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# Idea processing support systems

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The article explores the concept of idea processing support systems noting their relevance and usefulness in management decision. A review of some of the pertinent software is offered along with an account of the development of an integrated idea processing support system called the creative decision support system. The latter takes the user through a seven stage process towards solving problems and includes graphic and audio triggers to creative thinking. Additionally there are databases for analogies, change of perspective and potential problem analysis. The package also has a drop and drag facility which allows the execution of external programs and text documents within the package.

Making decisions that involve attempting to do things in the same way as they have always been done in the past can lead to difficulties in a business environment which is experiencing rapid cultural, economic or technological change. Change is an ever present phenomenon to which businesses of all kinds are forced to respond. Executives have to find new and better ways to solve problems since an increasing number of problems have few or no precedents. Creativity in problem solving can lead to more effective decision making.

Creativity is an important human resource which exists in all enterprises. Organisations have to try to make use of this resource by devising settings which permit creative talents to thrive and by using mechanisms which will elicit creative contributions. Traditionally, enhancing the effectiveness of management decisions has been the role of decision support systems. In this article I shall be exploring an alternative form of support structure which facilitates the processing of ideas in management decision making.

Decision support systems (DSS) have been around for some years. Indeed they usually form part of or an attachment to the management information system. DSS are concerned with the nature of analytical methods of problem formulation and problem solving and often use the procedures and methods of operational research. Simulation, mathematical programming, forecasting methods and a variety of other techniques form part of the repertory of a DSS. Idea processing support systems (IPSS), however, are a relatively new concept which is discussed extensively by Young (1983). IPSS deal with the synthesis of ideas into problem contexts and exploratory problem definition. In this context the computer is employed principally as a thought organising tool and meaning manipulator.

Idea processing involves the use of mental processes and it is applicable to the formulation and solution of decision problems which do not require (in the main) either mathematical algorithms or any other kinds of structured logical step by step solution methods. Because of an often apparent lack of logic to this form of thinking it has often been equated with intuition. Isenberg (1984)

reported that "thought sampling" statements describing how senior managers think indicate that they do not engage in solving isolated problems but deal with interconnected networks of problems and use what he calls "high intuition" in which rapid pattern recognition takes place and solutions are generated and regenerated as new information is obtained. Idea processing is fundamental to much of management decision making and its importance has often been neglected. The syndrome noted by Isenberg (1984) has been the subject of much research during this century (and earlier, perhaps) and has resulted in what we know today as "the creative problem solving process".

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## The creative problem-solving process

Various suggestions have been put forward regarding the nature of this process. Two notable ones have been by Wallas (1926) and VanGundy (1988). Wallas conceived four phases to the creative problem-solving process:

- 1 preparation;
- 2 incubation;
- 3 illumination;
- 4 verification.

The preparation phase consists of gathering facts, knowledge and ideas that may be relevant to the problem of interest. The incubation and illumination phases involve first a pause (incubation), in which some unconscious sifting and relating of the information gathered during preparation takes place. This is followed by recognition or awareness of a new relationship that is significant to the thinker (illumination). The latter seems to be relevant in its result, but not necessarily in its means to the suggestion that information gathered is interpreted and understood to comprise a situation which is relevant and requires a strategy to be formulated and decided upon. It may also be the means of revealing new strategies. Incubation is related to the search for options at a subconscious level and may be directed at the formulation of one or more strategies to cope with a decision situation. In verification the insight

# Decision Support And Idea Processing Systems

**Joseph K. H. Tan, Samuel Barry Sheps**



## **Decision Support And Idea Processing Systems:**

## Decoding **Decision Support And Idea Processing Systems**: Revealing the Captivating Potential of Verbal Expression

In a period characterized by interconnectedness and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the captivating potential of verbal expression has emerged as a formidable force. Its capability to evoke sentiments, stimulate introspection, and incite profound transformations is genuinely awe-inspiring. Within the pages of "**Decision Support And Idea Processing Systems**," a mesmerizing literary creation penned with a celebrated wordsmith, readers attempt an enlightening odyssey, unraveling the intricate significance of language and its enduring effect on our lives. In this appraisal, we shall explore the book's central themes, evaluate its distinctive writing style, and gauge its pervasive influence on the hearts and minds of its readership.

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