



GABRIELE HILBERG:



Producing Creative Solutions Under Pressure

Moments of sudden inspiration typically occur when you are *not thinking* about the problem. In the shower or at the gym, a solution can come seemingly out of nowhere. Yet, some people frequently have brilliant, perception-altering ideas and seem to be able to rely on their ability to produce cognitive leaps. How do they do that?

Paradoxically, too much thinking and analysis can drive you even further into paralysis. Under pressure, people tend to think in established mental concepts and familiar categories they are comfortable with. The solutions are most likely a reflection of what has worked in the past. How do you avoid imposing old frameworks on present realities? How do you examine your assumptions and go beyond your perceptions of the problem? How do you know whether you are looking at the right problem? How do you come up with a solution when two parties are locked in a total stalemate?

Our best thinking got us here – why do you think that more thinking will bring the solution?

–David Bohm

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How to stop Thinking

In August of 2005, we were faced with exactly this kind of situation. A colleague and I had submitted a proposal for a speaking engagement about the “Quantum Process” at the Stanford Linear Accelerator, Stanford University. Our excitement over the acceptance of the talk quickly turned into a frenzy of questions. How should we present the material to the scientists? How much detail should we give about the scientific explanation behind the approach? Would they be open to the application of quantum mechanics at the macroscopic level? How could we get all that information covered in the time available? We were caught up in a flurry of rewriting notes and researching textbooks in preparation for the presentation.

Suddenly, we hit on the idea—why not use the Quantum Process to solve this problem? We agreed to step into the future reality of the car trip *back from* our presentation.

“Wasn’t it a great idea to start the talk with a demonstration?” The words flew out of my mouth the instant we stood in our virtual future.

Nothing had prepared me for this idea—there had been no hint that I was even thinking about it. Yet, we both know immediately that this was the answer we had been looking for.

This kind of sudden outburst is an intuitive flash, a spontaneous creative expression that is generated by something other than the rational mind. An intuitive flash is accompanied by an instant recognition that the solution will work. You can sense the rightness in a direct, palpable way. This sudden insight shifts you out of your existing cognitive framework and allows you to see the problem from a new perspective. In other words, your brain activity shifts to the right hemisphere, the center for creative, holographic processing of ideas and images, and gives you a snapshot of a possible outcome for the problem. Though you might not immediately find the right language to exactly describe your intuitive impressions, you now have a complete picture to work with. Had you limited your thinking to the left hemisphere of the brain, which controls reason, logic, and deduction, you would have generated only solutions based on past experiences and familiar frameworks.

After studying the conditions under which we typically experience these blinding flashes of the obvious, this Quantum Process was designed to replicate those conditions and to produce innovative solutions—in the office and on schedule. Think about what could be possible if you didn’t have to wait for happy accidents in the shower or at the gym!

*The intuitive mind is a sacred gift,
The rational mind is a faithful servant.
We have created a society that honors the servant
And has forgotten the gift.*

–Albert Einstein

Case Study

My client Katherine, a director of a City Team in Silicon Valley, was exasperated with her administrative staff. After a recent reorganization, her eight team members were up in arms about the new division of the workload. Frustrations had mounted over the past three weeks, and she was considering moving several staff members to different departments.

After she described the situation, I asked Katherine to step with me across the room into a future time, when the problem was solved and she was happy with the outcome. Standing in the future and looking back to see herself dismayed with the rebellious staff, she was able to relax and open her mind to seeing the situation from a new perspective. It was easy for Katherine to resolve the problem by generating this “virtual hindsight”. As she put it:

Looking at the situation from the future, I suddenly started laughing when I realized that the “I” was the source of the problem! I went back to my group and shared with them what I had seen, and asked if they were willing to wipe the slate clean and approach the situation anew. They enthusiastically agreed and we are now in the process of building a powerful team where everyone contributes and feels free to voice their thoughts.

Katherine was able to access her own creative, intuitive side to produce the needed breakthrough in a minimal amount of time. She was amazed that only 30 minutes prior to working the Quantum Process she had felt frustrated, stressed, and out of options. It was particularly inspiring to her that she had discovered the solution for herself, which strengthened her trust in her own creative potential and capacity to be a good manager.

Success often requires that you step outside of your habitual ways of thinking and reacting. The Quantum Process enables you to recognize your assumptions and beliefs, which underlie your perception of the problem. Once these assumptions are made transparent, you will be in a better position to resolve problems or conflicts.

Katherine resolved her issues quickly because she was willing to consider that she had been wrong. This does not come easily for many people in business. Once people have established their position and have a personal investment in being right about an issue, it is extremely difficult to find innovative solutions to resolve the conflict. To be creative and innovative, you cannot at the same time be convinced that you already know the answer.

The successful use of the Quantum Process hinges on the willingness of the individuals to consider the possibility that their truth is only a personal, biased perception. Here, a basic understanding of the quantum paradigm allows you to see your own view of reality for what it truly is: your subjective experience of truth. This understanding of subjective truth is at the core of the Quantum paradigm.

Perceptions versus Objective Reality

We are living during a great paradigm shift from the Newtonian worldview to the quantum perspective of the nature of reality. This shift has drastically changed the foundation of science over the past 80 years, and quantum mechanics has revolutionized technology and innovation. Scientists, after initial disbelief and struggle, are now embracing the shift and going beyond it. Quantum mechanics has taught us a new way of interpreting the world around us.

We are learning that the world shows up for each of us as we expect it to. When scientists discovered that if you look at light as a wave, you will see light as a wave function, and when you look at light as particles, you will observe light as a function of particles, this new understanding defied our old belief in an objective reality as separate from and outside of ourselves. We can no longer deny that our reality is subjective. This paradigm shift is now infiltrating our perception of reality in other segments of our lives, as it has far-reaching implications in fields such as medicine, law, and business.

In everyday living, this shift becomes evident when we deal with the question: What is really happening here? From the Newtonian point of view, you would answer the question by looking for the objective, measurable reality based on data and a linear reasoning process. This approach is rooted in the belief that reality exists independent and outside of you and can be described by standardized methods of measurements.

Quantum mechanics showed us that the observer influences the observed outcome. What was first discovered on a microscopic level has been found to be true on the macroscopic level, also. The reality

we perceive depends upon our personal lens of perception – which makes reality highly subjective.

We deceive ourselves by assuming that our view represents truth when it is really just an interpretation, a lens through which we choose to see the world.

–Loehr/Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement*

Once a problem begins to fester, it becomes more and more difficult to recognize your own assumptions and beliefs about an issue. Although you attempt to be objective, your perception of the problem is highly affected by your conscious and non-conscious beliefs about the origin and nature of the problem.

In vertical time, all possibilities occur simultaneously. Your thoughts are attractors, which collapse the field and generate the reality you perceive. The Quantum Process challenges you to question your assumption that your view is accurate. It allows you to recognize those false, often unconscious beliefs and assumptions that keep you from resolving the problem.

Case Study

My client Paul, a pioneer and celebrated author in the field of software engineering, was referred to me by his brother. According to the brother's description, Paul had moped around for months, tinkering all day long with model airplanes and leaving him to run their business single-handedly.

Paul wanted me to know that building model airplanes was his great hobby, the thing that gave him the greatest pleasure. But it wasn't until I began probing about the time years before, when his first and second book had come out, that his eyes lit up and he became alive and animated. Paul told me that he had a third book in his head, but that he could see no chance of it ever being accepted by his peers in the industry.

He gave a lengthy and detailed explanation of why investors and leaders in the industry would reject his innovative ideas based on their inability to face the end of an area. Paul went on to say that he would be hit with great resistance because he did not have a college degree and had taught himself everything he knew in his field. As an aside, he mentioned that, several years ago, Bill Gates had personally asked him to join Microsoft after purchasing one of Paul's software products.

I listened intently and, when he paused, I said, "This is a very

fascinating analysis of your dilemma. I almost started to believe your story." Paul was startled for a moment—and then burst out in a roaring laughter. "You got me, I am telling my old story again. The amazing thing is that I really believe that it is true when I tell it to myself!" We were off to a good start.

Paul's problem was that of being the expert. Fortunately, he was willing to consider that at the brink of publicly expressing his newly forming ideas, he experienced recurring attacks of old low self-esteem based on his being a high school drop-out. What was harder for him to see was that his view of venture capital investors and industry leaders could also be a biased perception.

The most insidious belief is that we see reality as it really is.

Paul described two incidences in the recent past when venture capital investors had been unwilling to consider his new concept because they lacked the courage to see new horizons. As a result of these experiences, he had given up and thrown himself into building his model airplanes.

"You took your marbles and went home," I observed.

My analogy brought a big grin to Paul's face. "Well, they just don't get it that you can be smart without a degree."

It became obvious that this deep-seated belief kept Paul stuck in the perception that he and his innovative concepts would be rejected. He looked dismayed and extremely frustrated.

I asked Paul to step with me across the room and into a future time, when his third book had been written and was very well received. I asked him to look back at himself, in the "present," feeling frustrated and stuck. He took a quick glance at his miserable self and spouted: "He acts like a pompous S.O.B. and, on top of it, he is impressed by his own pity party." We both burst into laughter—I could have not said it better!

I challenged him to look at the benefits he was getting from holding on to his negative view of the situation. He squirmed a bit, but then offered that he was really afraid of being wrong about his new ideas. He began to see that it was very convenient to see possible investors and supporters as incapable of understanding his creative ideas, because it got him off the hook in terms of developing and testing his ideas further.

"He is acting overly confident and boasting because he's covering up his fear that his new concepts might belong in the garbage," Paul realized. "And, he is really going to piss people off with his attitude before they are ready to get it."

He felt drained and exhilarated at the same time; yet when he returned to the present, he was changed.

"It is amazing what I can see about myself from over there—maybe there is hope for me and my project. My big ego is really preventing me from moving ahead."

Within one hour Paul had shifted his perception and gone from seeing an external problem to recognizing that his block was really internal. He felt renewed energy and hope when he saw his old construct of the problem crumbling, and was empowered by his more truthful view of the situation.

Again and again, I am fascinated by how boldly my clients confront their core issues when standing in the future and looking back. It seems particularly important that they speak to themselves in a language that hits the mark in a personal way.

Righteousness versus Resolution

There is nothing more delicious than being right. But while there are times when you *are* right, self-righteousness might be exactly what gets in the way of solving your problem. A problem always exists between two or more people. A win/lose solution cannot bring a lasting resolution to any conflict, because it invites retaliation and further conflict. You might win the battle, but you will have lost the probability for future cooperation.

There are also times when you are convinced that you are right, but in actuality you have misinterpreted information or based your opinion on assumptions that left out relevant data. The danger of expertise lies in the very knowledge that makes you an authority, as your confidence in your particular perspective can blind you to other relevant data.

More often, because we have advanced to an expert status in one area, we falsely assume or are given authority and expertise in other areas. A classic example is Margaret Mead, who was an outstanding and highly accomplished anthropologist. When she became a Representative in the English Parliament, her speeches were so absolutely horrible that people frequently left the room when she spoke.

So, how can you be sure that you know what is right and what is wrong?

Within the Newtonian paradigm, there is assumed to be one right answer, which seemingly exists independent and separate from you out there in the world. This creates the illusion that one

right answer can be found. Whoever finds that answer is the winner.

Within the Quantum paradigm, however, the “right” answer is understood to be a subjective interpretation of truth as seen through your personal lens of perception. While your answer is right from your point of view, another right answer also exists from a different perspective. Both answers are subjectively correct.

It is easy to lose this new Quantum understanding in the middle of a conflict, when you are strongly attached to the belief that you are right. People confuse the intensity of their feelings with truth; the more strongly we feel that we are right, the more we think our belief is true.

Feelings don't tell you the truth; feelings only tell you what you feel.

Often, by the time individuals come to work with the Quantum Process, they are beyond their attachment to being right. Typically, the struggle and conflict has brought them so much frustration and suffering that they are willing to find a solution and get on with life. When working with a business team or department, however, it is harder to assess how willing individuals are to let go of being right. In these situations, people can tend to give lip service to the idea of finding a win/win solution, while subconsciously holding on to their need to be right.

Before engaging a team in the Quantum Process, I challenge people to question their assumptions that their own view is accurate and contrary views are wrong and biased. I show the team several video clips that were originally used in a Harvard study on Inattentive Blindness. The team members are instructed to pay attention to specific activities in the video clips. The more their attention is focused on the given task, the less capable they are of noticing the unexpected object in each of the videos. This creates a direct, personal experience of being blind to what is in front of them. And worse, they discover that trying harder does not increase the odds of seeing things more quickly the next time.

This is often a very surprising and unsettling experience, particularly for intelligent, successful individuals who are unaccustomed to questioning their perceptions. However, this moment of bewilderment can open a door and allow team members to consider the possibility that they have been wrong or have missed important cues in the problem at hand.

When we translate the team's experiences to the business environment, it becomes obvious that the longer we struggle with a problem the less capable we are of noticing those unexpected elements that could point us to a creative solution. This recognition sets the stage for a successful outcome in working with the Quantum Process.

Business Applications of the Quantum Process

The Quantum Process is highly effective in any situation in which hard work, commitment, and determination have not resolved a critical issue. When you have become frustrated, jaded, or cynical and it is increasingly difficult to approach the topic of discussion, the Quantum Process offers you a tool to generate new possibilities, options, and avenues to success within a short period of time.

If you keep doing what you have been doing, you'll keep getting what you've been getting.

Success in business is ensured when the assumptions you make about business strategies, innovative concepts, and customers are accurate. However, if your assumptions and beliefs are off the mark, no amount of effort, determination, or positive spin will bring you the desired outcome.

The Quantum Process is a practical tool that helps you to challenge yourself and your team to fundamentally rethink your framework and concepts. By accessing your gut instincts and verbalizing your intuitive hunches, you tap into intelligence beyond the rational, analytic mind. This allows you to generate cognitive leaps, to think outside the box, and to come up with creative, innovative solutions—even under extreme pressures.

The Quantum Process helps you to resolve critical, long-standing business issues, re-focus your energy, and drastically improve your performance in the following areas:

- Strategic Thinking and Re-Evaluating Business Strategies
- Interpersonal Conflict Resolution and Team Building
- Reorganization and Merger of Cultures
- Customer Service and Quality Assurance
- Product Development and Trouble Shooting
- Mediation and Legal Stalemates

The Quantum Process enables you to honestly face difficult issues and look beneath the surface. It allows you to develop your capacity to question your perceptions and generate solutions that really work—which gives you the ultimate business advantage.

You and I are participating in the most exciting global paradigm shift since medieval times—equal to or larger in proportion than the discovery that the world is round and not flat. Quantum physics, with its shift toward a fundamentally different way of understanding the nature of reality, has opened the doors

to rethinking separation and interconnectedness at all levels of humanity.

We have exhausted our past concepts and are outgrowing familiar methodologies and approaches to life. We are beginning to sense the death of an era. Tweaking the old ways of thinking will not work because, as Einstein proclaimed, we cannot solve problems by way of the same level of thinking that created them.

We stand today at the same revolutionary brink at which scientists found themselves over 80 years ago. At that time, the new understanding of reality encountered major opposition and turmoil rocked the scientific communities. Even Einstein struggled with and in the end resisted the conclusions of his own scientific breakthroughs. Yet the scientists have come back from the abyss and told us that the new ways of thinking about interconnectedness have opened up hopeful horizons and vistas.

What might be possible if we applied quantum thinking in everyday life? How would such a shift change our world? I believe that our collective future on this planet depends upon our ability to see the world through innovative and creative eyes. We need to re-think our approach to local and global challenges. We need to invent new concepts and processes outside of the existing frameworks of the past. We need to transform our thinking and ourselves. In order to deal with the inescapable global challenges we now face, we must learn to go beyond our linear, analytic mind and stop worshipping rational thinking as the highest form of intelligence. We have outgrown the Newtonian paradigm of seeing things as separate and isolated.

Through Quantum thinking, we can transform our views and perceptions to see the interconnectedness of all beings and events. This also means that we must transform our view of who we are as individuals by taking a fresh look at our ego-based perceptions of separation and isolation and exploring beyond the linear developmental model of psychological growth, personality, and identity. This is not a challenge for the faint of heart, but if we are to ride the paradigm shift already underway and find workable solutions to the problems we face as businesspeople and members of the human race, then we must rise to the occasion. If we can re-vision our personal realities, then we can change the way we do business; and if we can change the way we do business, then the shift will ripple into all of our potential future realities.