city that has heavy traffic, sit for an hour with a notebook, and write down your observations.
- Get a book on a topic you would otherwise never read—history, murder mystery, children’s book—and spend an hour with it.
- Go to a Barnes & Noble bookstore and spend an hour reading the short excerpts of books that catch your eye.
- Surf the Internet, picking random topics, and see what you find.

