



## Case name: Achieving Personal Affirmation

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**Company:** General Electric Company Applied Creative Thinking (ACT) Participants

**The Challenge:** To release the creative potential of GE employees by providing them with opportunities to affirm their existing natural inborn creativity.

### **Purpose:**

To design into the Applied Creativity Thinking workshop (ACT I) a series of modules that when experienced are capable of achieving individual personal affirmations of latent capabilities such as drawing and sculpting, which are often pre-cursors of their creative potential.

### **Existing conditions:**

GE employees who are potential workshop participants typically do not think that they can draw. On one occasion, I asked a group of about 100 GE managers if they could draw. About 5 or 6 raised their hands— mostly quite tentatively. When I next asked the group if they would like to be able to draw, almost all raised their hands. My final question was, “Do you think being able to draw provides evidence of your creative potential?” Over 90 responded by vigorously raising their hands.

### **Raising hands**



### **Desired Outcomes:**

Short term: By providing GE employees with the opportunity to attend an Applied Creative Thinking workshop (ACT I), in which they would learn how to draw, and facilitate them into a personal affirmation that they indeed had creative potential which could be unleashed to their own benefit and to that of the Company.

Long Term: Through ACT I workshop participation by employees of specific GE components (i.e. the Lighting Systems Dept.), create a critical mass of creatively affirmed employees to increase the level of success of the individuals and the business they serve.

### **Whole brain intervention methods, processes, and strategies:**

The design of the affirmation module is based on the work of Betty Edwards, a world renowned art teacher and author. In pursuing my own brain research I became aware of Betty Edwards' remarkable work in teaching people how to draw. We became acquainted with one another and exchanged visits and correspondence. When I was attempting to gain management approval for the design of the Applied Creative Thinking workshop, I felt I needed proof that this “brain stuff” really worked. Since Betty lived and worked in California, I arranged a demonstration with our Nuclear

Energy Division, in San Jose, which involved teaching 14 nuclear engineers how to draw. They were selected from a pool of highly trained technologists on the basis of their expressed inability to draw. Betty and I devised a program which allowed me to introduce the subject of brain dominance and for Betty to follow on with a one day drawing workshop. The results were astounding. Twelve out of the 14 nuclear engineers produced final drawings that they were enormously proud of, several of which were artistically impressive. Even the 2 remaining participants demonstrated acceptable progress. These results when presented to my corporate management contributed in a major way to the decision to implement the whole brain designed Applied Creative Thinking workshop as a corporate educational offering.

In designing a drawing module for ACT I, I adapted Betty Edwards' techniques to accomplish in two hours what had previously required eight hours. The fundamentals of Betty's techniques are described in detail in her best selling book, *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. Fundamental to the success of the technique is the power of the contrast between a "before" and "after" drawing. In most cases, the preliminary drawing is juvenile and crude. The simple series of brain related art technique results in dramatic improvement. From an affirmation standpoint, the techniques allow a person to "see" by removing the barriers to seeing. Once the barriers are removed, a person is much more likely to be able to capture what they can now see accurately. The results are stunning. The comparison between the before and after drawings confronts the individual with the reality of their accomplishment. They can no longer hide behind the typical, "I can't draw" excuse. Building on this new affirmation and extending it to other key aspects of the creative process is a primary reason why this whole brain process unleashes the creative potential of workshop participants.



**Before & After Hand Drawing**

Based on the success of the drawing module and the affirmation concept in ACT I, a follow on workshop was designed for the graduates of ACT I. This workshop was called ACT II. And, in this design, the drawing module was replaced with a module that taught the participants how to sculpt. Personal affirmation continued to be the objective of this module. However, in the case of sculpture, the design was entirely based on my own personal expertise as a professional artist. The results were equally successful to the drawing module. Although none of the workshop participants had had any prior experience with sculpting, all of them achieved acceptable results and more than half of them achieved outstanding results, of which perhaps 10% were truly artistic.

Those participants who graduated from both ACT I and ACT II may have even doubled the power of affirmation of their creative potential. They now had two forms of hard evidence that their natural creativity could result in both impressive drawings and impressive sculptures.

**Summary of outcomes:**

Out of 1,000 graduates of ACT I, well over 900 demonstrated their ability to draw at impressive levels to family, friends, and self. Out of 50 graduates of both ACT I and ACT II, over 40 produced sculptures impressive to their family, friends, and self. It is my assessment that the level of success of

these two modules in these two workshops is greatly in excess of typical learning experiences. The personal affirmations resulting from this high level of success have contributed substantially to the overall success of these two Applied Creative Thinking workshop experiences.

Richard LeBlanc, a quality control engineer for GE, is an outstanding example of the power of affirmation. Although a participant only in ACT I, he achieved both types of affirmations. After producing an outstanding drawing of his left hand, he asked for materials to attempt a sculpture. With minimal artistic coaching, he was able to create a very impressive sculpture of the hand that he had previously drawn. He was astounded with the results as was everyone else.

**Richard LeBlanc**



Richard's feelings of affirmation persisted for many months, and even years. Following his return to work, he successfully undertook many creative tasks that he would have previously shied away from. In addition, his confidence was so improved that his role as a supervisor was greatly benefited. He had, in fact, unleashed a substantial degree of personal potential that had always been there, but had not been available to apply to his work and to his life. The lives of many other participants have been similarly benefited.





**Optimizing the results:**

Short term: Achieve affirmation during a workshop setting and apply the results to the workshop's ongoing creative exercises.

Long term: Allow the motivating forces of personal affirmation to unleash more of the naturally creative self in both work and life situations. And, through the achieving of increased success, continue to strengthen the positive affect of affirmation in self.

**Measurement criteria applied to actual outcomes:**

The success measurement process allows for up to 100 points to be allocated to each of the four quadrants of this Whole Brain process. The success measurement points are allocated as follows:

| Metaphors  |  | Success measurement points |                 |
|--|--|----------------------------|-----------------|
| A<br> | D<br> | A<br><b>50</b>             | D<br><b>100</b> |
| B<br> | C<br> | B<br><b>40</b>             | C<br><b>80</b>  |

