

## Lesson 2 Creativity Is Key

### The Potential of Unconventional Thinking

As we go through life, we may become stuck in a routine, missing out on extraordinary ideas or solutions. In such a situation, we can try considering things from a different angle. By doing so, we can expand our understanding of the world, challenge our assumptions, and find creative solutions to problems. Let's look at two stories that demonstrate the power of thinking differently.

#### Who Makes the Pathways?

Walter Gropius was a well-known architect, widely regarded as one of the pioneers of modernist architecture. However, even this expert architect was once troubled when designing an amusement park. He finished most of the main structures except for the pathways between the attractions. Gropius wanted to find the best design for the pathways but could not come up with anything that satisfied him.

One day, Gropius took a trip to France. The place he went to was famous for its vineyards. Farmers were selling grapes along the road near each vineyard. Then, one far ahead caught his eye because there was no one selling grapes but only a box by the side of the road. It turned out that the elderly couple who owned the vineyard were in poor health and could not pick the grapes themselves. Instead, they let people pick as many grapes as they wanted as long as they put five francs in the box. The couple not only prevented their grapes from becoming too ripe by permitting grape picking, but they also provided an enjoyable experience for their customers.

Astonished by the elderly couple's idea of allowing customers to freely pick grapes, Gropius thought it would be good to extend this idea to the amusement park design and allow visitors to create their own paths. Upon returning to his project, he instructed the construction team to plant grass in areas where he wanted to create the pathways. When the grass started to grow, he opened the amusement park earlier than planned.

In places where people repeatedly walked, small footpaths started to form on the grass. The shapes of the paths were not unified, with some wide and some narrow, because they were formed naturally by visitors. The following year, Gropius used the grass pathways as an outline on which he built permanent pathways, resulting in the most convenient and efficient routes. This pathway design was later chosen as the best road design at the 1971 International Landscape Architecture Symposium in London.

It was contrary to common sense to allow people to walk on newly sprouted grass because it could damage the grass. Moreover, it was unprecedented for an architect to let people do the designing. Nonetheless, Gropius gained insight into creating ideal pathways by thinking outside the box.

## Why Are There Mirrors in Elevators?

Have you ever wondered why there are mirrors in elevators? The world's first successful passenger elevator was installed in a five-story building in New York in 1857. This prominent development brought excitement to the field of architecture by making it possible to build much taller buildings than ever before. Nevertheless, passengers were highly dissatisfied regardless of how practical it was.

Employees of the elevator company conducted a customer survey in order to find out why the passengers were so unhappy. The results of the questionnaire showed that it was the elevator's slow speed that was causing dissatisfaction. The trip from one floor to the next took nearly fifteen seconds. The employees also discovered that passengers thought the elevator was much slower than it actually was because passengers had nothing to do. During the slow ride, some passengers complained and said they felt trapped. Even though the employees identified speed as the main source of dissatisfaction, it was not something that could be improved immediately due to technological limitations.

Then, one day, one employee of the elevator company began to look at the problem from a different perspective. She thought about it from a passenger's point of view. She thought that what mattered was not speed but discomfort and boredom. She asked herself what could be done in this case. After many days of searching for a solution, she proposed installing a mirror inside the elevator. She believed that it could make the elevator appear larger, reducing the feeling of being trapped. Also, she believed that people could relieve boredom by looking in the mirror.

On a survey done after the mirror was installed, passengers commented on how much faster the new elevator was, even though the speed was exactly the same. Passengers stopped paying attention to the speed of the elevator because they were looking in the mirror.

If the employee had thought only of ways to increase the speed of the elevator to resolve the problem, it might not have been possible to find a solution. However, by viewing the problem from a different perspective, the employee found the solution by speeding up the customers' perception of time.

In solving problems that are new to us, it is quite easy to get stuck in a particular point of view. However, even a simple shift in perspective can result in a creative solution. So, the next time you face a problem, try thinking about it from a different angle.