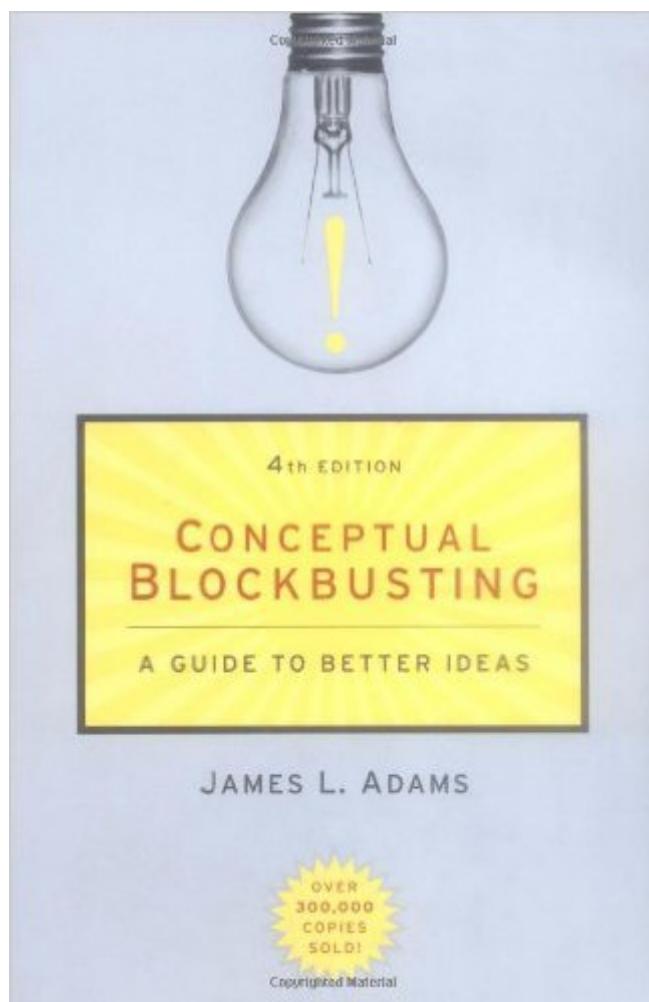


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# Conceptual Blockbusting: A Guide To Better Ideas



## Synopsis

James Adams's unique approach to generating ideas and solving problems has captivated, inspired, and guided thousands of people from all walks of life. Now, twenty-five years after its original publication, *Conceptual Blockbusting* has never been more relevant, powerful, or fresh. Integrating insights from the worlds of psychology, engineering, management, art, and philosophy, Adams identifies the key blocks (perceptual, emotional, cultural, environmental, intellectual, and expressive) that prevent us from realizing the full potential of our fertile minds. Employing unconventional exercises and other interactive elements, Adams shows individuals, teams, and organizations how to overcome these blocks, embrace alternative ways of thinking about complex problems, and celebrate the joy of creativity. With new examples and contemporary references, *Conceptual Blockbusting* is guaranteed to introduce a new generation of readers to a world of new possibilities.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

My dad gave me a copy of this book for Christmas in 1978 when I was a junior in college. I enjoyed reading it then, and I've read it numerous times since. I can say now with some length of perspective that in my opinion it's a definitive classic on this topic and I'd say it is probably the most influential single book in my engineering career. It's enabled me to think of things of that no one else does, and more often than not it's because of ideas I picked up here. The solutions are enduring too. The nine-dot problem, the ping-pong ball in the tube, the spacecraft panels opening without a

damper are examples I think back to when faced with technical challenges that have no apparent easy answer. I cringe inside when people want and push for systematic and methodical ways to solve problems. It's almost a religion to some that the pretense of an imagined rigor akin to mathematical proof will always lead them to "correct" answers. It's not that those methods are wrong but they're quite incomplete and tend to only reinforce the mental blocks you already have. If you want to unconfine your thinking and leverage the power of both halves of your brain, then put this book in your cart, buy it, and read it.

James Adams' classic book, *Conceptual Blockbusting*, is a definite read for people who want to expand and deepen their true creative thinking skills. Since reading it many years ago I have re-read it often, then referenced it and recommended it to others in general, workshop participants plus students. Managers will benefit greatly by reading and re-reading this book to discover how they are squelching, killing or sideswiping creative thinking in the people they are responsible for managing. All others can benefit by becoming more aware of the well-structured approach he has used to depict the many varied forms of creative blocks Adams discovered during his many years of teaching. No this is not a book for those who already think they are as creative as they can be, nor is any other book actually.

This book approaches from a different perspective the question of how a person or an organization can become more creative. Most creativity books give you techniques that will trigger creative ideas - brainstorming, picture prompts, role playing. These are all good techniques, but Adams addresses creativity by answering the question: What are the factors (conceptual blocks) that keep us from being creative in the first place? Knowing these factors - cultural or professional bias, fear of looking silly - for example, allows us to move beyond them. To my mind, this knowledge and the use of creativity techniques are a one-two punch that gets you creative results. The book does have its share of creativity techniques, but the most important knowledge to walk away with is the knowledge of those things that hinder our creativity. Edward de Bono, another creativity guru, also explores on the reasons why people's creativity is stifled, but his approach is somewhat narrower, focusing more on the default mechanism of the mind that tends to focus on pattern recognition and therefore on pursuing the routine rather than the different (see *Mechanism of Mind* and *Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step* (Perennial Library)). Adams' book, in contrast, is more comprehensive in dealing with the various conceptual blocks. If you want to be more creative, I highly recommend this book as a starting point or as a close companion to other books that have creativity techniques and

exercises.

I found this book to be very helpful with expanding my abilities to think creatively. I think that, as we work our way through the school mill and then on in to jobs, a lot of our natural creativity is pushed to the background. We learn to get things right - whatever right is. Making mistakes becomes bad. This book helped me recognize my own unwillingness to have what might be considered bad ideas. It helped me become a little more exploratory in my thinking.

Perhaps it was the high recommendation for this book that left me a little disappointed. I have seen this book recommended in a number of software developer books (most notably perhaps, Code Complete 2E). The author discusses possible obstacles (mental, cultural, etc.) to creativity, some of the psychology behind creativity, and some 'vehicles' to greater creativity. All in all probably very worth reading, but the reading is dry, with the occasional exercise breaking the monotony slightly. I highly recommend this book, until I can find a book that says the same thing in 25% of the space, which I think is possible.

The time spent reading this small volume was well rewarded with new insights about creativity and the communication of ideas. My awareness was heightened as to how frequently my acquaintances and I use the same "verbal" methods to try to communicate ideas that could much more clearly be communicated visually.

Perhaps more for the layman than the professional scholar, this book can help you to see why you keep coming up short in finding answers to the recurrent problems that plague you. I have bought at least ten copies since it's first publication because when I loan it out, I seldom get it back.

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