

Knowing + Doing = Being



Know+Do publishes monthly *think papers* for its subscribers and clients highlighting different issues that promote the philosophy of '**knowing+doing=being**'. Our approach is: you need to define where you want to **BE**, in order to **KNOW** your plans are correct and what you are **DOING** will help you achieve your goal? This is a special paper to celebrate our recent partnership with ACEVO to deliver a series of Think Spaces for leaders.

For more information on *Know+Do's* services, solutions and resources view our website www.knowanddo.com or contact info@knowanddo.com / (0161) 280 4567

Making Leaders Think

Special Edition Partner Think Paper

Welcome to this special edition *Think Paper* focussed on Thinking - something we do every day in a variety of ways. We know that depending on how we approach it, our thinking (or lack of it) leads to actions that produce very different results. The paper outlines both an approach to thinking and our recent experience of running some *Think Spaces* for CEOs who are members of ACEVO¹.

ACEVO are the leading voice of the UK's charity and social enterprise sector. They are also a key partner in the *Inspiring Impact*² programme that aims to make high-quality impact measurement the norm for charities and social enterprises by 2022. It wants more non-profit organisations to measure their social impact, to use impact data to manage and increase impact, and to share findings.

The *Inspiring Impact* programme aims to address five key questions:

1. *What does good impact practice look like?*
2. *How do we know what we need to measure?*
3. *How do we measure it?*
4. *How can we compare with and learn from others?*
5. *What's the role for funders?*



¹ www.acevo.org.uk

² <http://inspiringimpact.org>

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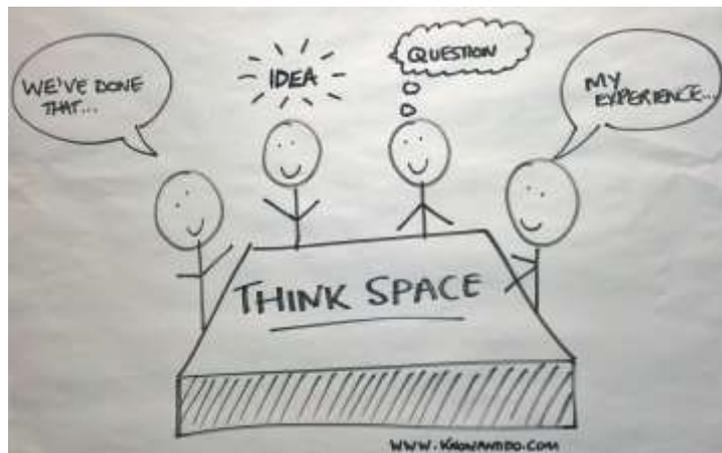


The French philosopher Voltaire recommended that we should “Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers.” *Inspiring Impact* has offered five questions (above) that ideally need to be explored by the individuals and organisations to enhance organisational performance and impact. The scale of change that has hit the community sector since the global financial crisis is massive, with NCVO reporting “the sector stands to lose £2.8 billion over the spending review period (2011- 2016)”³. This is coupled with a heavily increased demand for services as the sector looks to support people through difficult circumstances triggered in part through public sector cuts.

No sector is immune to the crisis and all businesses have to deliver value and balance the books to stay in business. The long term view that *Inspiring Impact* is taking, together with its probing questions, could really make a positive and demonstrable difference to individual organisations and the sector if they take the time to think things through properly.

ACEVO are providing support on leading for impact and approached *Know+Do* to deliver some action learning sets as part of their input to the programme. However, further exploration revealed that possibly the biggest challenge facing leaders was how to make sense of the questions posed by the programme. Through our business coaching work we knew that many leaders really valued the ‘space for clear thinking’ that coaching offered, coupled with the questions they need explored. **We proposed to pilot a series of *Think Spaces* rather than a strict action learning approach per se.**

The *Think Spaces* were a series of five breakfast meetings (from 8-11am) for small groups of 6-8 leaders of charities to explore the challenge of measuring impact, sustaining organisations and to be inspired to think and explore issues with a different mind-set. Participants were also expected to gain a practical framework and a new peer network, which will support them in driving business change and innovation within their organisations.



Steve Jobs offered a clear view on the importance of thinking and simplicity – two aspects we value. “That’s been one of my mantras - focus and simplicity. Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it’s worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains.” However, in today’s busy, connected, ‘always on’ environments creating time and space for thinking is hard. A variety of studies have shown in periods of constant change and pressure we can get stuck in default patterns of thinking that are hard to break out of.

³ http://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/policy_and_research/funding/counting_the_cuts.pdf

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*“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” **Albert Einstein***

If we want to follow Einstein’s lead we need to look at how to change our thinking. Our *Think Spaces* were designed to create the space and conditions needed to help people to be inspired to think and explore issues with a different mind-set. They started with the view that we need to explore new ways of thinking to ensure that we can continue to make a positive impact.

What does it mean to ‘think’ though? The Oxford dictionary defines thinking as:

- *having a particular belief or idea*
- *direct one’s mind towards someone or something; use one’s mind actively to form connected ideas*

For us there is a conscious element to thinking, where ‘to think’ means to focus on something in particular. Many people don’t create or work in the right conditions to allow thinking to happen at the level necessary to make a difference. Many inventors have talked about the need to lock themselves away to think something through. We have fallen into different habits around thinking and many of these are lazy, meaning we don’t really give enough time to really think things through.

This meant that we wanted to help create the optimal conditions and provide a standard framework to help attendees turn down the noise and tune into thinking. Most importantly we focused on how they think and got them exploring how they could go about answering the five questions relating to *Inspiring Impact*.

The *Think Spaces* were piloted across 2 cohorts; 1 in Manchester and 1 in Leeds. There would be 5 sessions in total for each cohort with sessions 1, 2 and 5 facilitated through *Know+Do* and sessions 3 and 4 were self-facilitated by the delegates. The following framework was used to underpin each session:

- i. **Define:** Clarify starting question and key terms to think about
- ii. **Examples:** Participants share work place questions, issues and examples for discussion
- iii. **Analysis:** Using the 3 P’s model (Purpose, Process, Payoff) the participants analyse some / all of the examples
- iv. **Learning:** Individuals share reflections on discussions and document any intended actions
- v. **Action point:** Participants will commit to an action per each session and report back

After general introductions to the background of the programme, an outline of the current funding and practical climate and to each other, the process of thinking began. This was less PowerPoint and more flipcharts, pens, paper, plenty of post it notes and open discussion. In the first instance it was about beginning to open people up to what thinking means to them, how they do it, and how it relates ultimately to measuring impact.

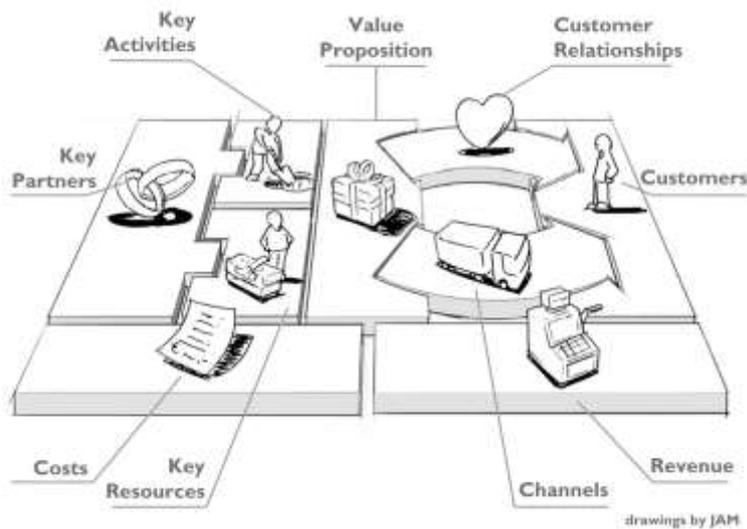
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Henry Ford is quoted as saying that *“Thinking is the hardest thing to do, which is probably why so few people engage in it.”* It’s a discipline and a skill that like exercise, if it’s not been done for a bit it feels awkward and can be tiring. Some participants found the process a bit simplistic at the beginning – do we really just sit and think?

We also used some business models to provide a further framework to focus discussion and thought processes. One of these was the *Business Model Canvas*⁴, whereby a business and its associated activities are represented visually by nine elements (see below).

Using this model we asked participants to start to consider how they would define each element. For instance, who is a ‘customer’? This proved to be an interesting exercise once started, as at first glance many assumed they knew the basics - they were after all the CEOs of their businesses. But with a little bit of thought and conversation questions started to emerge such as “was the funder the customer, or is it the service user?”



We quickly established that different businesses viewed ‘customers’ differently but that also had an impact of how they spoke to them, treated them and interacted with them. This was not simply a case of semantics but the meaning given to each element or constituent part of it was tied to a whole series of business processes, that created a certain expectation or delivered a particular result all of which impacted on the business, either positively or negatively.

The more thinking occurred the more questions came up. Things that had been glanced at were taken aside and thought about. The CEOs challenged each other, shared thoughts and experiences and learnt a lot more about themselves and their business through the process. All delegates really valued the space to think and started to think about how to continue this post pilot. Feedback included:

“Thank you for some very interesting and thought provoking sessions.”
“I really enjoyed your style and the opportunity to have ‘guided’ head space.”

Inspiring Impact is a 10 year programme that aims to make high-quality impact measurement the norm for charities and social enterprises. By starting with five key questions it’s seeking to provide the space to think about these rather than prescribe some carefully scripted answers that bring about no real change. These are changing and challenging times which will require all sectors to pull together, to ensure that all

⁴ www.businessmodelgeneration.com

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communities in the UK have a better quality of life. We encourage you to think about what your role will be in supporting and creating impact the next few years.

To take charge of your thinking you could always follow in the footsteps of arguably the greatest thinker of all time, Leonardo Da Vinci. He worked with the following seven principles:

1. **Curiosità** - An insatiably curious approach to life and an unrelenting quest for continuous learning
2. **Dimostrazione** - A commitment to test knowledge through experience, persistence, and a willingness to learn from mistakes
3. **Sensazione** - The continual refinement of the senses, especially sight, as the means to enliven experience
4. **Sfumato** ("Going up in Smoke") - A willingness to embrace ambiguity, paradox, and uncertainty
5. **Arte/Scienza** - The development of the balance between art, logic, and imagination ("Whole-brain" thinking)
6. **Corporalità** - The cultivation of grace, ambidexterity, fitness, and poise. Promoting body awareness
7. **Connessione** - A recognition of and appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things and phenomena ("Systems thinking")

To encourage you to begin thinking find a little space and complete the following sentence:

"My best thinking occurs when....."

Now you've finished the sentence the next step is to **ACT** upon it...enjoy your thinking!

To find out more about the work of *Inspiring Impact* and to download a number of free resources please visit www.inspiringimpact.org. For more information on ACEVO and the support its offers its members log on to www.acevo.org.uk.

Know+Do's Think Papers have been designed to capture our company values⁵, including sharing and simplicity. We aim to take share our thoughts and experiences in an accessible way to encourage the reader to take action. We welcome your feedback about how the *Think Papers* have helped you or your teams.

Know+Do offer in-house training on a range of business growth and management issues. We also have expert business coaches available to support leaders in business. We are approved consultants for ACEVO and providers for the Growth Accelerator⁶ and BIG Assist⁷ programmes. For more information please contact us on info@knowanddo.com or call (0161) 280 4567.

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⁵ <http://knowanddo.com/about-us/values>

⁶ <http://www.growthaccelerator.org> , <http://knowanddo.com/archives/2388>

⁷ <http://www.bigassist.org.uk/customer/supplier/profile/47769/>