

## **LS 138**

### **Creative Problem Solving and Decision-making**

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#### **A. Rationale**

Competence is an important job requirement in today's global economy. It is however not enough because requirements for specific jobs are constantly changing with new technologies and new markets. Adaptability to new job and environmental requirements is also necessary. The Ateneo Center for Organizational Research and Development (CORD) and some in-house corporate studies show that corporations look for these abilities: life-long learning, critical thinking and creative problem solving among its managers. But recruits with these qualifications are short in supply because of traditional stress on rote learning in most schools. This course will provide lectures, exercises and fieldwork that will help students live curious and develop creative problem solving skills necessary not only for careers in big corporations but also for in starting businesses.

#### **B. Objectives:**

##### **The end of the course, the student should be able to:**

1. Exhibit passion in scanning the environment.
2. Diagnose individual problem solving and decision-making style.
3. Identify and articulate problems clearly.
4. Analyze problems using a multi-stakeholder and cross-functional approach.
5. Generate new ideas individually and with groups to arrive at decisions and solutions.
6. Create a business proposal.

#### **C. Outline**

##### **I. Laying the Ground**

A. Why this course? Methodology. Approach, Requirements.

B. What is Problem-Solving and Decision-making

C. Wonder! Notice, Explore

Exercises

Stop Look and Listen

What's going On???? Cast your net wide

**Group Work 1: What's going on, what are the latest trends**

Group 1:

Newest orgs in the Ateneo; most exciting, innovative org

Group 2

Art Galleries

Rizal Library

Group 3:

Java Wireless

Business Resource Center (business incubator)

Group 4:

Ateneo Innovation Center

?????

for each of the Reports

## II. Learning Approaches

### Class Presentations

- A. What Kind of a Learner are You? How do we open ourselves to environment?  
Self-diagnosis—strengths; weaknesses
- B. Whole-Brain Techniques  
Left and Right Brains  
Putting them Together: Techniques  
Exercises
- C. Systems Thinking

### **Individual Work 1: On Systems Thinking**

## III. Problem Identification

- A. What is a Problem  
Topic from first session: What is problem-solving and decision-making;  
What is my usual approach to a problem
- B. Mess Finding  
Articulating Problems  
Exercises

### **Individual Work 2 : Philippine Airlines: What is its Problem**

## IV. Problem Solving Technique: A Model

- A. The Model  
What is the mess

What are the Facts  
What is or are the problems  
Who are the Stakeholders  
What are the acceptable solutions  
What is the decision?

**Group Work 2: Robinson's East and PAL: Problem and Solutions**  
**Individual work 3: Abusive Customer**

V. Creativity and Innovation

Class Presentations

- A. What is Creativity?
  - Myths about creativity
  - Components of Creativity
- B. What Is Innovation
  - Kinds of Innovations
  - Examples of Best Practices

V. Generating ideas

- A. What are the Sources of Ideas?
  - New Knowledge
  - Customers
  - Lead Users

**Group Work 3: Sell Me**  
**Individual Work 4: Smart and Globe**

VI. Working with Groups

Class Presentations

- A. Generating Ideas from a Group
- B. Characteristics of Creative Groups
- C. Creativity and Cultural Contexts: Disruptive Innovations and "Copying" innovations
- D. Tips on Motivation
  - Optional
- E. Handling Conflicts and Difficult People

**Group Work 4: Toyota and Apple**

VIII. Will it Fly? Evaluating the Good Idea

Class Presentations

## **Final Exam: A Business Proposal**

### **IV. Course Methodology**

The course will combine the lecture, group work and workshop methods. Lectures will introduce topics but skills training for creative problem solving and decision-making will be through analysis of REAL problems and issues. The course will take the student out to the field and use many cases for practice in problem solving and decision-making. The course will also require students to constantly be on the look out creative initiatives, in the local, regional and international (particularly business) environments, which will be analyzed in class.

### **V. Course Requirements**

A. Group Work (4)	
1. What's going on out there: Ateneo	10%
2. Problem Solving: PAL and Robinsons's East	10%
3. Sell Me	10%
4. Innovations: Apple/Toyota	10%
B. Individual Work	
1. Systems Thinking	10%
2. What is the Problem?	10%
3. Case Study: Abusive customer	10 %
4. Smart and Globe	10%
C. Final Group Project: A Proposal	20%

### **VI. Readings**

#### *A. Required*

1. Oech, Roger von. A Whack on the Side of the Head (1990). New York, USA. Warner Books, Inc. 1990 (chapters required)
2. Managing Creativity and Innovation. USA. Harvard Business School Publishing Corp.