Terry's Top Tips for Structured Thinking & Creative Problem-Solving

1. Start with the *actual* problem, not the symptom

Before solving anything, double-check: are you fixing the real issue or just whacking a Band-Aid on a symptom?

Example: If meetings always run over time, is the problem the length or the lack of an agenda?

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2. Ask "Why?"... then ask it four more times

The 5 Whys technique uncovers root causes. Keep digging past the first answer.

Example:
Why is the report always late?
→ Because staff don't prioritise it.
→ Because they don't see its value.
→ Because no one's explained how it's used…

Now we're getting somewhere.

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3. Use the SCAMPER tool to break out of a rut

SCAMPER = Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to another use, Eliminate, Reverse. It gives you structured ways to challenge the status quo.

Example:
Stuck with a clunky onboarding process? Try "Combine" — what if HR and IT combined their first-day briefing?

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4. Map it visually

When problems feel murky, draw them. Use mind maps, flowcharts, Post-Its — whatever gets it out of your head and into the light.

Example: Drawing a flowchart of your internal sign-off process might reveal it's more Byzantine than beneficial.

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5. Reframe the problem as a question

Instead of "Our staff are disengaged," ask "How might we make work more meaningful on a Monday morning?"

Changing the framing invites fresh thinking — and fewer complaints.

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6. Find the outlier, not just the average

Outliers often hold hidden answers. Who's succeeding where others struggle? What's different about them?

Example: One new hire nailed compliance training faster than anyone else — turns out they watched the videos at 1.5x speed. So… why not recommend that?

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7. Think in opposites

If the problem's too sticky, flip it. Ask: "How could we make this worse?" then reverse those answers into solutions.

Example:
"How do we make this customer experience *terrible*?"
→ Keep them waiting, give vague answers, ignore feedback.
Now do the opposite.

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8. Make it a team sport

Get people outside the problem to look at it. Invite curious minds who *don't* know all the background. Their naivety is a feature, not a bug.

Example: You might be stuck trying to improve a safety process until someone from marketing asks why the safety posters look like tax forms.

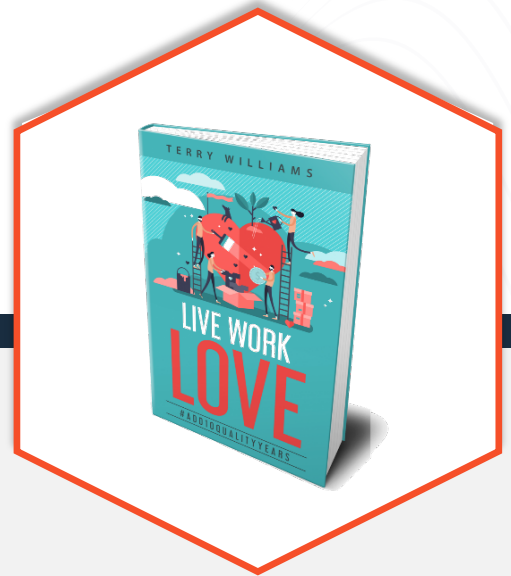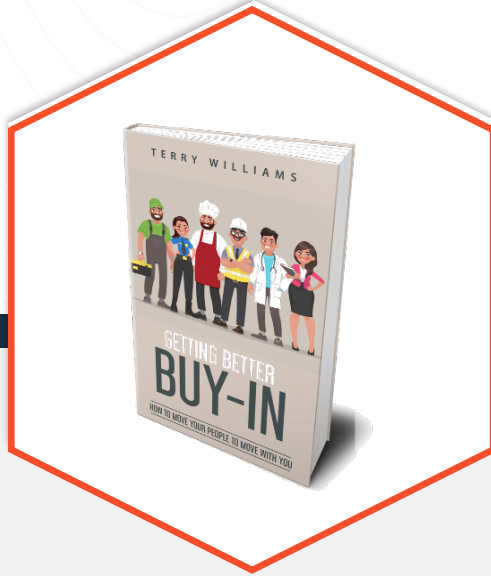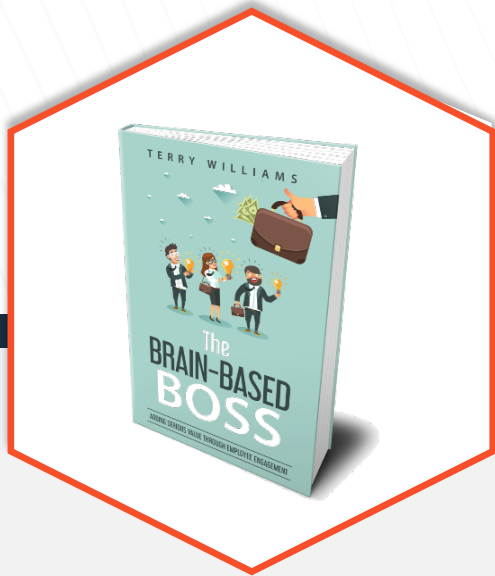## 9. Don't fear constraints — use them

Constraints drive creativity. If you've only got 20 minutes and $200, what's the smartest, scrappiest way forward?

Example: A team with zero budget for team-building created a "Friday Five-Minute Show & Tell" and now it's a ritual.

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10. Capture, reflect, tweak, repeat

Once you've tested something, reflect *before* you move on. What worked? What bombed? What needs adjusting?

Example: After trialling a new reporting template, ask users: "What did you spend the most time on?" Then simplify that bit.

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