Re:Focus
simple ideas to help you thrive

by Simon Sinek

Spend more time in the shower

Most organizations schedule time for creativity. Call it a brainstorming seesion or an off-site or any other clever title you want to give it - the concept is the same - it's a time in the calendar to be creative, to think outside the box, come up with innovative solutions or generate ideas. The problem is, you can't schedule creativity.

When we "sit down to think," we engage our rational brains. This is the part of the brain we use to weigh the pros and cons or engage our "expertise." But consider how many problems or ideas we have in the shower, in the car heading to work, lying in bed or any other place that we're certainly not consciously trying to solve any problems. That's because our subconscious brains - our limbic "feeling" brains - have access to vastly more information than our conscious "thinking" brains. Monumental amounts more, in fact. Our rational brains can access the equivalent of about 2 feet of information around us. Our subconscious brains can access the equivalent of 11 acres of information around us. Every experience, every lesson, every mistake, every success is all stored away and your brain has the capacity to access that information, even though you're not conscious of it.

This is what gut decisions are - this is why we say they "feel" right. Because the feeling part of our brain is digging deep into our past to help guide our decisions. This is the reason experiences matter. The more experiences you have, the more data your limbic brain has to access, which will help generate ideas or solve problems.

When we take showers or go for a drive (or paint or run or wherever you allow your mind to wander), it continues trying to solve the issues we face in our lives at the time. It accesses all our past experiences to help us see things our conscious brains can not.

This is the reason, when you visit an office filled with "creative" people, they have video games, pin ball machines, toys and all sorts of other distractions. Things that stop them from thinking...things to help "inspire" them.

I used to be one of those people who likes to take a quick shower in the morning and get on with my day. But not anymore. About 6 months ago, I realized that when I took longer showers, I would have about 2-3 really good ideas while in there. So now I take long showers every morning and just listen to the water. I don't concentrate on anything, I don't try to think of anything specific, I don't spend more time washing. I just stand under the water and let my mind wander. I now get about 2-3 really good ideas every morning (then I have to repeat them to myself out loud over and over while drying then run and take notes before I forget them).

Find the place your mind wanders, the place you solve problems or have ideas and spend more time there. If your morning commute is when you have all your ideas, for example, then, from time to time, just go for a drive without having a destination and just enjoy the drive. Let your mind wander.

If your team has a big problem to solve or you need big ideas from them, don't lock them in a room to figure it out - let them go for a walk, wander around a museum together, listen to music. Play games, throw a ball around, read children's books. Let a mind wander and you'll be amazed at what it discovers.