What is the purpose of the approach?
The purpose of Creative Problem Solving is to help you to unleash your creativity by freeing your mind of limitations. CPS stimulates you to find ‘out-of-the-box’ solutions through free association and/or free idea generation. The ideas you come up with do not have to logically connect to the given problem or situation.

Process description
CPS consists of a three-stage process that mimics your natural creative process, following six explicit steps:

STAGE 1: EXPLORE THE CHALLENGE

STEP 1 Objective finding identify the goal, wish or challenge

STEP 2 Fact finding gather the relevant data

STEP 3 Problem finding clarify the problems that need to be solved in order to achieve the goal, wish or challenge

STAGE 2: GENERATE IDEAS

STEP 4 Idea finding generate ideas that solve the identified problem

STAGE 3: PREPARE FOR ACTION

STEP 5 Solution finding move from idea to implementable solution, developing the criteria for success

STEP 6 Acceptance finding (plan for action) determine who is responsible and what is needed to implement the solution in practice

During the second phase, you can employ several heuristics to stimulate creativity and fuel the idea generation process:

1. INVENTORY: collect and recall all existing information concerning the issue

2. ASSOCIATIVE: expand ideas by making associative links to new ideas, for example by brainstorming in a design team

3. CONFRONTATIONAL: identify and break down assumptions to get to new ideas, then force-fit these into the problem at hand, such as by using Synectics

4. PROVOCATIVE: ask ‘what if not ...? ’ or ‘ what else ...? ’

5. INTUITIVE: look at your problem or challenge in a non-structured and non-rational way, using your experience and direct and personal inspiration

6. ANALYTICAL-SYSTEMATIC: systematically make an inventory of possible solutions and make systematic variations and combinations

Tips & Concerns
- In order to apply CPS successfully you should create a ‘safe’ environment where team members and other stakeholders can come up with out-of-the-box ideas.
- Criticism should be postponed and associations stimulated. If for instance a client states that he would not like to venture into a certain strategic direction, he might obstruct the creative process and block designers by demanding that they look for the right solution in the direction that he does like.
- An ‘undesirable’ idea can act as a steppingstone towards a ‘desirable’, implementable solution.
- In general, all rules for creative techniques apply here, such as a warm up and postponing criticism.

Limitations of the approach
- CPS requires a genuine interest in out-of-the-box solutions. Do not use the approach to justify existing ideas.

REFERENCES & FURTHER READING: