# Factory floor Reporting constructively

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**Handout**

**Self-Assessment:**

**Explore your creative potential!**



Creativity is more complex than commonly thought. Journalists should be creative on different levels. The following questionnaire helps you to find out where your strengths and weaknesses are and identify the abilities you should develop further.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Not really | Sometimes | Often | Always |
| **Am I able to think outside of the box?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to formulate new and relevant questions?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to identify problems?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to scrutinize information from all sides and take different perspectives?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to think associatively?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to develop original ideas?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to make analogies?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to cut through complex issues and to describe / visualize them?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to develop research strategies, to find new angles, identify hindrances?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to summarize facts in a coherent manner?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to combine and interpret facts, to build theories?** |  |  |  |  |
| **Am I able to think in pictures – to combine information with pictures?** |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **How do I solve a problem?** | |
|  | Not worry about the problem |
|  | Focus on only one aspect of the problem |
|  | Resolving the problem by taking it from several sides in an open, unsystematic and experimental way |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **When someone asks me to do something creative together,** | |
|  | I prefer to take my time and finally do something alone |
|  | I am happy to have company and maybe we can do something interesting |
|  | I am very excited and think already about how the person's skills will complement mine |
|  | Other |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **When something unexpected (e.g., disturbance, change, correction**  **of the task/briefing) happens in the creative process** | |
|  | I am totally thrown off and can't quickly find another way to make it work |
|  | I did not expect this, but I continue without allowing myself to be irritated any further |
|  | I think about following the new impulse and pursuing several paths. That can't hurt after all. |

**Some tips:**

**Think outside of the box:**

Analyze the mainstream public opinion and question it. Could things be seen differently?

**Formulate new and relevant questions:**

Take the perspective of your audience. Which questions could be relevant for them? Which information could be useful for them? And do they all have the same perspective?

**Identify problems:**

Look behind what is obvious and always stay critical. Analyze messages and question their meaning.

**Scrutinize information from all sides:**

Ask who is affected, who is involved and try to understand in which way and what that means. Zoom in and look at the bigger picture.

**Develop original ideas:**

The best way to develop original ideas is to produce many ideas. It is a wrong perception that you might suddenly come up with the one and only phantastic idea. Prominent creative people in history have simply been very productive – and only a small part of their ideas was brilliant, most of them were mediocre or unusable.

An idea is original when it differs from usual ways of thinking. You look at a well-known topic from a different perspective. Or you develop a topic further – in a new direction.

**Think associatively:**

You can develop this ability by practicing associative thinking more often, for instance by using the mind mapping method for exploring your topic. This also helps to improve your visual thinking.

**Cut through complex issues and describe / visualize them:**

Most topics that journalists must deal with are extremely complex, especially in a globalized world. Journalists aren’t full experts in the fields of reporting, even though many have acquired some special knowledge, for instance in economic or environmental topics. Their knowledge is rarely so deep that they entirely oversee a complex topic. Often, when there is a solution to one problem, two new problems pop up because everything is so connected.

To be a journalist does not mean to become an expert. But becoming a creative journalist means developing an idea of how different factors intertwine and ask relevant and well targeted questions.

**Develop research strategies, to find new angles, identify hindrances:**

Research takes place by more than 50% in your mind. Who could have an interest in handing over certain information to you. How should you approach a potential informant? What type of questions should you ask at what stage of your research process? You should develop a strategic approach to your information sources.

While doing research, you should constantly develop new ideas to find new angles for your research.

**Summarize facts in a coherent manner:**

To produce a proper report, you must assemble in a coherent way all the information you gathered. It often helps to visualize the different bits and pieces of your research results and how they relate to each other.

**Combine and interpret facts, build theories**:

As a journalist you collect facts, combine them with information that you already have, interpret facts. Then you build theories. Sometimes, this is done unconsciously but as a creative journalist you should always be aware of your assumptions. The theories then need to be vetted before any information can be assembled to tell new stories.

**Think in pictures – to combine information with pictures:**

While the left hemisphere of our brain is responsible for logical and structured thinking and linguistic memory, our right hemisphere stands for emotion and fantasy. Journalists should constantly develop their ability to link information to pictures. Verbal images enable media users to get easier access to information, they emotionalize facts and activate spatial imagination. Under time pressure, journalists are often not very creative in their wording and chose frequently used phrases. Creative journalists don’t rely on their first ideas but search further.