WORKSHOP IN: Indesit Company

BUSINESS UNIT CUSTOMER CARE (B.U.C.C.)

Case Study Introduction

Hereby we present a Case Study about the application of *CREATE* methodology with the industrial partner Indesit Company (previously Merloni Elettrodomestici). The whole application lasted 6 days and was grouped in 3 two-days workshops, to be held at Indesit Company's headquarters in Fabriano (AN, Italy). The partners of *CREATE* Consortium that were involved in carrying out these sessions were, besides Indesit Company, University of Udine and Innova S.p.A., who acted as trainers and facilitators.

The following document is structured in five main parts:

I. a general introduction, with common information about the company's profile, the creative phases involved in the sessions and the application fields which the methodology was used for;

II. the description of sessions nr. 1-2, complete with details and notes about the implementation and use of the methodology;

III. the description of sessions nr. 3-4, complete with details and notes about the implementation and use of the methodology;

IV. the description of sessions nr. 5-6, complete with details and notes about the implementation and use of the methodology;

V. the general comments and issues emerging from this Case Study, along with conclusions.

For those people who want to have a detailed overview about *CREATE* methodology and how it can be used in a real case, it is not necessary to read through all the parts of this document anyway. Most informations are fully covered by the general introduction and conclusions chapters and with the description of sessions nr.1-2. Descriptions of further sessions are very similar to the first one and may be used to evaluate how *CREATE* methodology has proved fruitful to solve further different real problems. Each session has thus been drafted as a stand-alone example of the application of our methodology.

Further information on *CREATE* methodology and organizational creativity in general may be found in our project's website (www.createproject.net) and public documents.

Enjoy!

PART I:

GENERAL INFORMATION

Company's profile

In 1930, Aristide Merloni founded Industrie Merloni in Albacina, on the outskirts of Fabriano. Business was initially concentrated on the production of scales and afterwards diversified into liquid gas cylinders and boilers.

In 1960, the Ariston brand was created and production of consumer goods such as cookers began to be developed. Industrie Merloni opened new factories throughout the central Italian region of Le Marche

In 1975 Industrie Merloni's Household Appliances Division was transformed into what would become the youngest multinational company in the industrial sector: Merloni Elettrodomestici. Its production facilities in the centre of Italy each specialized in a product line to provide a complete range of appliances. With the Ariston brand, the Company became market leader in Italy and started exporting.

Merloni Elettrodomestici widened its commercial objectives and developed a network of subsidiaries throughout Europe. It achieved substantial market shares in France and UK and established itself on the other main markets as well. In 1987 it was listed on the Milan Stock Exchange and acquired Indesit. The next acquisition, two years later, was Scholtès, a French brand producing high quality appliances. The Company began to grow in the built-in market. Increasingly effective communication focused on "personalizing" products, the Margherita model becoming the first washing machine with the name of a woman.

In the '90s Merloni Elettrodomestici developed a multi-brand strategy throughout Europe. It was now one of Europe's major manufacturers, producing millions of appliances in various European countries. In 1997 it completed a process of management restructuring by appointing a CEO from outside the Merloni family. Growth in Eastern Europe involved the Company in competition on new markets, where it quickly became a leading force. At the end of 1999, Merloni Elettrodomestici was the first in the world to offer digital products capable of connecting to the Internet.

Since the 1st January 2005, the name has changed into Indesit Company.

Today Indesit Company is the third producer of white goods in Europe, with a production of more than 12 millions appliances and with over 3 billions euros turnover. It owns two global brands, Ariston and Indesit, and three regional brands such as Scholtès, Stinol and Hotpoint. Its product lines concern cookers, refrigerators, washing machines, dishwashers and dryers (both free-standing and built-in), with 17 plants over Europe and about 20000 employees.

<u>About BUSINESS UNIT CUSTOMER CARE</u>

The Business Unit Customer Care (BUCC) is one of the most important business units of Indesit Company. Its mission is to "manage and develop services to create value for the company, consumers and partners providing the best technical assistance at sustainable cost".

Several data are significant to understand the global dimension of this unit. Today there are about 1500 Indesit call centres in Europe. They receive over 8 million telephone calls and manage more than 4 million home visits per year. BUCC employs 5000 engineers and manages about 120000 spare parts codes.

The aim of Indesit's BUCC is to become the first business unit customer care in United Kingdom and in Italy in 2004, and to be among the first in all other countries.

Application field of the methodology

Customer Care, Service Development

Creative Phases involved

Predisposition, Idea Generation, Evaluation

PART II:

SESSIONS 1-2

Place and date(s) of the sessions

Fabriano (AN - Italy), 15th-16th July 2004

Description of the participants

All the participants worked for the Business Unit Costumer Care.

The composition of the group attending this session was made of 18 employees in charge of the following roles:

- "Team managers": they coordinate and control the call center operators;
- "District Managers": they are the interface between BUCC/Indesit and the network of assistance technicians in a specific Italian region;
- "Costumer Service Managers": they control the procedures of product/compenent substitutions and of assistance.

Agenda of the session

Starts on	Ends on	Item
FIRST DAY		
09.30	09.40	Introduction and CREATE project presentation
09.40	10.00	Beyond Efficiency toward Discontinuity: Managing the creative destruction for the success of the business (presentation)
10.00	10.30	Open discussion on order and chaos in the Business Unit Consumer Care
10.30	10.45	Through the Lens of Creativity (presentation)
10.45	11.00	Organizational Creativity: the organisational conditions and the proposed methodology (presentation)
11.00	11.30	Coffee break and compilation of preliminary questionnaires
11.30	11.45	Technique for the idea generation: Provocation & Movement (presentation)
11.45	12.30	Workshop on Provocation & Movement: guided exercitations on applicative examples and launch of new provocations
12.30	12.45	Open discussion
12.45	14.15	Lunch
14.15	14.45	Technique for the idea generation: Creativity Template – theory and applicative examples (presentation)
14.45	15.00	Technique for the evaluation: 6 Thinking Hats (presentation)
15.00	15.30	Results emerged during the previous experiences in DERBI (presentation)
15.30	15.45	Coffee break
15.45	16.30	Workshop on 6 thinking hats: guided exercitations on applicative examples

16.30	17.00	Open discussion to raise problems and ideas
SECOND DAY		
09.30	09.45	Summary of the results of the first day and introduction to the second days
09.45	11.00	Workshop with application of creative techniques to a real problem of the division
11.00	11.15	Coffee break
11.15	12.45	Workshop with application of creative techniques to a real problem of the division
12.45	14.15	Lunch
14.15	15.45	Workshop with application of creative techniques to a real problem of the division
15.45	16.00	Coffee break and compilation of final questionnaires
16.00	17.00	Final discussion and conclusions

Description of the session

The description of the session will follow this structure:

- Predisposition phase;
- Idea Generation phase (use of Provocation&Movement technique);
- description of the Evaluation of the first generated idea (use of Six Thinking Hats technique);
- description of the Evaluation of the second generated idea (use of Six Thinking Hats technique);

PREDISPOSITION PHASE

The first three presentations ('Beyond Efficiency toward Discontinuity', 'Through the Lens of Creativity', 'Organizational Creativity') had the purpose of raising the awareness of the team about the importance and usefulness of creativity and of predisposing them to the use of creative techniques for the following phases. The people in the team were really enticed and amused especially by the first presentation, so that a lively open discussion followed about whether their business unit was a chaotic or ordered organization and which elements of chaos and order could be singled out. In this phase several people talked freely about their difficulties at work and this contributed to focus their mind on possible topics to cope with in this creative session. After the other two presentations, the general feedback was that the team was eager to make use of the techniques to be presented in the following presentations.

IDEA GENERATION PHASE

Step 1: Setting up Provocations

After the presentation of the technique 'Provocation & Movement', the facilitators asked the team to set up a few provocations by using the Provocation methods. The people in the team were uninhibited so they started to throw provocations freely without the intervention of the facilitators. These provocations were noted in a paper board. Here is the result:

PROVOCATIONS	Provocation Method
The product has no warranty	*Exaggeration*
The technician assembles the product	*Change of logic*
The customer is our technician	*Change of logic*
The product is customized	*Negation*
Technical assistance is free forever	*Exaggeration*
The customer is happy when he phones to the call center for a failure	*Negation*
There is an automatic shipment of spares	*Dream*

Then the team was asked which provocation they wanted to start working with. Therefore each provocation was voted openly by everyone. More than one choice could be made. The most voted provocation was then selected.

PROVOCATIONS	Votes
The product has no warranty	2
The technician assembles the product	3
The customer is our technician	1
The product is customized	1
Technical assistance is free forever	3
The customer is happy when he phones the call center for a failure	6
There is an automatic shipment of spares	1
The customers carries the product by himself	2

From this point on, the description of the session will focus on how a particular idea has been developed (*Registration of product and customer*). Actually in this same session another idea was fully developed and will be presented later in this chapter.

Step 2: Movement

For the selected provocation, one of the Movement methods (in this case, 'Extracting a principle') was chosen to direct the provocation into one feasible idea. This step and the following discussion was carried out openly with all people participating, but the facilitators were needed to remind the participants about the Movement methods.

PROVOCATION
The customer is happy when he phones the call center for a failure

MOVEMENT (*extracting a principle*)
The customer should gain a certain benefit phoning to the call center

IDEA

- The customer when he calls for a failure earn points on a ***fidelity card*** to buy new household appliance or to win other prizes
- The points can be accumulated even with purchases of other Merloni products and/or services

The Movement step consisted in extracting a principle from the provocation 'The customer is happy when he phones the call center for a failure'. That is, the team tried to answer to the questions: 'Why is this customer happy when he calls? Is there any general reason that makes a customer happy when he calls the service number?".

The common answer was that customers are happy to call when they expect to gain a certain benefit. The following discussion concerned about some possible tangible benefits for a calling customer: the group agreed that customers could possibly earn some kind of 'points' each time they call. These points could be accumulated in a card that may be used later to have discounts on new products or win other prizes. Moreover, this card could hold points also coming from purchases of other products/services from Indesit Company.

The original provocation anyway proved very fruitful, since during the Movement step another principle was extracted. An analogy between the service operator and the family's doctor emerged from the discussion: both characters interact with 'customers' who are initially unhappy, but who feel confident about finding a solution to their problem. This consideration struck the participant's imagination and another idea emerged from the group (see picture below):

PROVOCATION
The customer is happy when he phones to the call center for a failure

MOVEMENT (*extracting a principle*)
The customer refers to the call center operator as family's doctor, confident about finding a solution to the problem

IDEA

- The customer to be able to choose the trusted operator must already know the resources of the call center
- In order to know the resources of the call center the customer is provided with an **audio/video information tool** when he buys a new product

Thus, from the same provocation, two different ideas were drawn through different movements. Hereafter we are going to start with the description of the Evaluation phase for the first idea, which will be followed by the second one.

EVALUATION PHASE (1st IDEA)

"Smile, you have a failure!"

From ignored customers
To 'cuddled' customers

The definition of new ideas from the original provocation ended the Idea Generation phase. The next phase aimed to fully discuss this ideas by using the Six Thinking Hats technique. The purpose of the Evaluation phase would be to assess if the idea emerged is feasible and, at least, if a few initial implementation steps can be defined. Otherwise, if the evaluation is negative, this idea would be rejected before taking into consideration a possible implementation plan.

The Six Thinking Hats technique was then presented. In order to complement the training material with a real case application of this technique, the facilitators presented also their previous experience in Derbi.

The Six Thinking Hats session therefore started on the *fidelity card* idea. While the application of Provocation & Movement lasted less than 1 hour overall, the Evaluation phase took more than 2 hours of discussion in order to be fully completed.

Hereafter we provide indications on how the session was run with a few considerations from the facilitators' point of view:

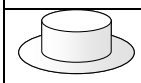
- after the training presentations, each participant was given a set of 6 coloured cards, each one representing one different hat; coloured cards were preferred over hats because hats may be considered 'ridiculous' to wear by someone, while cards are as funny as hats but more 'neutral'; moreover, hats may be difficult to transport while coloured cards may be easily obtained with simple materials (paper, scissors, marking pens, etc.) usually present in most offices. Coloured cards proved effective anyway;
- the session began with the White Hat, for two main reasons:
  1. it is useful to collect all objective data (costs, norms, restrictions, etc. etc.) before evaluating positive and negative aspects of an idea;
  2. participants are more easily involved in the discussion if they start by explaining 'neutral' information;

During this session, many people soon afterwards started using the other hats correctly without support from facilitators;

- the author's recommendations about the use of the Six Thinking Hats state that each hat must be worn simultaneously by all participants in order to force people to assume the hat's point of view; in our experience, we let the participants use the cards freely: for instance, someone could state a Yellow Hat consideration while immediately after another one could interrupt with a Green Hat suggestion. The only restraint was that each people had to hold the relevant coloured card in front of him while stating his consideration (e.g., he had to hold the yellow card if he was going to state a 'yellow hat' sentence). This allowed people to freely express their thoughts without having to wait for the hat's turn, while at the same time they were shielded by other people's opinion because they were 'wearing a hat' anyway. On the other side, this method may lead to chaotic discussion if facilitators are not strict in enforcing the use of the cards and limiting people who tend to interrupt frequently (mainly with a Black Hat attitude);
- the facilitators paid attention if the same participant held the same card every time he intervened; in this case, the person was invited to 'wear a different hat' and make a relevant statement; this approach was fruitful for both the participants and the overall discussion;
- the session was managed with the support of a notebook and a projector; six different PowerPoint slides were prepared with different background colours, one for each hat; as statements were thrown, one facilitator reported them in the relevant slide;
- at several points during the discussion, the facilitators or one of the participants held the blue card (representing control) and overviewed the collected sentences, by cycling through the different slides. If some slides were too empty in comparison with others, the facilitators invited the participants to wear the hat in question and throw a few more considerations;
- during the intermediate overviews, pending issues were noted (usually Black Hat negative remarks or Yellow Hat possible exploitations); therefore facilitators invited people to wear a given hat (usually the 'green hat') and try and solve the issues;
- while using the Green Hat, participants usually generated new ideas and solutions by sheer intuition and common brainstorming; if the group was stuck with some problem that could not be solved, the facilitators recalled the Provocation methods: they proved helpful also in these cases;
- at the end of the sessions, all the participants and facilitators wore the Blue Hat and summarized the conclusions in the final Blue Hat slide.

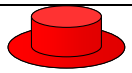
Here follows a summary of the evalutation of the *fidelity card* idea with the use of the Six Thinking Hats:

Evaluation of the FIDELITY CARD idea with the Six Thinking Hats



The WHITE HAT: all the analytical data

- The idea of a fidelity card has been already proposed in the past
- The card must be desirable and worthwhile to strongly attract the customer
- Costs for the creation and the management of the card must be checked
- Who pays for the prizes? A possible “gift pack ” – oven cleaner, etc. – costs about 20 euros
- In the past there have already been similar experiments: despite the available prizes, the customer did not use to phone the call center to sign up and give his data
- In the past even the offer for a free check-up had little success



The RED HAT: emotions

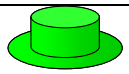
- If points are given only in case of failures and repairing, the possible implicit message for the customer would be that the household appliance “should” anyhow break down
- The customer would feel “privileged”

The YELLOW HAT: positive aspects

- The system for point acquisition could improve the request of accessories or other products/services (e.g.: warranty extension)
- Customers willing to gain new points would call for the repairing only the authorized technical assistance center
- Through the card it would be possible to register and “trace” new products and monitor new customers

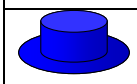
The BLACK HAT: what’s wrong with it?

- A specific ministerial authorization could be necessary
- Managing the cards and the scorings would be too complicated for the company
- It could be difficult to find the sponsors
- The card wouldn’t be appealing since the acquisition of new points wouldn’t be frequent
- Too many cards exists!



The GREEN HAT: new further ideas

- The card could be attached to the instructions booklet
- The card could be activated by:
  - Phoning to the call center or
  - Going to the selling point/authorized technical assistance center
- The customer could earn points if he recommends the purchase of the product to other customers (multimarketing)
- There could be an annual prize draw
- The card could contain the registration number and the model of the machine
- According to the earned points, the kind of prize could be chosen



The BLUE HAT: final overview

- The idea of the fidelity card is not considered generally sound since:
  - Past similar experiences were not successful
  - It would imply too many management burdens for the company
- The real benefit related to the system of the fidelity card is related to the possibility of acquiring the data about customer and product
- In synthesis, the first evaluation round let to:
  - Basically **reject the idea of the fidelity card**
  - Clearly raise the relevance for Merloni of **acquiring data about the customer and the purchased product**

→ ***How can we do that?***

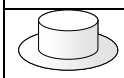
As can be noted from the summary, at the end of the evaluation phase the idea of the *fidelity card* to let users accumulate points when they call the service numbers was abandoned. Anyway the discussion proved useful and successful for two main reasons:

- since the working group agreed that this idea was to be abandoned, no further effort was going to be wasted in development;
- the Six Thinking Hats technique generated an extended overview about many aspects and topics related to the *fidelity card* idea: during the discussion, a few of them were singled out as very important key-factors for the mission of the business-unit; the group, while discarding the initial idea, decided to focus on these instead ('spill-over' effect).

Thus the group noticed that the most important key-factor that could be enabled by the employment of a *fidelity card* was the possibility to acquire data about the customer and the purchased product. In fact, while Indesit Group sold more than 2 millions products in 2003, only a very small part of them has been registered, since only a small part of products is faulty and needs the contact with the call center. Therefore, since customers' and products' data are considered one of the most valuable assets for marketing/service actions, the group wanted to investigate how to induce the customers to registrate their products.

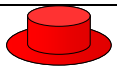
Therefore, the group autonomously decided to use Six Thinking Hats immediately after the conclusion of the initial assessment in order to fully explore the new problem of the *registration of customers and products.* In the following table we provide a summary of the most important points of the session:

Evaluation of the REGISTRATION OF CUSTOMERS AND PRODUCTS idea with the Six Thinking Hats



The WHITE HAT: all the analytical data

- The serial number necessary for the record is visible only after the removal of the packaging: therefore the registration cannot be done at the moment of purchase
- Only 5% of the machines are affected by failures, therefore the Call Center now registers only a limited part of whole production
- In 2003 Merloni sold about 2 millions of machines
- It is estimated that a request of 20.000 products/year can be stimulated through the registration if at least 10% of all the customers provide their data
- The Call Center has about 1,5 million contacts/year: in order to be able to manage further 200.000 contacts/year the Call Center would need at least other 7 people



The RED HAT: emotions

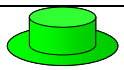
- The customer could feel 'cuddled' by the cares of Merloni
- The customer could feel 'annoyed' by an excessive sending of invitations/promotions/communications

The YELLOW HAT: positive aspects

- By the registration of customer and product it would be easier to understand the market trends
- Even the selling points could be interested in acquiring and sharing these data
- The registered customer could be contacted after 5 years to propose him the replacement of his old appliance

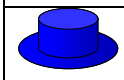
The BLACK HAT: what's wrong with it?

- The sellers wouldn't be interested to support this initiative since they could feel supplanted
- There would be problems between the Sales Department and the Technical Centers for the management of replacements (i.e.: exchanging an old household appliance with a new one)



The GREEN HAT: new further ideas

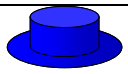
- In order to induce the customer to register, we can suggest:
  - Discount at the moment of purchase
  - Discount for the next Merloni product that will be purchased
  - Immediate gift of consumers' goods (e.g.: Tupperware, Zucchi, etc.)
  - Recharge (5 or 10 euros) for the mobile phone
- The registration of the product could be made directly by the customer via internet to lighten the effort of the call center
- The customer could check on-line the situation of his own appliances (es.: warranties, check ups, etc.)



The BLUE HAT: final overview (I)

- For the registration of the customer and of the product two scenarios can be foreseen according to the level of reliability of the seller:

1. LARGE DISTRIBUTION
   - The customer can immediately register himself obtaining a direct discount on the product
   - The customer registers the product at home by phoning the Call Center or via Internet receiving a mobile phone recharge
2. SMALL RETAILERS
   - The customer registers both himself and the product at home by phoning the Call Center or via Internet receiving a mobile phone recharge



The BLUE HAT: final overview (II)

- With the registration of customers and products an increase of contacts for the call center is foreseen
- This increase will probably imply a strengthening of the resources of the Call Center
- The expected increase of the replacements could have a twofold effect:
  - Diminution of the reparations, therefore potentially less incomes for the technical assistance centers
  - An erosion of sale volumes through traditional channels, therefore potentially less incomes for the selling points

The Six Thinking Hats proved very helpful. The direct use of the Green Hat was very common thoroughout this session: many possible solutions for the registration of products were spontaneously generated by most participants and each one was quickly assessed with its pros and cons. The group finally converged into the depiction of two possible scenarios, whose features were summarized with the final Blue Hats. There was a general agreement and satisfaction about the results of this session.

EVALUATION PHASE (2nd IDEA)

"Smile, you have a failure!"

From call center operator to family's doctor

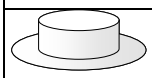
The following day, after a brief revision of the results of the previous evaluation session, the group resumed the second idea emerged from the Provocation&Movement (*Audio/Video information tool*) session and went on using the Six Thinking Hats technique in order to evaluate this idea too.

This discussion did not present particular issues, therefore the general comments about the first Evaluation phase still apply (see before).

In this case, the evaluation of the original idea *Audio/Video information tool* followed a linear progression: after exploring several points of view, the final Blue Hat was able to deem this idea worthy and to define a few features for this new tool, along with some open issues on further future development.

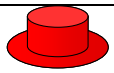
On the following page we provide a summary for the results of this phase:

Evaluation of the AUDIO/VIDEO INFORMATION TOOL idea with the Six Thinking Hats



The WHITE HAT: all the analytical data

- It is necessary to define the audio/video tools according to the customer typology
- It is necessary to define the contents of the audio/video tool
- It is necessary that the audio/video tool is multi-language
- The audio/video tool must aim to both male and female users
- Operators must give their authorization for the use of their own images
- The technical assistance centers have already demonstrated to appreciate a direct knowledge of the operator

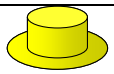


The RED HAT: emotions

- The customer feels safe and cuddled
- The customer builds a trust relation with the operator such as with family's doctor
- Foreshadowing in the audio/video tool a possible failure could be felt negatively by the customer

The BLACK HAT: what's wrong with it?

- The tool could be not used due to laziness or lack of time
- Elderly person often aren't familiar with technologically advanced solutions
- Operators and fittings often change: problem of obsolescence of the tool
- In the past, videotapes about the product and distributed at the selling points weren't successful

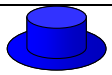


The YELLOW HAT: positive aspects

- In the reference markets there are many young consumers keen on new technologies
- The company could decrease the number of product substitutions since it deals with a milder customer
- The company becomes more transparent for the customer
- Service excellence justifies a higher price

The GREEN HAT: new further ideas

- The audio/video tool could substitute the instructions booklet
- The audio/video tool could contain advertisements of fittings and complementary products
- The audio/video tool could contain a simulated technical intervention
- To induce the customer to use the tool, the tool could contain a code for a prize contest
- The cost of the tool could be partially covered by sponsors
- The customer should choose the type of tool (CD-Rom or videotape)
- A further interaction channel with the call center could be proposed: a webcam, for instance



The BLUE HAT: final overview

- The audio/video tool should contain:
  - Info on the product
  - Info on warranty and out-of-warranty services
  - Info on the production and test process to improve company's image
  - Participation to a contest for the customer who registers
- The audio/video tool must be differentiated according to the typology of customer: videotape or CD-ROM (DVD)
- The idea of the web cam is interesting:
  - It could be initially promoted as a pilot initiative
  - It implies many difficulties (privacy, etc.)

PART III:

SESSIONS 3-4

Place and date(s) of the sessions

Fabriano (AN - Italy), 16th-17th September 2004

Description of the participants

All the participants work for the Business Unit Costumer Care. The composition of the group participating in this session was made of 12 employees in charge of the following roles:

- Buyers: they are responsible for the purchasing of spare parts and components;
- Quality managers;
- Technical managers: they are responsible of the preparation of training material and courses for the technicians and the employees and of the delivery of technical documentation.

Agenda of the session

The agenda of session 3 & 4 in Indesit Company was similar to the one designed for the first and second session. The contents of this session was refined according to the feedbacks collected during the first one performed inside the company. The session lasted two days:

- on the first day we introduced the creativity through theoretical presentations and then we tried to use the techniques;
- on the second day we continued to use the techniques to examine another case.

The session terminated in the first afternoon of the second day. This session produced the generation of two ideas that will be presented in succession.

Description of the session

The description of the session is composed by:

- the Predisposition phase;
- the first part of the Idea Generation phase: setting up the provocations and moving from one provocation (use of Provocation&Movement technique);
- the description of the Evaluation of the first generated idea, realized in the first day (use of Six Thinking Hats technique);
- the second part of the Idea Generation phase: moving from another provocation (use of Provocation&Movement technique), realized in the second day
- the description of the Evaluation of the second generated idea (use of Six Thinking Hats technique);

PREDISPOSITION PHASE

After a brief presentation of the purpose of the session, the predisposition phase started with two presentations (‘Beyond Efficiency toward Discontinuity’, ‘Through the Lens of Creativity’) that allowed to introduce the meaning of creativity in the firms, the use of lateral thinking and the predisposition of the team for the use of creativity techniques for the following phases. After these presentations, the group discussed with the facilitators if the business unit was a chaotic or ordered

organization and which elements of chaos and order could be singled out. The group, during this first phase, appeared very interested. There was a friendly and favorable climate thanks to the good relationships among the people. From this point on the facilitators started to present the creative techniques.

IDEA GENERATION PHASE (1st IDEA)

Step 1: Setting up Provocations

The first presentation introduced the technique 'Provocation & Movement' that allowed to find out a few provocations. Setting up provocations is the first step to generate a new idea. Each people in the group wrote in a sheet 2-3 provocations in five minutes and then we noted them in a paper board. In the table are reported the provocations and the methods used to obtain them.

PROVOCATIONS	PROVOCATION METHODS
Our technicians do not need training to run interventions	Exaggeration
Our products are guaranteed for ever	Exaggeration
Repairing is free	Negation
Products are not repaired	Negation
Spare parts are not sold	Change of logic
Not even products are sold!!!	Change of logic
Profit and loss account writes by itself	Dream
There is no warranty on products	Exaggeration
Merloni does not pay service centres	Change of logic
The product alerts a week before breaking down	Dream
Merloni has no competitors on spare parts (monopoly)	Exaggeration
There is only one spare part for the whole range	Exaggeration

The group threw a lot of provocations. This means that the team understood how to use the technique and which were the methods to generate them. In fact, in the figure, it is possible to observe that each provocation method had been used. In particular, the provocations "Products are not repaired", "Spare parts are non sold" and "Not even products are sold" appeared to be very strong.

In order to select the provocations for the following phases, each people could vote on 3 provocations and at the end we chose to analyze the two most voted (figure 2).

The selected provocations were :

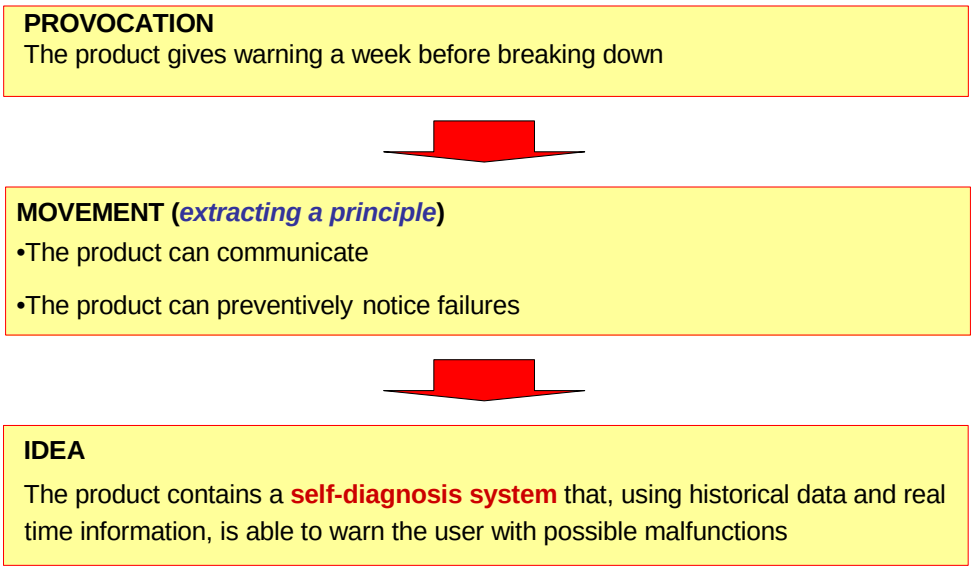
- "*The product gives warning a week before breaking down*"
- "*There is only one spare parts for the whole range*"

PROVOCATIONS	votes
Our technicians do not need training to run interventions	1
Our products are guaranteed for ever	2
Repairing is free	3
Products are not repaired	3
Spare parts are not sold	2
Not even products are sold!!!	5
Profit and loss account writes by itself	3
There is no warranty on products	1
Merloni does not pay service centres	2
The product gives warning a week before breaking down	5
Merloni has no competitors on spare parts (monopoly)	2
There is only one spare part for the whole range	5

Step 2: Movement

The first selected provocation was "*The product gives warning a week before breaking down*". From this, there was the need to use a Movement method (in this case, 'Extracting a principle') to direct the provocation into one feasible idea. This step and the following discussion was carried out openly with all people participating, but the facilitators were needed to remind the participants about the Movement methods.

The Movement step is to extract a principle from the provocation 'The product gives warning a week before breaking down'. The team tried to answer to the question: "How can the product give a warning? How can it do that a week before a failure?". These are the kind of questions that the team tried to answer to make the "Movement". This led to imagine that the product should be able to communicate and should preventively notice failures.



The following discussion concerned about some possible tangible benefits with the introduction of this product improvement. The group tried to image if it was possible to realize a system that allows to communicate with the company or with the service centres. For example, the product could send

to the service centres a signal when there are some anomalies in the product. In this phase, the group discussed openly the different proposal and they tried to extract a feasible idea. The presence of people with knowledge in various fields (for example electronic, commercial, etc) allowed to discuss the "Movement" from different points of view. The moderator only supervised the conversation allowing all members of the group to explain their own considerations.

From this process, the resulting idea was:

> *the introduction into the product of a **self-diagnosis system** that, using historical data and real time information, is able to warn the user with possible malfunctions.*

EVALUATION PHASE (1st IDEA)

"Preventing is better than healing"

The next phase is to fully discuss this idea by using the Six Thinking Hats technique. The purpose of the evaluation phase is to assess if the idea emerged is feasible and if at least a few initial implementation steps can be defined. Otherwise, if the evaluation is negative, this idea would be rejected before taking in consideration a possible implementation plan.

After the discussion of "Movement" step, the Six Thinking Hats technique was presented. In order to complement the training material with a real case application of this technique, the facilitators presented also their previous experience in Indesit Company with employees. The facilitators also suggested to further develop one of the ideas emerged in the previous sessions, that is to have an additional 'executive-level' assessment of the ideas previously discussed by their subordinates. The participants whole-heartedly decided to use the Six Thinking Hats to assess one of their own ideas instead.

The Six Thinking Hats session therefore started. While the application of Provocation & Movement appeared very quick, the Evaluation phase took more than 2 hours of discussion in order to be fully completed.

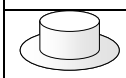
After the training presentations, each participant was given a set of 6 coloured cards, each one representing one different hat; coloured cards were preferred over hats because hats may be considered 'ridiculous' to wear by someone, while cards are as funny as hats but more 'neutral'; moreover, hats may be difficult to transport while coloured cards may be easily obtained with simple materials (paper, scissors, marking pens, etc.) usually present in most offices. Coloured cards proved effective anyway.

The application of "Six Thinking Hats" began with the use of the White Hat, for two main reasons:

1. it is useful to collect all objective data (costs, norms, restrictions, etc. etc.) before evaluating positive and negative aspects of an idea;
2. participants are more easily involved in the discussion if they start by explaining 'neutral' information;

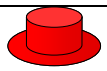
Afterwards, the group started to use the other "hats" correctly. Each people showed the card with the appropriate colour before saying his opinion about the idea. Everybody had the opportunity to express his own considerations. The use of the hats (in this case, cards) allowed each one to explain different aspects of the problem in a structured way.

Evaluation of the SELF DIAGNOSIS SYSTEM idea with the Six Thinking Hats



The WHITE HAT: all the analytical data

- The company is willing to adopt this approach: similar systems are under experimentation
- Self-test on the product components must be made electronically: for instance on many cars there are already systems for component control
- Currently some washing machines already signal the code of the failure on a small screen
- In a past pilot project, abandoned due to excessive costs, the signal of the product was sent to the call center via internet
- On the basis of company data, it is possible to know preventively elements with high faultiness level
- An assistance intervention costs at least 50 euros, while some new products cost only 200 euros

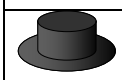


The RED HAT: emotions

- The customer could get 'anxious' if he receives too many warnings
- The customer feels 'safe' when the company shows cares towards him

The YELLOW HAT: positive aspects

- Technical intervention would be easier and quicker if we know in advance the type of failure
- Preventing failures would increase the satisfaction level of the customer and the image of the company
- Signaling the necessity of the check up is useful and could be not too costly
- The check up could allow to verify inadequate or incorrect uses

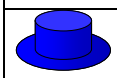


The BLACK HAT: what's wrong with it?

- Electronic components often do not work properly
- The user could overlook the signals of the product
- The idea of signaling automatically the failures to the nearest technical assistance center is not currently feasible due to the unsuitability of the assistance network

The GREEN HAT: new further ideas

- With statistical elaboration on the historical data related to past interventions it could be possible to set prearranged alert signals
- Besides, warnings could be activated by elaborating the data that the machine already collects (e.g.: nr of cycles carried out)
- The machine should be able to signal the code of the failure and the spare part needed
- Check-up could be done remotely by the customer guided by the call center through the telephone
- The machine after signaling a possible failure could start to limit some functionalities to prevent irreversible failures and to urge the customer to call the assistance
- The service could be segmented according to different brands

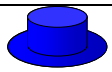


The BLUE HAT: final overview

- We may devise 2 typologies of warnings:
  - •Pre-fixed for the "check-up"
  - •Activated by the self-diagnosis system

1. PRE-FIXED SIGNAL ("CHECK-UP")

- This typology can be run by relatively easy and cheap systems
- The time of the check-up is calculated according to the historical data (e.g.: past interventions, etc.)
- During the check-up it would be also possible to:
  - Register the customer/product
  - Offer new products/services (es.: SW updates, components susbstitution, etc.)
- The check-up could made:
  - By direct intervention of technicians
  - By phone with the customer guided by the call center



The BLUE HAT: final overview

2. SELF-DIAGNOSIS SYSTEM

- This typology requires a much more complex system
- It could be included only in the top brand products
- With an immediate communication about the type of failure and necessary intervention, the response time of the assistance would decrease and therefore customer's satisfaction would increase

In this case, the presence of people with different knowledge allowed to develop a deep analysis and consider many ways to realize the idea. The good results of the session were obtained thanks to a heterogeneous group. In fact, the presence of different roles of BUCC workers allowed to analyze the problem from different points of view and find out the possible available solutions to solve the problem appeared during the evaluation of the new idea.

At the end of the discussion, the group defined two typologies of warning. With the Blue Hat, the group, with the help of the facilitators, tried to summarize the different hats and to find a feasible way to implement the idea. The two typologies of warnings led to imagine two scenarios:

1. the introduction of a prefixed-signal which could run by a relatively cheap system and allow to register the customer and offer new products or services during the "check-up" phase;
2. a much more complex system which could be particularly interesting for the top-brand products and could link the necessary intervention with the type of failure.

At the end of the day we summarized the activity of the day and we presented the plan for the following day.

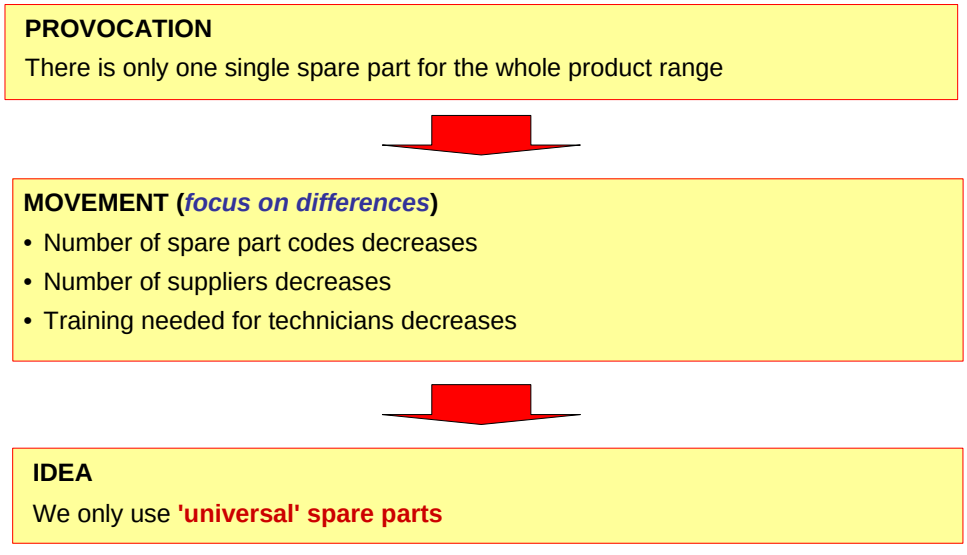
IDEA GENERATION PHASE (2nd IDEA)

In the morning of the second day the group analyzed the second selected provocation "*There is only one spare part for the whole product range*". The group was enthusiastic to develop another case: the climate was even more favourable than the previous day and the group already knew how to work.

With this considerations the group started to analyze the second provocation.

Since the provocations obtained in the previous day were many, the group was eager to select and discuss a new one from the pool. For this reason in this phase we only focused on the "Movement" step on an already existing provocation and then we analyzed the idea with the "Six Thinking Hats".

The discussion started with the purpose to understand the meaning of the provocation and the way to find out an idea from this one. A lot of questions emerged, for example "Could only one spare part exist? Is it possible to imagine a unique spare part? How would our job change if only one spare part existed?".



The Movement was made with the *"focus on differences"* method which allowed to extrapolate the differences in comparison with the classical use of spare parts. The Movement headed toward the reduction of spare parts and related suppliers. In fact, during the discussion it emerged that Indesit products are designed with a low degree of commonality between parts and of 'carry-over' techniques. From this discussion the idea was:

We only use ***'universal' spare parts***

When the group found out the idea they made the next step: the evaluation of the idea.

EVALUATION PHASE (2nd IDEA)

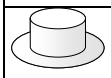
"Spare parts?
One, no-one, forty thousand!"

The group started to evaluate the idea with the White Hat. They said that Indesit had about 40000 different spare part codes. This led to two main considerations: on one side, having a 'universal spare part' could be an intriguing idea and a great opportunity; on the other side, it would be a great opportunity also for low-cost spare part producers (especially Far East suppliers), which could pose a serious threat on this business.

Subsequently, the group started to use also the other coloured hats. At first they imagined that the problem was product design, but then they tried to see the problem also under other points of view, for instance commercial opportunities and threats. At a certain point, the group imagined that the only one single spare part is the product itself. This means that if the product breaks down, the company will replace it.

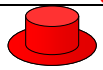
During this Six Thinking Hats session a new component of the group was present and started to use the Black Hat continuously, always replying to his colleagues when they expressed their own opinions and often without even declaring his hat. If this seemed to be normal initially, then this attitude produced difficulties in the evaluation of the idea because he hampered the structure of the discussion. The facilitators advised this person to limit the use of the black colour. But he continued to be in contrast with colleagues and he limited the regular development of the session. This person was not present during the Predisposition phase of the previous day and for this reason it is possible to understand his behaviour. This demonstrates that the Predisposition phase is necessary to introduce creativity in an organization and to predispose the group for the correct use of techniques. It is clear that the person did not understand which was the meaning of the use of lateral thinking.

Evaluation of the 'UNIVERSAL SPARE PARTS' idea with the 6 Thinking Hats



The WHITE HAT: all the analytical data

- When the volume of business for a code is high, suppliers may address the market directly (opportunistic behaviour)
- Electronic components standardization is easier
- Spare part business relies greatly on out-of-warranty interventions (but they are decreasing)
- In the mid term, they won't probably address to local suppliers anymore for some codes, for these codes will be produced at extremely low price in the Far East



The RED HAT: emotions

- High prices for spare parts spoil the image for both the company and the technician

The YELLOW HAT: positive aspects

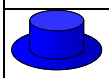
- Spare parts standardization helps improving intervention times and prices
- Standardization would give more bargaining power over suppliers
- If they knew which repairing interventions are no more convenient, compared with product replacement, procedures would be simplified and costs would decrease

The BLACK HAT: what's wrong with it?

- R&D are already standardizing components for new products, but they are not considering compatibility with previous products
- If a spare part is 'universal', it is less likely that we sell original spare parts
- Low numerousness of spare parts would decrease profit margin for technicians operating with the company

The GREEN HAT: new further ideas

- They could identify those intervention which are no longer convenient (i.e.: in the USA, washing machine tanks are no longer repaired, the product is wholly replaced)
- In the mid-long term, component standardization and Far Eastern supplies will further reduce product costs: repairs will be no longer made, products will be directly replaced. **The single spare part is the new product itself!**
- Since technical assistance will disappear, technicians will become more and more carriers, installers, dealers



The BLUE HAT: final overview

Discussion could not be directed towards a common shared solution. Nonetheless a few points have emerged:

- It is necessary to find a **fair balance between component standardization and numerousness**, in order to simplify management of codes and at the same time to shield the company against opportunistic behaviours of suppliers
- It would be really useful to identify those interventions that are no longer convenient (i.e.: washing machine tank) and promote product replacement in these cases as a routine activity
- With suppliers from the Far East at extremely low prices, sooner or later fewer and fewer parts will be worth repairing or substituting: in the end, products will be directly replaced with new ones.

At the end, after several indications by the facilitators, the discussion could come to an end and produce interesting evaluations. The group did not define if the proposed idea could be accepted but they issued a few open questions. For example, identifying those interventions that are no longer convenient and promoting product replacement in these cases appears very interesting, but it requires a deep change of logic that must be evaluated more deeply from the management of the company.

Other comments for the 3rd and 4th session in Indesit Company

This session provided facilitators with some further indications and comments that may complement ones from previous sessions.

- The facilitators are useful to manage the session. If the discussion is not taking off, the facilitators must encourage the conversation and involve each people of the group by launching direct questions or starting to explain their own opinions. In the closing phase, the facilitators must be able to check when the proper time for the final Blue Hat has come.
- The facilitators must be able to limit the use of the Black Hat. In the second case, previously explained, the facilitators had to limit the arguments of the person who used it too often. Besides, the facilitators must balance the use of the hats to have different points of view about the idea.
- The mutual knowledge of the participants helps the settlement of a good climate and therefore may influence the success of a creative session.
- The presentation of the results produced during the previous session was highly appreciated. Actually, this "bottom-up" approach obtained much success and interest, since a *cross-fertilization* of ideas among different organizational levels is not so common. These presentations also helped to remove inhibitions. However, the groups preferred to explore their own provocations and ideas and not to resume the previous ones, because the latter ones had already been fully examined by the preceding groups.

PART IV:

SESSIONS 5-6

Description of the participants

All the participants worked for the Business Unit Costumer Care. The composition of the group attending this sessions was made of 8 peoples. They were all executives in charge of the role of "service managers". More in detail, they are responsible of the BUCC for each market area (e.g.: Italy, Spain, Northern Europe, UK, etc.) and they are from different nationalities (e.g.: Italian, Spanish, Dutch, English, etc.).

Agenda of the session

The agenda of session 5 and 6 in Indesit Company was similar to the one designed for the first two sessions. The contents of these sessions were refined according to the feedbacks collected during the ones already performed inside the company. In particular attendances appreciated the presentation of what had been produced during the sessions with the previous groups: this means that executives have been provided with the ideas generated by cadres who attended sessions 3 and 4. However service managers preferred to explore their own new ideas instead of resuming the previous ones.

Description of the session

As general observation, the structure of sessions 5 and 6 followed same pattern of the previous sessions.

PREDISPOSITION PHASE

Predisposition phase had the purpose of raising the awareness of the team about the importance and usefulness of creativity and of predisposing them to the use of creative techniques for the following phases. Participants have been provided with two initial presentations of the first sessions, that are: 'Beyond Efficiency toward Discontinuity' and 'Through the Lens of Creativity'. Once again people in the team were really enticed and amused by both presentations.

IDEA GENERATION PHASE

Following the framework already used, after the presentation of the technique 'Provocation & Movement', the facilitators asked the team to throw a few provocations by using the Provocation methods. The people in the team were a little inhibited, so they showed difficulties to start throwing provocations without the intervention of the facilitators. In fact, looking back to other sessions, it was noticed that the higher the hierarchy level, the lower was the bent for lateral thinking. The facilitators anyway think that a few factors may have negatively influenced the outcome of this Provocation&Movement session:

- the number of participants was considerably lower than in other sessions;

- the participants came from different parts of Europe and, differently from other groups who attended regular meetings also in training contexts, they usually meet only when discussing important 'formal' matters; therefore the level of cohesiveness of the team was lower than in the first group;

Therefore a general conclusion for the Provocation&Movement technique is that it provides the best performance when practiced by experienced groups.

Anyway the provocations were thrown correctly by participants and were noted in a paper board. Here is the result:

PROVOCATIONS	Provocation Method
The product has no warranty	*Exaggeration*
The technician assembles the product	*Change of logic*
The customer is our technician	*Change of logic*
The product is customized	*Negation*
Technical assistance is free forever	*Exaggeration*
The customer is happy when he phones the call center for a failure	*Negation*
There is an automatic shipment of spares	*Dream*
The customers carries the product by himself	*Change of logic*

Then the team was asked which provocation they wanted to start working with. Therefore each provocation was voted openly by everyone. The most voted provocation was then selected.

PROVOCATIONS	votes
A single number to call Customer Care over whole Europe	2
Products must have high prices	1
Products are sold in showrooms	1
The duration of the warranty is unlimited	4
Low brand product warranty lasts only 6 months	3
We will not withdraw pieces damaged by retailers	1
When there is no damage, interventions are paid by the customer	3

For the selected provocation, one of the Movement methods (also in this case, 'Extracting a principle') was chosen to direct the provocation into one feasible idea. This step and the following discussion was carried out openly with all people participating, but the facilitators were needed to remind the participants about the Movement methods.

PROVOCATION

The duration of the warranty is unlimited

MOVEMENT (*extracting a principle*)

- The product must be of high quality
- The product must "obtain" customer's trust

IDEA

The **warranty for all the products is extended up to 5 years**

The Movement step consisted in extracting a principle from the provocation 'The duration of the warranty is unlimited'. That is, participants tried to answer to the question: "Which features should a product have to be guaranteed forever? Is there any general consequence on customer's point of view?".

The common answer was that products have to be obviously of high quality, that is they must obtain customer's trust.

The following discussion concerned about some possible ideas related to providing products with unlimited warranty. At this point the group agreed that this solution wasn't practicable at all, so they suggested the idea to extend the warranty from the current two years to five years. The definition of this new idea ended the Idea Generation phase.

EVALUATION PHASE

This phase aimed to fully discuss this idea by using the Six Thinking Hats technique. In fact, the purpose of the Evaluation phase would be to assess if the idea emerged is feasible and, at least, if a few initial implementation steps can be defined. Otherwise, if the evaluation is negative, this idea would be rejected before taking into consideration a possible implementation plan.

The Six Thinking Hats technique was then presented. In order to complement the training material with a real case application of this technique, the facilitators presented also their previous experience in Indesit Company with employees and cadres. The facilitators also suggested to further

develop one of the ideas emerged in the previous sessions, that is to have an additional 'executive-level' assessment of the ideas previously discussed by their subordinates. The participants decided to use the Six Thinking Hats to assess one of their own ideas instead.

The Six Thinking Hats session therefore started. Also in this case the Evaluation phase took more time to be fully completed. At this point we provide indications on how the session was run with a few considerations from the facilitators' point of view.

Again, like the other Evaluation sessions performed inside the company, participants were given a set of six coloured cards, representing the different hats. In fact, especially working with high hierarchy level people, facilitators deemed it 'safer' to use coloured cards in spite of coloured hats because the latter ones may be perceived as ridiculous.

According to the suggestions coming from the books by E. De Bono, The Six Thinking Hats session began with the White Hat, for two main reasons:

- it is useful to collect all objective data (costs, norms, restrictions, etc. etc.) before evaluating positive and negative aspects of an idea;
- participants are more easily involved in the discussion if they start by explaining 'neutral' information;

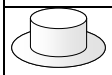
After using the White Hat, people started using the other coloured cards correctly. Facilitators decided to let people choose freely which card to use in spite of forcing all participants to wear simultaneously the same colour, because the latter approach could limit personal initiatives too much. Nevertheless, as already noticed during other creative sessions, people is naturally induced to wear the Black Hat too frequently, probably because it is easier to deny other people's suggestions than to create new ones. Despite of this, with the help of the facilitators, all the coloured cards were used in order to provide a complete analysis of the idea to be evaluated.

The session was managed with the support of a notebook and a projector in order to take note of all sentences developed by participants, subdividing them in six different slides, one for each coloured card. At several points during the discussion, the facilitators or one of the participants held the blue card and overviewed the collected sentences, by cycling through the different slides. Sometimes during the discussion people was invited to use the Green Hat in order to provide new ideas correlated to what emerged from the different slides. In particular when facilitators noticed that some colours (representing a particular point of view) were empty or weakly analyzed, they induced people to use again that coloured card.

Of course (it is a general rule) at the end of the sessions, all the participants and facilitators wore the Blue Hat and summarized the conclusions in the final Blue Hat slide.

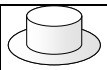
Here follows a summary of the evaluation of the "*five-years warranty*" idea with the use of the Six Thinking Hats:

Evaluation of the FIVE-YEARS WARRANTY idea with The Six Thinking Hats



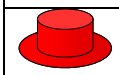
The WHITE HAT: all the analytical data (I)

- The company already aims to extend the default warranty for their products from 2 to 5 years
- There have already been some cases in Europe:
  - In Spain a company provides 5-years-warranty for the spare parts
  - In Germany a company provides 7-years-warranty for a single product (top level washing machine)
- It is a risk for the company since:
  - Average coefficient of product faultiness = 10,5% total global value (for top level products <5%)
  - Extending the warranty to 5 years would mean to increase the warranty costs of about 2,5 times (from 15 to 40 euro/product)



The WHITE HAT: all the analytical data (II)

- Problems related to warranty extension:
  - Assistance Core Business is declining (the price of household appliances has been dramatically decreasing during the last years)
  - To launch the product at competitive prices, production costs and time-to-market are reduced, often compromising the overall quality
- Problems of distribution:
  - Distribution has changed: from small resellers to large distributors
  - Large distributors have an increasing power for fixing the prices
  - In Germany some companies use their own distribution network to overtake the distributors

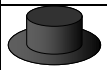


The RED HAT: emotions

- If a customer has a failure in the first month, he doesn't trust the product any more
- 5-year-warranty conveys 'trust' to the customer (retention of customer's loyalty)

The YELLOW HAT: positive aspects

- Increase of sales
- Less conflicts between customers and technicians



The BLACK HAT: what's wrong with it?

- Is the company willing to bear a cost increase?
  - This would imply a shift from a company that produces high volumes to a company that produces top level products
- Is the customer willing to pay more to have an extended warranty?
- The business of out-of-warranty assistance would disappear

The GREEN HAT: new further ideas (I)

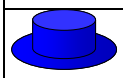
- After 5 years the customer could buy:
  - A new product at discounted price
  - A check up and further 5-year-warranty
- Some possible restrictions for the 5-year-warranty:
  - It is given only if the customer registers himself and the product (this would allow marketing initiatives)
  - Administrative fee (10, 20 euro)
- Brand differentiation:
  - Top level: warranty extension included (profits are higher)
  - Low level: warranty extension with additional fee

The GREEN HAT: new further ideas (II)

- Scenarios for distribution: need of changing of distribution system to overtake the distributor
  - For low level products: e.g.: direct sale by home shopping
  - For high level products: e.g. direct sale by own network of selling points ("boutiques")

The BLACK HAT: what's wrong with it? (II)

- Additional fee limits the efficacy of the initiative
- A very strong brand is necessary to sell directly through boutiques
- The customer of household appliances wants to choose among different alternatives: difficultly he would go to a single-brand shop/boutique



The BLUE HAT: final overview

- The idea is feasible only after coefficient of faultiness has diminished
- Differentiation according to the different brands:
  - Top level: warranty extended to all the products
  - Low level: optional extension
- The distribution systems must be reconfigured with direct sales (e.g.: own shops) for some market segments

As you can notice in the Blue Hat slide, the group suggested that the idea analyzed during the evaluation phase could be carried on with success only if other conditions would happen. First of all, participants suggested the coefficient of faultiness should be diminished. Moreover it was needed to distinguish between different brands: the warranty could be extended on all top-level products while it could be optional on value-level ones. Besides, the working group expressed the need to reconfigure the distribution system with direct sales for some market segmentation.

As concerns the application of the Six Thinking Hats methodology it can be noticed that participants correctly started wearing the White Hat and finished with the Blue one, crossing all other hats and providing several sentences according to their emotions and feelings about the idea to be evaluated.

The Black Hat in particular highlighted some problems related to the warranty extension so facilitators invited the group to wear again the Green Hat in order to provide other possible ideas to improve the starting one. In this sense people distinguished between high level products and low level ones, proposing different solutions for each category.

As general suggestion, the Six Thinking Hats proved very useful once again. Even though different opinions were discussed about the topic, at the end of the session there was a general agreement and satisfaction about the results of this session.

Other comments for the 5th and 6th session in Indesit Company

This session provided facilitators with some further indications and comments that may complement ones from previous sessions.

- As a general observation, it can be asserted that an interactive approach helps the facilitators both to create a “good” atmosphere and to have an idea of the company’s situation and of the group’s main dynamics.
- A further element of reflection is related to the hierarchic level of the participants. We observed that the higher the hierarchic level, the lower was the bent for out-of-scheme thinking. This means that the the group proposed weaker provocations and goals, remaining sometimes too “anchored” to the current procedures and roles.
- Anyway, service managers used very well the proposed logical framework to generate (with Provocation & Movement technique) and to evaluate (using the Six Thinking Hats) ideas. In particular the evaluation phase captured people’s attention providing significant results and some exploitable starting points concerning customer care improvement.

PART V:

GENERAL ISSUES AND COMMENTS FOR INDESIT COMPANY CASE STUDY

The most relevant distinction between the three groups of sessions was the participation of different people at different hierarchical level. In particular, the composition of the groups was as follows:

- Sessions 1&2 (18 people): employees in charge of the following roles:
  - "Team managers": they coordinate and control the call center operators;
  - "District Managers": they are the interface between BUCC/Merloni and the network of assistance technicians in a specific Italian region;
  - "Costumer Service Managers": they control the procedures of product/compenent substitutions and of assistance.
- Sessions 3&4 (12 people): cadres in charge of the following roles:
  - Buyers: they are responsible for the purchasing of spare parts and components;
  - Quality managers;
  - Technical managers: they are responsible of the preparation of training material and courses for the technicians and the employees and of the delivery of technical documentation.
- Sessions 5&6 (8 people): executives in charge of the following roles:
  - "Service managers": they are responsible of the BUCC for each market area (e.g.: Italy, Northern Europe, UK, etc.). They are of different nationalities (e.g.: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, etc.).

The participants were chosen according to the following criteria:

- they work for the Business Unit Consumer Care: this let to focus the activities in a specific field;
- each group was formed by people who have different roles within the unit: this let to have different views and contributions for a single problem/topic;
- each group was formed by people who knew each other before the sessions: this helped to create immediately a favorable and friendly climate;
- the group that attended the first set of sessions was formed by employees, the second group by cadres, the third one by executives (of different nationalities: Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, etc,): this settlement allowed also to draw some "qualitative" conclusions about the possible relation between the efficacy of the proposed framework and the hierarchic level of the participants.

The contents of the sessions were refined according to the feedback collected during the first sessions run in Derbi (see Derbi-Piaggio Case Study in www.createproject.net). This refinement consisted mainly in:

- inserting two new introductive presentations that actually aroused the attention of the participants providing them at the same time with concepts about creativity and innovation, enriched by many examples, useful to contextualize the topic;
- reducing the theoretical part and synthesizing the description of the techniques;

- making the presentations of the techniques be followed by practical examples and by an interaction with the participants that should be able to apply the techniques immediately. This means that, for instance, after the description of the technique of Provocation & Movement, the people who attended the session were asked to launch new provocations related to their work. Once collected and voted by the participants all the provocations, the best one was developed and the emerging idea evaluated in a second stage with the Six Thinking Hats.
- favoring the emergence of real problems that could be faced using the proposed framework and dedicating most part of the sessions for analyzing the problems, generating new ideas and assessing them, acting as facilitators.

As general observations, it can be asserted that this more interactive approach helps the facilitators both to create a "good" atmosphere and to have an idea of the company's situation and of the group main dynamics.

Another initiative that was highly appreciated by the second and third group was the presentation of the results produced during the session with the previous group: this mean that we presented to the cadres the results developed by the employees, and to the executives the ideas elaborated by the cadres. Actually, this "bottom-up" approach obtained much success and interest, since a *cross-fertilization* of ideas among different organizational levels is not so common. These presentations also helped to remove the last inhibitions. However, the groups preferred to explore their own provocations and ideas and not to resume the previous ones, because the latter ones had already been fully examined by the preceding groups.

Moreover, we noticed that the age of the participants does not influence the efficacy of the proposed framework: in fact, there were young people, supposedly more minded to adopt new approaches, that found difficulties to use properly the techniques and remained tied down to the traditional and consolidated way of thinking. On the other side, many elderly participants, usually more "conservative" according to the common sense, demonstrated an unexpected ability to refuse the conventional way of tackling problems and to use the so-called "lateral thinking".

A further element of reflection is related to the hierarchic level of the participants: each of the three groups was composed by people of the same level (1st group: employees; 2nd: cadres; 3rd: executives). We observed that the higher the hierarchic level, the lower the capacity (availability) of reasoning out of the conventional schemes. This means that the first group launched very disruptive new ideas and use properly the techniques, while the third group proposed quite weak goals, remaining sometimes too "anchored" to the current procedures and roles.

As said before, we tested the framework with groups that were different also for the number of the participants: the first was composed by about 18 people, the second one by 12, while the third one by 8. We did not observe major differences concerning the internal dynamics: likely the fact that the participants knew each other before the sessions helped to generate immediately a good and collaborative environment and to easily overtake inhibitions.

We found very useful to define, at the end of the sessions, a funny and captivating slogan that in one sentence could sum up the results achieved during the meetings: this trick helped the participants to remember the work done. Moreover, at the end of the sessions the participants were provided with the training material and the results developed during the sessions and with a little gift: a book on creativity (usually "Six Thinking Hats" by E. De Bono) "customized" with the slogan chosen for the sessions. This was really appreciated by the attendants and favored also an internal dissemination.

Compressing the sessions in two days, obviously, limited the possibility of testing all the techniques and of collecting a relevant amount of data (e.g.: internal and external mapping) usable for the idea

generation and evaluation phases, but at the same time did not reduce the efficacy of the framework that demonstrated to be quite flexible and adaptive.

During these sessions, we used a lot the technique of Provocation & Movement, as it is very easy and quick. Moreover, the people showed to appreciate the fact of launching provocations and then to vote them in order to choose the most interesting or popular one. Launching provocations generated many new ideas and helps to form an outstretched climate, that is necessary for a good creative session. It was also useful, after choosing the provocation to be analyzed, to support the "movement" phase by using the White Hat immediately after, that is to collect information in order to contextualize better the topic.

Beside this, it was possible to notice a sort of "spill over" effect as concerns idea generation: in fact, starting the evaluation of a new idea, this was explored and finally rejected, but the considerations made about the rejected idea allowed to find out a new idea that was then developed and successfully assessed.

Particular attention must be paid by the facilitator when applying the technique of "Six Thinking Hats" in order to control the use of the Black Hat that is commonly the easiest to use: an abuse of this hat could limit the efficacy of the discussion and inhibit the creation of new ideas and new alternatives.

Finally, it was very useful to support the discussion by projecting in real time on a screen all the ideas and information raising from the interaction, specifying also the person who proposed it, in order to have a clear and complete picture of all the related issues.

Conclusions

The sessions in Indesit Company let to point out some possible considerations:

- The hierarchic level, differently from the age, seems to influence the capacity/availability of accepting the use of unconventional approaches such as "lateral thinking";
- The discussion of even a "bad" idea can produce a "spill-over" effect that generates new good ideas;
- The mutual knowledge of the participants helps the settlement of a good climate and therefore the success of a creative session;
- The participants appreciated to receive a "souvenir" (i.e.: book on creativity) personalized with the slogan (i.e.: a funny and captivating sentence) of the sessions: this helps also the internal dissemination;
- "Provocation & Movement" combined with "Six Thinking Hats" is very effective: the facilitator should in case only limit the use of the Black Hat and enforce the rotation of hats for single-minded participants;

Short sessions (2 days) limit the possibility of using all the techniques, but however give good results as concerns idea generation and assessment