

Picture this... the art of *seeing* photographically

By Bob 'Idea Man' Hooey

While I was taking my architectural training back in the 1970s, I pursued the use of a camera as a means to cover some of my education expenses. In addition to being the College Photo Director, I took assignments for weddings, special functions, meetings and other gatherings where *capturing the moment* was desired by my clients.

I've been able to *develop* some of those skills as a photographer further in my role as a productivity strategist, '*idea man*' or creative catalyst for my clients and audiences. These skills have helped me to *see* with increased clarity in some of the other areas of my life, my business, and my interaction with those I serve.

There are some interesting parallels between the skill of looking creatively thru the lens of a camera and the art or skill of creative problem solving or strategic planning.

Photographic creative elements

I would suggest there are a number of creative elements that contribute to good photography and they can serve as metaphors for the world of creativity and innovation. **Lens selection is just one of them.**

Most 35mm camera bodies have interchangeable lenses, which allow us to '*frame*' our subject in a variety of interesting and creative ways:

- **Normal** focal length lens (*comes with the camera as a standard*) allows you to shoot pictures from a perspective very similar to what you see with your naked eye.
- **Telephoto** lenses (*come in various combinations*) allow you to bring in distant objects by appearing to make

them closer. They tend to focus in on one part of the scene and provide a decreased field of view than the normal lens.

- **Wide-angle** lenses take in more of the scene than a normal lens. They tend to emphasize the distances between objects and some times distort a bit on the edges.
- **Panoramic** lenses take in a full spectrum shot giving you the 'big picture' view. They tend to take more time, are more susceptible to movement distortion and use more film.

Lighting selection (*natural, augmented*), **shutter or aperture speed** can be used to create with a camera too. It is like painting with pictures. Using different lenses allows the photographer to play with elements such as image exposure, lighting, and the shooting angle from which the shot is framed. This allows for some very creative photographs.

Photography is a numbers game. In order to come up with a great image it is preferable to take many shots with various shutter speeds, and lighting choices.

You never know which combination (**lens, exposure, point of view, or lighting**) will yield the best results. So you take a large quantity of shots and work toward gleaning some quality results in the selection to follow. Ideas follow that same guideline.

Applying this metaphor to our quest for creative innovation

Creativity, like photography, is all about the skill of '*seeing*.' Being able to approach a situation and look at it differently than everyone else.

During the years I was designing kitchens, I'd frequently come up with several creative approaches to remodelling a frustrating kitchen or bath area.

Quite often I heard my clients say, '**Why didn't I THINK of that?**' Perhaps because I was looking at it with a different set of eyes and seeing the possibilities not the liabilities. I was looking for what could be, not what was!

When we analyze a problem or opportunity we tend to *focus* in on a single aspect of it, such as you would with a telephoto lens. At other times our approach may lead us to broaden our intuitive perspective and take in the bigger picture like a wide-angle lens. And at other times we see to see how it integrates or fits in with other factors or elements like a panoramic view would give us.

Often as a photographer you would walk around your subject seeking the best shot, the best light in which to view it or them. This procedure from a creative process in innovation can yield some fresh ideas and reflective insights.

Both the innovator and the photographer recognize the importance of quantity as an

approach to quality. *The best way to have a great idea is to have a great number of ideas to choose from.*

A few thoughts to conclude...

If you or your team are looking for methods or techniques to increase your creative output, why not take a tip from the photographic picture book. Resist the trap of looking at your current opportunities or challenges from your normal, habitual, policy driven viewpoint.

Take a mental walk around your challenge or opportunity in the context of other forces, trends or insights. Are there similar situations you've faced or other people in your network have successfully faced in the past? Like the photographer, examine all the variables and factors that just might lead you to a winning solution.

Remember, creativity, like photography is all about seeing or viewing things differently – about thinking and understanding fluently.

Look to see the unique elements and influencing factors that other might have missed from their narrow or normal viewpoint.

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