

# Scamper technique to generate new ideas

by **Douglas Maddock**

Alex Osborn, a pioneer teacher of creativity and the father of brainstorming, had a breakthrough. He identified the nine principles ways to manipulate a subject. They were later arranged into the clever mnemonic SCAMPER.

**S**ubstitute

**C**ombine

**A**dapt

**M**agnify or **M**inimize

**P**ut to another use

**E**liminate

**R**everse or **R**earrange

This is a proven idea-generating technique that has been used countless times. The way it works is simple: Take a category, product, brand, service, process, situation or anything really and apply each letter and see what happens. For example:

**Substitute:** What can be swapped in or out?

In 1982 Gregory Sams substituted vegetarian ingredients for meat and created the first veggie burger.

**Combine:** What can be combined to create something new?

Home haircuts require clippers and a vacuum. The Flowbee resulted from combining the two.

**Adapt:** What can be borrowed and adapted?

Hyundai adapted the concept of a warranty to the recession resulting in the Hyundai Assurance program (which Ford quickly copied).

**Magnify or Minimize:** What can you make really big or really small?

The Hummer and the Smart Car, enough said.

**Put to another Use:** What can you apply in new ways?

In 1968 a 3M researcher was trying to invent a super strong adhesive and instead developed a super weak adhesive. Another 3M employees used the adhesive to hold bookmarks in his hymnal. Hallelujah, the Post-it was born.

**Eliminate:** What can you remove?

The wireless phone has no chords. The touch screen eliminated physical buttons on phones.

**Reverse/Rearrange:** What if you put things in a completely new order? Clarence Birdseye took the quick freezing process that made him millions in the frozen food industry and reversed it, resulting in the first dehydration process for food.

New ideas are just one word away...**SCAMPER!**