The Concept Garden Training Seminar

Learning

The Concept Garden

Prepare	- Study the problem
Plant	- Generate ideas
Thin	- Select the most interesting ideas
Grow	- Build ideas into concepts
Harvest	- Record the Final Concept

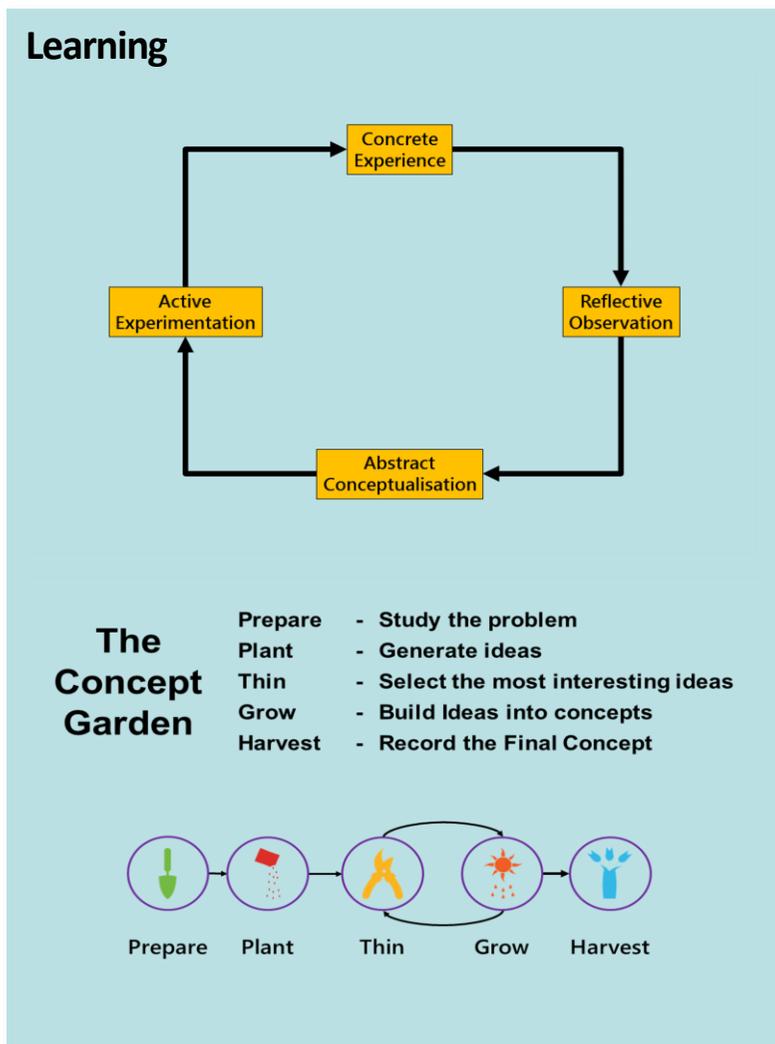Prepare Plant Thin Grow Harvest

Training Objectives:

- To create an awareness for participants of the necessity of a systematic and professional approach to problem solving
- To introduce an effective framework for going from problem to concept for implementation using appropriate tools & methods.
- To experience and practice the application of different tools & methods.

Example Agenda

Day 1	Day 2
Introduction	Thin
The Concept Garden	*Simple Matrix*
Focus	*Pairwise Comparison*
Prepare	Grow
Objective Tree	*3 Hats*
Problem Space	*Virtual Implementation*
Selection Criteria	Harvest
Plant	*Concept Memo*
Brainwriting	*DOIT*
SCAMPER	

For more information,
contact Billy Grierson

billy@perthinnovation.com

billy@perthinnovation.com

Concept Garden

When we have a problem we often just jump in, find an idea and then assume that the problem is solved. This is like deciding we want to grow something, taking one seed, planting it and hoping that we will get something to harvest. The Concept Garden is a set of tools and techniques to help with the different stages of problem solving.

	Define the problem	Generate ideas	Select the options	Build the idea	Implement the concept
	Preparation	Planting	Thinning	Growing	Harvesting
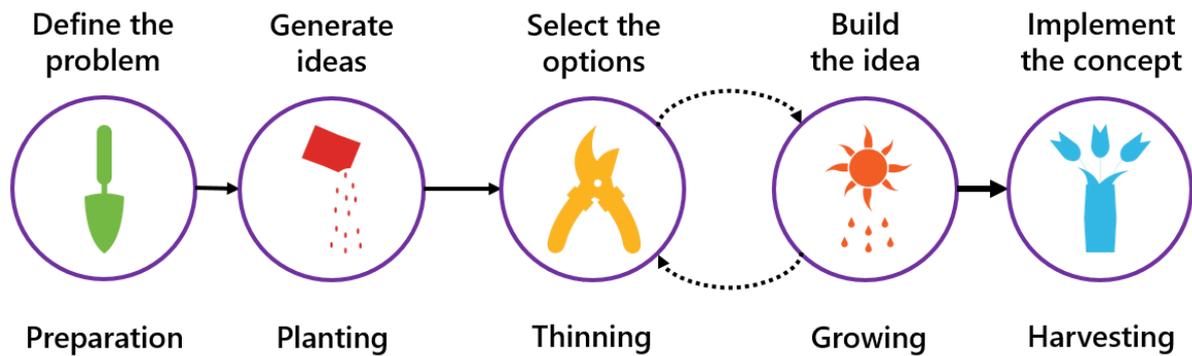
There are tools to study the problem (prepare the ground), generate ideas (plant the seeds), select he preferred options (thin the seedlings), build the ideas (grow the plants) and record the final concept (harvest the fruit).

	Preparation: When gardening we need to prepare the ground. Similarly, with problem solving we need to prepare before we start trying to generate solution ideas. We need to understand the problem, why we want to solve it and what the solution has to deliver. The Concept Garden give us a set of tools that support us in doing this preparation work.
	Planting: In the garden, if we want to grow something we need to plant some seeds. Similarly, in problem solving, we need to find some initial ideas that we can grow into solutions. When we plant seeds in the garden we will usually plant many more than we will need and it is the same in problem solving. We need to generate many more ideas than we will need. The Concept Garden gives us some ideation tools that will help us to come up with a lot of ideas.
	Thinning: Because we have planted more seeds than we will need, once they start growing we will need to "thin-out" the plants to give the remainder room to grow. With problem solving we need to remove the weakest ideas so that we can focus on the strongest – the ones most likely to lead to a viable solution. Like in gardening, this is done in stages. As the plants or ideas grow, we need to carry out more thinning. The Concept Garden provides tools that allow us to do this thinning in a systematic, progressive manner.
	Growing: Once the plants have started to grow, we cannot just leave them to get on with it. There are many challenges that they will face and we must support them in growing by weeding, watering and possibly pruning. Similarly, with problem solving, we need to nurture and look after our ideas as we try to grow them into concepts for a solution. The Concept Garden provides tools to help us to do this, gradually introducing stronger challenge and more detail, so that the idea becomes stronger and more likely to give a long-term solution to the problem.
	Harvesting: Once the plants have grown and are able to provide us with what we need (fruit, vegetables, flowers etc.) we need to harvest them and present them in such a way that other people will want to have them. The same applies to problem solving. It doesn't matter how strong the solution concept is, if we cannot persuade other people that it should be implemented, then it will not solve our problem. The Concept Garden has tools that help us to record and present the solution concepts in a way that will make it easier for us to present them to other people.

Tools covered in the seminar

Tool	Description
Objective Tree	What is your objective? If there are 8 people, we will probably get 12 different answers to this question. The Objective Tree tool looks at how these different objectives relate to each other and allows us to decide which are in the scope of the current exercise.
Problem Space	What do you know about the situation? This is not always simple to answer. The Problem Space tool leads us through a series of questions designed to tease out what we know and what we need to find out.
Selection Criteria	How do we decide which ideas are worth working on and which should be discarded? This tool will help us to identify how we will judge the utility of ideas after they have been generated.
Brainwriting	This is modification of the well-known Brainstorming technique. It is designed to ensure that all team members can participate. We will look at when it is useful and how to get the best results.
SCAMPER	How can we get more "off the wall" ideas? SCAMPER is a tool that leads to more off-the-wall ideas than Brainwriting but staying within the constraints of our business.
Simple Matrix	How do we decide which ideas put further effort into? Simple Matrix gives us a way to quickly classify a large number of ideas so that a smaller group can be selected for further study.
Pairwise Comparison	How do we prioritise the key ideas to decide which to work on first? If we only have a few options (10 or less) then Simple Matrix is more than we need. This tool gives a very effective way to prioritise smaller groups of options.
3 Hats	How do we turn an idea into a potential solution to our problem? The 3 Hats technique allows us to work on an idea and modify it to remove any negatives without losing the benefits.
Virtual Implementation	What will happen if we implement this idea? By asking this question, and looking at different time scales, Virtual Implementation can help us to spot, and deal with, weaknesses in the final concept.
Concept Memo	How do we convince other people that our final concept is worth implementing? Concept Memo is a simple technique for recording the final concept in such a way that the most important questions are answered.
DOIT	How can we make sure that our action plan is implemented? While there are no guarantees that actions will get completed, this simple tools helps to design an action plan in such a way that we maximise the chances that it will.

Dr Billy Grierson   Perth Innovation   billy@perthinnovation.com