

Penyampai : TAN SRI DATO SERI AHMAD SARJI BIN ABDUL HAMID  
Tajuk : THE SEMINAR ON LATERAL THINKING: MINDSET CHANGE TOWARDS CREATIVE LEADERSHIP  
Lokasi : INTAN BUKIT KIARA, KUALA LUMPUR  
Tarikh : 25-07-1996

1. I am indeed pleased to accept the invitation of INTAN as the organiser to officially inaugurate this seminar on Lateral Thinking: Changing the Mindset Towards Creative Leadership. Dr. Edward de Bono originated and popularized the concept and practice of "lateral thinking". He has introduced yet another interesting concept called "surpetition", a concept which calls for organizations to think and go beyond competition. I find his arguments for this concept persuasive and I believe, he will elaborate on this concept in his presentation today.

2. The Government's decision to go for ISO 9000 certification for the whole public service is a prime example of our resolve in the pursuit of excellence. We have also experimented, adapted and adopted other concepts such as process re-engineering, learning organizations, core competencies and benchmarking over and above Total Quality Management (TQM). Judging by our record of responsiveness, we are ready to learn and experiment with Dr. Edward de Bono's concept of "supertition".

But I am sure Dr. de Bono will agree with me, may be even more, that to derive the full benefits of all these new concepts and practices of management, the role of leadership is very critical. "Leadership factor", particularly in the context of Malaysia assumes greater significance as we have pegged the performance of our organizations to that of world class standards.

3. Unlike earlier leaders who had to begin from scratch, the new generation leaders are starting from a platform of success. Earlier heads of departments had to struggle in their efforts to institute administrative reforms and management improvements. Present heads of departments are entrusted with greater and more complex challenges imposed by Vision 2020 imperatives. We must put on our various thinking hats to think laterally and come up with creative ideas to tackling these challenges. Being creative, as the authorities on creativity would say, is in all of us. Creativity is an inborn human faculty, one that can be cultivated and nurtured. The unfortunate thing is that we have tended to suppress creativity by fearing change and finding solace in conventional preoccupations. Creativity, which is the ability to generate novel responses to problems and challenges, is a basic human ability. It is fallacious to think that creativity is the domain of only a few individuals. This misconception must be destroyed once and for all. Each of us must acknowledge that we have this in-born skill and that it can be nurtured. A pre-requisite to the nurturing of the latent creativity in each of us is the identification of those factors which inhibit creativity. These can be as follows: Strong Views : Having a strong view in something not only limits our response options, but causes us to limit the way in which we perceive and process information from the outside world. We may 'filter out' information which contradicts our view, and end up in our own (reality tunnel), in which we remain unaware of much that occurs in front of our very eyes. A strong ego identity with a particular view further exacerbates this problem. It can lead us to aggressively defend the view to the detriment of our creativity.

Routines : Routines or set ways of performing tasks have their uses, but allowing them to become too entrenched in one's life causes one to limit the range of responses available and can lead to the development of the anathema of creativity, 'the bureaucratic mind'.

Fear : Fear of self expression and of the judgement of others can severely limit one's creativity.

Stress : High levels of stress drain one's energy and stifle creativity.

Self Criticism : Negative thinking and self criticism are also limiting factors of an individual's creativity.

From the above inhibiting factors , we must identify those which are affecting us and actively work towards minimising their adverse influence. In addition to this process of identifying and minimising the influence of the creativity limiting factors in us, we must also embark on an aggressive, pro-active

programme of actively enhancing the creative impulse in us.

4. It is for this reason we have invited such prominent speakers like Dr. Edward de Bono to help in making us skilled in bringing out creative talents to the forefront. I take this opportunity to thank Dr. Edward de Bono for consenting to be with us and wish you a fruitful experience listening to his thoughts. With that, I officially open the seminar.