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Of all the things that thwarted early Arctic exploration, the onset of a polar winter remained the most ineluctable... And the most deadly! So concluded radical Norwegian explorer Fridjof Nansen... Knowing his attempt to reach the North Pole would fail if his ship became packed in and crushed by winter ice, his solution was both elegant and brilliant... So what did he do?

The answer is an excellent example of 'Opposite Thinking': a technique that not only gives you a new perspective for each idea that you have already, but also implies a range of other ideas that might exist in between. For example, take the situation of wanting to make an ideas meeting different. Typically, a 'brainstorm' is held in small groups, at the office, during the afternoon. Asking "What's the opposite?" instantly – and almost without thought – gives distinct alternatives: larger groups or individuals, out of the office, not in the afternoon!

You might immediately think to try asking individuals to each generate 10 ideas, over breakfast, in the coffee shop, or wonder: where else, outside the office, might be more conducive to ideation? As you begin toying around with each element, you'll quickly see how this simple question instantly shifts your perspective.

An interesting example of this can be seen in the extraordinary creativity of engineers planning to relocate Egypt's Kalabsha Temple in 1970. The tides of the Nile left the 2,000 year old site underwater for nine months of the year – nowhere near long enough to move in the necessary equipment and manpower, cut the archeological treasure into 1,600 blocks, label them and move everything out again!

So the German engineering team chose to do the exact opposite: they let the river rise to its highest point and only then began dismantling the temple – using barges! As the waters dropped, so too dropped the barges with the cranes, allowing workers to remove the many layers of stone from the top down... When they reached the lowest levels, they had plenty of time to take out the foundations and equipment – it was the dry season!

In much the same way, Arctic explorer Fridjof Nansen realised that his predecessors' biggest mistake was trying to race to the Poles ahead of winter. Other ships - lighter weight & faster - had tried this and failed: they were crushed by the relentless advance of the freezing ice fields around them!

So Nansen did the opposite: he built his vessel, 'Fram', with a uniquely strong, smooth, round bottom. Consequently, as the jaws of the advancing pack ice formed, they had nothing upon which to take hold: The Fram – slow moving & stubby, but carrying enough provisions to allow the crew to survive until the ice thawed – simply rose up and onto the ice shelves... There, she lolled gently onto one side and came to rest as the crew began the next stage of their journey. And bizarrely enough, that meant staying exactly where they were... But, alas, that's another story, another technique and another Info Sheet altogether!\*

\*When we say "lolled" we mean, of course, to drop or droop. We're not saying the ship sent lots of love or laughed out loud. For more information on the Opposite Technique, email [deej@dmiproductions.co.uk](mailto:deej@dmiproductions.co.uk)