

## Seven Techniques For Getting Creatively Unstuck By Robert Tucker, Innovation Resource

If you solve problems for a living, you've probably had it happen. Just when you least expect it - and just when you need to be brilliant - you're suddenly blocked. You pour on the coffee and tell yourself you'll power it out. But all you produce is the jitters. You try burning the midnight oil, and all you do is exhaust yourself. Face it: your "idea factory" has decided to shut down. You're stuck.

The condition can be so jarring that authors have a name for it: writers block. For them, it's the inability to produce satisfactory new work. In some cases, it can last for years, as it did for such luminaries as Stephen King, Harper Lee, and Truman Capote. For the rest of us, it's usually a temporary condition, but no less frustrating if you're coming up on an important deadline and your well is suddenly, inexplicably dry.

Getting stuck doesn't have to become a personal crisis. Not if you have a few tools in your toolkit for just such times. Here are seven surefire ways to avoid the time-wasting, agonizing period of non-productivity known as being stuck - and get quickly back on track:

1. Recognize that you're stuck. But don't panic.

"Getting stuck is all part of the process," the senior engineer at a defense contractor remarked recently. "It doesn't scare me like it did when I was younger." Don't let it scare you either, but learn to recognize the symptoms. If you find yourself aimlessly surfing the Internet and avoiding the project you're on, this could be a sign. If you draw a mind-map but can only come up with several options, this could be a heads up that you're stuck. If you call a meeting to discuss solutions to a problem and silence fills the air - your team is stuck.

Try this: Interview yourself: why do you feel you are stuck? What's happening in your work or your personal life that may have precipitated this state? What has worked for you in the past to get back on track? The simple solution might be to get a good night's sleep. Focusing on something else for a day or two can also work. But if the condition persists, your strategy needs to be to shift and keep shifting until you get your groove back.

2. Consciously shift your environment.

Start shifting your environment, your perspective, and your approach to the problem you're working on till you get back into a flow state. How? Start by changing where you're working on the problem. Change your physical environment. Go work in the conference room, or at the coffee shop down the street. Work from home.

In a recent session I led for an engineering firm, one participant said this: "If stuck, I'll put [the project] aside, take a walk, visit a museum, or sleep on it. I often awake with complete solutions. I keep paper and pencil next to my bed and in my car at all times."

Other ideas: Visit a toy store with your kids and let them lead you around. Go to a museum. Go for a walk in the woods or take a spin on your bike. Nature is God's environment to help get us unstuck. Use it.

3. Consciously shift your approach.

Tried and true problem-solving steps can sometimes be ignored as we try to cut corners and produce brilliant work on the fly. If you're feeling stuck, revisit these steps: identifying the problem, setting goals, brainstorming possibilities, and assessing alternatives. Solutions to

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Have  
A  
Happy  
Thanksgiving!



## Mechanical Member: **TRANSWORLD, INC.**

*In the second grade when James Ritter's teacher asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up, he said he was going to be an electrician.*

James Ritter, founder, current president, and Charleston native has over 40 years' of experience in the electrical industry. After earning his Master Electrician's License, Jim founded Transworld, Inc. Electrical Contractor on September 20, 1987, and continues to take a personal interest in assuring quality performance.

Transworld, Inc. Electrical Contractor was founded with the mission to provide the best possible electrical service to our customers. We have strict quality and safety controls to make sure you are getting the best and remain dedicated to improving industry standards and staying on top of the latest changes regarding safety, electrical codes, and standards.

We pride ourselves on developing a community within our organization that encompasses our core values and demonstrates them to the surrounding community daily. Investing in all our employees and encouraging promotion from within the company allows us to create a professional image for the electrical industry that creates a sense of pride in our employees that inspires others. This is represented through our employees' longevity with over 300 years of combined experience.

We believe that each one of our customers is an extension of our family at Transworld, Inc. We are thankful for every customer that trusts our electrical services and we strive to ensure that our customers feel we are sincere in providing them with the best possible service at a fair price. This year we are celebrating 30 years of excellence and we look forward to continuing to grow as a leader in the electrical industry.

*We have an unlimited Electrical license in the states of South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia. Our workman's compensation experience modification rate is .79. Clients routinely rely on Transworld Inc. Electrical Contractors to meet their critical electrical needs and we plan to continue this into the future.*

**Transworld, Inc.**  
**PO Box 21373, 1553 King Street Extension**  
**Charleston, SC 29413-1373**  
**Phone: (843) 577-3491 Fax (843) 722-0117**

### NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Randall Owens	11/1	Walkup Electric Construction	
Lee Richardson	11/1	Atlantic Electric Company	
Cathy Richardson	11/3	Atlantic Electric Company	Wife of Joe
Lewis Caswell	11/5	W. O. Blackstone & Co., Inc.	
Kristi Soderlund	11/8	Elliott Davis LLC	Wife of Todd
Taylor Brewer	11/10	Easley Mechanical Services, Inc.	
Rusty Smith	11/10	Johnson Controls, Inc.	
Liz Kelly	11/14	H. R. Allen, Inc.	Wife of Billy
Karen Linden	11/15	Central Controls, Inc.	Wife of Albert
Mel Rosas	11/16	PinPoint Safety	
Albert Linden	11/23	Central Controls, Inc.	
Jim Brewer	11/25	Easley Mechanical Services, Inc.	
Randy Jones	11/25	The Chapman Company	
David Gregg	11/26	Honorary Life Member	
Nancy Hitchcock	11/26	C. R. Hipp Construction, Inc.	Wife of Al
Brenda Gibbs	11/27	Bear Mechanical Services, LLC	Wife of Fred
Michael Hunter	11/28	Ferguson Enterprises, Inc.	
Sandra DeAntonio	11/29	Honorary Life Member	Wife of Raymond

*Happy Birthday Members!*

*We Would Like To Announce Yours. If you would like to be listed,  
please call the Birthday Hotline at 803-772-7834 or Email to [mflowers@mcasc.com](mailto:mflowers@mcasc.com)*

**“Tool Box Talks” - Safety Tip**  
**LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP**

All too often accidents on construction jobs are caused by workers who fail to "look". One of the most important and basic principles of accident prevention on a construction job is to look where you walk, stand, sit or climb. You may have heard of the bricklayer who stepped back to admire his work, only to fall off the scaffolding! It is very important to look before stepping in any direction. You might step into a pile of scrap lumber, into an open trench, in the path of a moving piece of equipment or under a swinging load.

On most construction jobs, conditions in work areas change continuously; materials and equipment are constantly handled and moved about. Look up, look down, and look all around and make certain the way is clear and you are avoiding all hazards.

Working in the field of construction does not permit us to sit around much. When you can sit down, look where you sit. How often have you heard the injured worker say, "I didn't notice it"? This excuse just doesn't cut it. We all have to be aware of our surroundings or risk being severely hurt or killed.

If you are involved in cleaning or housekeeping duties on the job, sometimes scrap is thrown into a pile or from an elevated location. Material should not be thrown at anytime. It should be lowered carefully or removed with material handling equipment. Workers should look before they walk in areas where clean-up work is under way. Most importantly, never walk under suspended loads. Be alert and look up. Falling material will cause serious injuries.

Some of you may have heard of people being injured because they failed to watch where they were stepping. Test a platform before you step onto it; be sure your ladder is secure before climbing it. If work areas are poorly lighted, be especially cautious.

Stay alert, look about you constantly and don't rush or take chances, because those few minutes you save may cost you your lifestyle - or your life!

Remember, someone who rushes in headlong, often comes out feet first!

**PinPoint Safety, LLC - Mel Rosas**  
**12216 Pinegate Court, Pineville, NC 28134-9139**  
**Telephone (704) 277-5673 Fax (704) 900-8241**

**Upcoming Events**

**9th Annual Midlands Area Nine At Night**  
**Scholarship Golf Tournament**  
 Thursday March 22, 2018  
 Charwood Country Club, West Columbia



**12th Annual Piedmont Area Clays for College**  
 Friday, April 20, 2018  
 The Clinton House Plantation, Clinton

**The Charleston Slam 10th Annual Inshore**  
**Fishing Tournament**  
 Captain's Meeting - May 18, 2018  
 Graybar Electric Co., Inc.  
 Tournament - May 19, 2018



**174th Annual MCASC Summer Convention**  
 August 2-5, 2018  
 Hammock Beach Resort, Palm Coast, FL

**SAVE THE DATES**

**Welcome New Members**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Midlands</b> | <b>Christina Sosa-Manzo</b><br><b>Sosa Manzo Insulation</b><br><b>Lugoff</b>   |
| <b>Pee Dee</b>  | <b>Carlton Thompkins</b><br><b>ComeBack Equipment Rentals</b><br><b>Myrtle Beach</b>   |
| <b>Coastal</b>  | <b>Rusty Webb</b><br><b>NextGen Technologies, Inc.</b><br><b>Summerville</b><br><b>Sarah Windham</b><br><b>Dixon Hughes Goodman LLP</b><br><b>Charleston</b> |

**Anniversary**

**Lodema Adams & Keith Maxey - 11/17**

**Condolences**

**To the family and friends of**  
**Joseph A. Albers,**  
**Former MCASC Managing Director,**  
**On his loss**

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the bigger problems and projects often come, not when we command them to appear, but because we've incubated ideas for a period of time. They are the result of gathering inputs from others, mulling over alternatives, and seeking inspiration to carry us to a higher level.

Here are comments I've heard:

- "If stuck, I'll talk with a creative colleague in another field."
- "If stuck, I work at my white-board or sketch pad. If I'm still stuck, I'll switch to another task and allow the first one to go in the background for a while."
- "When I get stuck, I walk out and clear my head and then query somebody on the idea. This isn't easy at my company because I have to find someone with enough technical knowledge to understand what I'm talking about. And they've got to have a mind open enough to hear something that is not completely thought out."

#### 4. Shift your perspective.

"If stuck, I try to bounce the problem off others, thinking out loud," observed one manager. "This always worked for me when I used to do software development." Assumption assaulting is necessary because the human brain is designed for efficiency. It takes what neuroscientists call "perceptual shortcuts" to save energy. Only by forcing our minds to move beyond habitual thinking patterns can we imagine truly new solutions.

Years of experience in an industry, profession or job can give us invaluable experience. But they can also be a block. "It's always been done that way" or "we already tried that" are often a sign that you and your team need to shift perspective to move beyond habitual thinking blocks in order to imagine alternate possibilities. To get unstuck and spawn fresh thinking, ask such questions as "I wonder if we ..." or "what would an entirely different way of handling this situation look like?"

Try this: Bombard the brain with alternatives and possibilities. Actively challenge assumptions. Invite new thinking.

#### 5. Avoid using the pressure of deadlines to ignite creativity.

Harvard professor Teresa Amibole studies creativity in the workplace. At the end of each day, she asks participants in her studies to report on their creative experience, by writing about it in their journals. After reviewing over 12,000 days of diary entries, Amibole made a surprising discovery. She found that people universally believed they were most creative when they were working under severe deadline pressure. But their diaries showed otherwise. They were actually least creative when fighting the clock. "Time pressure stifles creativity because people can't deeply engage with the problem," Amibole told one interviewer. "People need time to soak in a problem and let the ideas bubble up."

Key message: We've all used a tight deadline to motivate us to get creative. But suppose you wait till the last minute and develop a case of stuck? Research indicates this is a bad habit worth breaking.

#### 6. Develop creative muscle.

For much of my professional life, I've been involved in an ongoing study of the creative habits of highly successful innovators and the organizations they lead. In personal observation and countless interviews, I find they develop what I call creative muscle almost every waking hour. That is to say, they have or develop a conscious internal process to stimulate the input, throughput and output of ideas on a constant basis. They use a series of routines, habits, and techniques to keep their idea factories operating at peak levels day in and day out.

To take one example, Silicon Valley marketing guru Regis McKenna told me about his personal process for generating ideas. Whether attending board meetings, relaxing with his family, or conversing with colleagues, he takes along a moleskin idea notebook and jots down ideas as they occur. "You're sitting there in that meeting, and something is said that relates to something else you're working on, and boom – you get an idea. I'm always in this mode of looking for better ways of doing things."

Action step: Become "idea-oriented" as you go through your day. Ideas are everywhere. Avail yourself to them by observing and being curious.

#### 7. Know when to multitask and when to unitask.

It's important to recognize the difference between being stuck, and simply being distracted. We may think we are more productive when we work on multiple projects at once, but research shows otherwise. Comparing multitaskers with non-multitaskers, Stanford professor Clifford Nass concluded that multitaskers performed poorly on a variety of tasks, were easily distracted, and had difficulty focusing.

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**HAMMOCK BEACH  
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PALM COAST FLORIDA

*200 Ocean Crest Drive • Palm Coast, FL 32137*  
**(386) 246-5500**  
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**GROUP: MCASC SUMMER CONVENTION RESERVATION FORM**

**DATES: AUGUST 2-5, 2018    CUT-OFF DATE: JULY 12, 2018**

**GROUP RATES ARE AVAILABLE 3 DAYS PRE AND POST CONVENTION DATES**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home Tele. # \_\_\_\_\_

Work Tele. # \_\_\_\_\_

Fax # \_\_\_\_\_

Room Request:	1/Bedroom Ocean View Suite Main Resort	_____	\$199.00 plus resort nightly service fee and tax
	3/Bedroom Ocean View Suite Main Resort	_____	\$349.00 plus resort nightly service fee and tax
	4/Bedroom Ocean View Suite Main Resort	_____	\$439.00 plus resort nightly service fee and tax
	3/Bedroom Ocean View Suite Ocean Tower	_____	\$409.00 plus resort nightly service fee and tax
	2/Bedroom Resort View Villa Main Resort Complex	_____	\$249.00 plus resort nightly service fee and tax
	3/Bedroom Resort View Villa Main Resort Complex	_____	\$289.00 plus resort nightly service fee and tax

The Resort Service Fee Is 11.5% & Includes: complimentary local and 1-800 calls, pool access with floats, beach chairs, towels and umbrellas, fitness center with sauna and steam room, wireless internet access, shuttle service to Hammock Beach amenities, 9-hole putting course, 1-hr bike rentals, complimentary use of driving range after 2:00 pm, and self-parking.

Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_ # Of Adults / Children: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

**CREDIT CARD INFORMATION**

Type of Card \_\_\_\_\_ Name on Card \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Info: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 1 night deposit will be taken at time reservation is made. Balance will be due upon check out.
- Reservations are subject to a 7 day cancellation policy. Please cancel reservations 7 days prior to arrival to avoid forfeiture of deposit.

**For Your Convenience, You May Book Your Reservations By Calling 1-877-834-8862 & Be Sure To Mention Code 0718MCA, Fax This Form To 1-386-246-5535, Or Book Online At:**

[https://www.phgsecure.com/IBE/bookingRedirect.ashx?  
propertyCode=dabhb&group=0718MCA&arrivalDate=07-24-2018](https://www.phgsecure.com/IBE/bookingRedirect.ashx?propertyCode=dabhb&group=0718MCA&arrivalDate=07-24-2018)





# MCASC 2017 COURSE REGISTRATION



**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **COMPANY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **FAX:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE ZIP** \_\_\_\_\_ **EMAIL ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME ON LICENSE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **LICENSE NO.:** \_\_\_\_\_ **STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Payment Method

- Please Invoice
- Check Enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### NOTE:

All Courses Will Be Held At  
The MCASC State Office Training Facility  
1504 Morninghill Drive, Columbia, SC

### NOTE:

WE OFFER A DISCOUNT  
IF YOUR COMPANY REGISTERS THREE (3)  
OR MORE FOR THE SAME COURSE.  
SEND 3...THE 4<sup>TH</sup> IS FREE

### NOTICE:

ANYONE FAILING TO WITHDRAW FROM A COURSE  
TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO ITS START WILL BE BILLED  
FOR THE ENTIRE COST OF THE COURSE.  
NO EXCEPTIONS.

## AL & GA APPROVED

- Collections In The Construction Industry

**Instructor: Chuck McDonald, Esquire**

**Wednesday, December 13, 2017 – Columbia**

**Time: 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM**

**Member: \$175.00**

**Non-Member: \$225.00**

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It's a challenge to cut out multitasking when creative concentration would serve us better. We all get a sense of being productive from being able to keep several balls in the air at once. But sustained periods of multitasking can lead to burnout, and increase the risk of getting stuck. So if you're doing routine work, multitask to your heart's content. But when you're doing important non-routine work, make it a point to eliminate distractions and work on one project at a time. During these periods, put your phone on silent mode; close all web browsers and shut your door. Even when your thoughts wander, or you get sidetracked, remind yourself of the importance of focusing singularly rather than scattering your mental force across multiple issues.

Conclusion: There are lots of different ways to get unstuck. Use the ones that work for you.

Article first published as Seven Techniques For Getting Creatively Unstuck on Forbes.

Robert B. Tucker is an innovation speaker based in Santa Barbara, California.

Visit The Innovation Resource website ([www.innovationresource.com](http://www.innovationresource.com)) to find more articles on this topic written by futurist and innovation coach Robert B. Tucker.

**Associate Member:  
VALLEN DISTRIBUTION, INC.**

Vallen Distribution, Inc., formerly Hagemeyer, NA, is a full service electrical, safety, and MRO distributor with locations throughout North America and are headquartered in Charlotte, NC. Vallen came to fruition through Hagemeyer, NA's acquisition of Industrial Distribution Group (IDG) in Charlotte, NC. IDG's primary strength is in storeroom management and custom solutions for multi-location industrial customers. The two companies were roughly the same size and decided to re-enter the market as a single brand bringing way for the new name, Vallen. Vallen has 4,500+ employees across the nation with seven offices in South Carolina.

On the electrical side Vallen offers Square D distribution equipment as well as many of the top names in the electrical industry including P&S/Legrand, EGS, Thomas & Betts, Appleton, Caddy, Milwaukee, etc. For the construction market, Vallen also stands strong with several partners in the lighting fixture industry such as Philips, Lithonia, Cooper, Hubbell, and GE.

In the Carolinas, our construction project team is the best in the business providing timely competitive bids and unparalleled service throughout the project. Our project team especially stands out after the order by utilizing the many resources we have to make projects run smooth for our customers. From design assist and vendor coordination to kitting, storage and staging projects, Vallen sets the bar high. We provide customer driven reporting and just in time process improvement. We learn from each project and strive to make each one better than the previous for our customers. Vallen is an electrical contractor's best friend when it comes to finding new ways to meet the demands put on them by owners and general contractors.

Vallen also pioneered on-site project material management. We have a dedicated team of vendor managed inventory (VMI) specialists who will scan and replenish the day-to-day material needed to keep contractors on the job and out of the supply house. Let us bring the material to you and manage it on your turf. Again, the reporting we provide along with this service sets us apart from others by helping the contractor stay on top of their material usage compared to their estimate.

**Vallen looks forward to the opportunity to earn your business!**

***Vallen Distribution, Inc.***  
***4801-A Rivers Ave.***  
***N. Charleston, SC 29406-6502***  
***Phone: (843) 745-6811 Fax: (803)753-6203***

**Congratulations to our next Associate & Mechanical Members who will be highlighted in the upcoming issue of "The Tool Box":**  
**City Electric Supply, North Charleston - Associate Member**  
**R. C. Jacobs, Inc., Georgetown - Mechanical Member**

**NOVEMBER 2017 MONTHLY AREA MEETINGS**

**MIDLANDS AREA**

Friday, November 3, 2017 @ 6:30 PM  
Location: 2210 Westmoreland Lane, West Columbia  
Hosted By: Central Controls, Inc.

**CASINO NIGHT!!**

**PEE DEE AREA**

Friday, November 17, 2017 @ 6:30 PM  
Location: 319 Alligator Road, Effingham  
Sponsored By: Walkup Electrical Construction

**THANKSGIVING & CHRISTMAS  
CELEBRATION**

**PIEDMONT AREA**

Tuesday, November 21, 2017 @ 5:30 PM  
Location: Quest Brewing Company, 55 Airview Drive, Greenville  
Sponsored By: Johnson Controls, Inc.

**Note: Time Change**

**Topic: "Update On 2017 Revisions  
To AIA Contract Documents"**  
**Presented By: Chuck McDonald, Esquire  
Belser & Belser, P.A.**

**COASTAL AREA**

Tuesday, November 14, 2017 @ 6:00 PM  
Location: 3350 Meeting Street Road, Charleston  
Sponsored by: Metro Electric Company, Inc.

**Topic: "TBA"**  
**Presented By: TBA**



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1504 Morninghill Drive  
Columbia, SC 29210  
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Fax: (803) 731-0390  
E-mail: mflowers@mcasc.com  
www.mcasc.com

*Serving mechanical contractors in  
South Carolina since 1912.*

**MCASC Executive Board & Staff**

Duwayne Jacobs, President  
Bob Miller, Vice-President  
Edward Gibbs, Treasurer  
Stan Harbourt, Secretary  
Leslie Whitehurst, Associate President  
Mona Flowers, Managing Director

Mechanicals make it happen -  
Be part of the best!

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**MCASC Vision Statement**

The Mechanical Contractors Association of South Carolina (MCASC) will be the leading construction association in South Carolina for specialty contractors and suppliers in the electrical, mechanical (HVAC), and plumbing fields by serving its membership, the industry, and the Community in a vibrant and harmonious fashion.

**MCASC Mission Statement**

The Mechanical Contractors Association of South Carolina (MCASC) will provide its membership with:

- current business/technical information and support
  - a proactive political/legislative agenda
- a joint industry collaboration to improve relative business practices
- an ongoing effort to offer training opportunities for both professional and craft personnel
  - educational scholarships for deserving students
- the development of industry related career opportunities

The Association's objective for this mission is to enhance the future of the Construction Industry in South Carolina.