

PROBLEM-SOLVING THAT LASTS

Problem-solving has always been a key part of success in business but rushing into the process without proper preparation can mean that problems keep recurring.

Helping businesses avoid that scenario is Perth-based Perth Innovation, facilitating a systematic approach to solving their problems.

Founder, Dr Billy Grierson, said: "Too many people jump to idea generation but we advise a more systematic approach. One of the killers in problem solving is trying to do too much at once, in the belief that 'multi-tasking' is more efficient. In reality, if you try to do five things at once, you end up doing five things badly. We have found it is more effective to focus on one thing at a time, do it properly, and then move on to the next thing."

Perth Innovation works with clients to apply this approach by focusing first on studying the problem to make sure that we understand what the real problem is, why we are trying to solve it (Objectives) and what the solution has to deliver (Selection Criteria).

The next step is to try to think of as many potential solutions as possible. At this stage it is important to let the ideas flow and not to be distracted by the first "good" idea we come up with.

Once our clients have generated a lot of ideas, they need to pick out the ones that are most likely to deliver the solution requirements. At Perth Innovation, we help our clients to focus on systematically reducing the number to something more manageable. This will take into account not only the Selection Criteria mentioned above but also the difficulty inherent in implementing the idea.

During the idea generation people generally use what Billy calls "bullet point thinking" – ideas are presented as short statements often of no more than five or six words. This is good for the ideation process, but we need more detail before the idea can be implemented. Perth Innovation works with clients to help them move to more "joined up thinking" and to develop the idea into a detailed solution concept. This includes a series of tools for challenging the idea in order to strengthen it in a process analogous to hardening-off of seedlings grown in a greenhouse before planting them outside.

Billy said: "Our role is to enable clients to find their own solutions. This fits with our use of the jester's hat in our logo. The jester was given some leeway to highlight flaws in arguments or to challenge conventional wisdom. We see the role of the consultant as being something similar. The consultant should challenge the conventional wisdom in companies he works with in order to bring a better understanding of their needs, wants, and capabilities – but it should also be fun. When people are having fun they tend to be more creative."

For more information, contact billy@perthinnovation.com

Perth Innovation uses a series of "Thinking Tools" to get the best performance from each of the steps described above. They will be staging two seminars in March and April 2016 to familiarise participants with these techniques.

The company is running two seminars on the theme

Seminar 1

Title: Introduction to Problem Solving (1 Day Seminar)

Date and time: 15th March 2016, 08:30-17:00

Location: Double Tree by Hilton, Aberdeen City Centre, Aberdeen

Cost: **£200 + VAT** (**£100 + VAT** for Chamber of Commerce members)

For more information and registration see <http://perthinnovation.com/what-we-offer/open-training/introduction-to-problem-solving/>

Seminar 2

Title: Idea Generation and Problem Solving (2 Day Seminar)

Date and Time: Day 1, 4th April 2016, 08:30 – 17:00

Day 2, 11th April 2016, 08:30 – 17:00

Location: King James VI Business Centre, Perth

Cost: **£400 + VAT** (**£200 + VAT** for Chamber of Commerce members)

For more information and registration see <http://perthinnovation.com/what-we-offer/open-training/idea-generation-and-problem-solving/>

