



THE **IDEAGEN** METHOD OF BRAINSTORMING

Henri Weijo

An open notebook is shown on the left side of the slide. The top page is a lined page with horizontal lines. The bottom page is a calendar page for February 2019, showing the days of the week (Th, Fr, Sa, Su) and the number 3. The notebook is set against a dark blue background.

AGENDA & LEARNING GOALS

1. Explain the importance of doing brainstorming in a structured way
2. Introducing the IdeaGen method of idea generation
3. Experiencing the method!

reminder

OVERALL COURSE FOCUS: CREATIVITY AS A PROCESS

- Generating a large number of ideas
- Non-judgmental, open-minded exploration

**DIVERGENT
THINKING**

**CONVERGENT
THINKING**

- Exposing ideas to criticism
- Selecting and developing ideas



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CREATIVITY

Better Brainstorming

by Hal Gregersen

From the March–April 2018 Issue

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About 20 years ago I was leading a brainstorming session in one of my MBA classes, and it was like wading through oatmeal. We were talking about something that many organizations struggle with: how to build a culture of equality in a male-dominated environment. Though it was an issue the students cared about, they clearly felt uninspired by the ideas they were generating. After a lot of discussion, the energy level in the room was approaching nil. Glancing at the clock, I resolved to at least give us a starting point for the next session.

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March 1992
Romantic Jealousy

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The Art of Creativity

When the creative spirit stirs, it animates a style of being: a lifetime filled with the desire to innovate, to explore new ways of doing things, to bring dreams of reality.

By D. Goleman, P. Kaufman, published March 1, 1992 - last reviewed on July 14, 2017



Has this ever happened to you? You're out for a jog, completely relaxed, your mind a pleasant blank. Then all of a sudden the solution to a problem you've been mulling over for weeks pops into your head. You can't help but wonder why you didn't think of it before.

***WHAT IS
BRAINSTORMING?***



***HOW DID YOU
LEARN TO DO
BRAINSTORMING?***

Productivity Loss In Brainstorming Groups: Toward the Solution of a Riddle

Michael Diehl and Wolfgang Stroebe
Universität Tübingen, Tübingen, Federal Republic of Germany

We conducted four experiments to investigate free riding, evaluation apprehension, and production blocking as explanations of the difference in brainstorming productivity typically observed between real and nominal groups. In Experiment 1, we manipulated assessment expectations in group and individual brainstorming. Although productivity was higher when subjects worked under personal rather than collective assessment instructions, type of session still had a major impact on brainstorming productivity under conditions that eliminated the temptation to free ride. Experiment 2 demonstrated that inducing evaluation apprehension reduced productivity in individual brainstorming. However, the failure to find an interaction between evaluation apprehension and type of session in Experiment 3 raises doubts about evaluation apprehension as a major explanation of the productivity loss in brainstorming groups. Finally, by manipulating blocking directly, we determined in Experiment 4 that production blocking accounted for most of the productivity loss of real brainstorming groups. The processes underlying production blocking are discussed, and a motivational interpretation of blocking is offered.

SIZE, PERFORMANCE, AND POTENTIAL IN BRAINSTORMING GROUPS¹

THOMAS J. BOUCHARD, JR.² AND MELANA HARE
University of California, Santa Barbara

Using a $3 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design, five-, seven-, and nine-man brainstorming groups were compared to "nominal" groups, composed of individuals who brainstormed alone. The third factor was due to the use of two *Es* (a male and a female). The criterion was total number of nonoverlapping ideas produced in each of the conditions. There was no main effect due to *Es* nor were there any interactions. As expected, there was a significant effect due to size and type of group. The larger groups produced more ideas and the nominal groups were more effective than the brainstorming groups. Contrary to our prediction that the nominal and brainstorming groups would converge as size increased, they diverged and the interaction was significant. The authors concluded that group brainstorming, over a wide range of group sizes, inhibits rather than facilitates creative thinking, and pooled individual effort is a far more productive procedure than group effort.

The Role of Social Anxiousness in Group Brainstorming

L. Mabel Camacho
Texas Christian University

Paul B. Paulus
University of Texas at Arlington

The authors predicted that individuals high in dispositional anxiousness would perform poorly when brainstorming in groups but not during solitary brainstorming. Experiment 1 demonstrated this result in a comparison of groups of 4 that were all high or all low in interaction anxiousness. In groups with 2 low-anxious and 2 high-anxious individuals, the low-anxious individuals lowered their performance in the direction of the high-anxious individuals. These results suggest that part of the productivity loss observed in interactive brainstorming groups may be due to the inhibited performance of individuals who are uncomfortable with group interaction. Moreover, these individuals may influence others in the group to lower their performance in line with that inhibited performance level. Experiment 2 demonstrated that the poor performance of socially anxious groups in interactive brainstorming is not dependent on whether group members have individual microphones or share 1 common microphone.

Electronic Brainstorming: The Illusion of Productivity

Alain Pinsonneault • Henri Barki • R. Brent Gallupe • Norberto Hoppen
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École des Hautes Études Commerciales, IT Department, 3000 Chemin de la Côte Ste-Catherine, Montréal, Quebec, Canada H3T 2A7, henri.barki@hec.ca
School of Business, Queens' University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, K7L 3N6 gallupe@post.queensu.ca
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Av João Pessoa, 52-Sala 11, Porto Alegre, Brazil hoppen@vortex.ufrgs.br

Electronic brainstorming (EBS) has been proposed as a superior approach to both nominal brainstorming (working alone) and face-to-face brainstorming (verbal). However, existing empirical evidence regarding EBS's superiority over nominal brainstorming is weak. Through a comprehensive examination of the process gains and process losses inherent to different brainstorming approaches, this paper explains past results. The paper also suggests that the process gain versus process loss advantages of EBS technologies may not be large enough to enable EBS groups to outperform nominal groups. In an effort to find alternate ways of using EBS more productively, three conditions thought to increase EBS's process gains and decrease its process losses (thus improving its productivity) are identified. A laboratory experiment designed to compare the productivity of ad hoc and established groups using four brainstorming technologies (nominal, EBS-anonymous, EBS-nonanonymous, verbal), generating ideas on socially sensitive and less sensitive topics, in the presence and absence of contextual cues, is

UNSTRUCTURED BRAINSTORMING

PROS:

- If all goes well, can produce a lot of ideas
- Can be fun for participants
- Social benefits, builds group cohesion

CONS:

- Often undisciplined, loss of problem focus
- Groupthink; repetitive ideas start “going around in circles”
- Can induce “illusory” or even “nonsense” creativity
- Strong individuals dominating

INTRODUCING: **IDEAGEN**

IdeaGen is an idea generation process, designed to produce “possible solutions” for a task or problem

- A possible solution is new, feasible, and specific enough that the steps to implement it are clear
- **Thus ideal for creativity in business contexts!**
- I first learned about IdeaGen during my advertising career, but have since improved it through theory



Key facts at a glance

- 20 years of experience in brand strategy and management, 10 years of which as a Strategy Director
- Management of well-known national and international brands in Germany and abroad
- Expertise in a variety of different industries
- Extensive experience in targeting & consumer insights
- Winner of the Gründerpreis (Business Founder Award) of the Wiesbaden region 2016
- MBA degree from the European Business School (ebs), Oestrich-Winkel (Dipl. Kaufmann)
- **Languages:**
German (native speaker),
English (business fluent), French, Spanish
- **Passions:**
My daughter Wilma, sailing, traveling...
and brands, of course

Career history

Tanja Lenz Strategy for Brands

Owner, 2015 – today

McCann Worldgroup Frankfurt/Berlin/Düsseldorf

Director Brand Strategy & Business Development, 2010 – 2015

Freelance work

Brand Strategist, 2007 – 2010

Grey Worldwide London

Global Planning Director for Nokia, 2006

SEK & Grey Oy Helsinki

Global Planning Director for Nokia, 2004 – 2006

Leo Burnett Deutschland Frankfurt

Regional Senior Strategic Planner, 2003 – 2004

Leo Burnett International Chicago

Senior Strategic Planner, 2002

Leo Burnett Deutschland Frankfurt

Account Supervisor, 1997 – 2001





PARTICIPANTS

- Around 5 to 8 people usually ideal
- Participant heterogeneity is desirable, especially in terms of skills and competences
- When possible, it is a good idea to include people who are not connected to the problem in some way



FACILITATOR

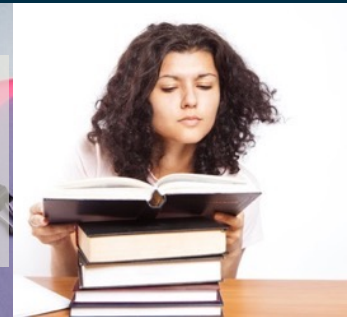
- Runs the session
- Usually stays out of the content itself
- Ensures that all ideas are captured and considered
- Manages participant interactions:
 1. dissuades negativity/judgment
 2. keeps participation democratic
 3. reminds of process goals
 4. builds psychological safety

IDEAGEN: ROLES AND PREPARATION



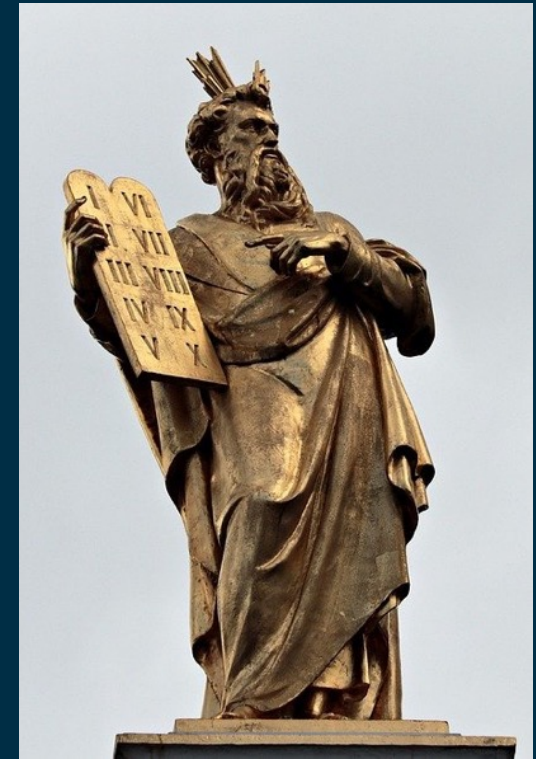
MATERIALS

pyramid boards, easels,
post-it notes, power dots,
scotch tape, excursion
materials...



IDEAGEN: GROUND RULES

1. Remember! It's about **solving a problem**
2. All points of view are as of now valid—**there are no right or wrong answers!**
3. Don't just shoot down ideas or disagree; build on them or offer alternatives!
4. Encourage others by acknowledging their ideas
5. Remember: **there will be plenty of opportunities to judge ideas later!**



IDEAGEN'S SECRET INGREDIENT: PRODUCING "SPRINGBOARDS"



- **Springboard definition:** “one sentence headlines or thought connections that result from thinking about and listening to others talk about the problem or opportunity”
- Springboards always — *always!* — start with either “I wish...” or “How to...”
- **WHY?**

MASSIVELY IMPORTANT INSIGHT!

- Having sentences start with **“I wish...”** or **“How to...”** forces the brain into a solution-oriented mindset for generating ideas
- Solves the ‘undisciplined’ problem of regular brainstorming → Solutions align with the problem and connect to each other!



SPRINGBOARDS (cont.)

- **Example:** if the “client” is an amusement park, and the orienting idea is “**How to create a unique amusement park experience**”:
 1. *“How to entertain millions of people, one person at a time”*
 2. *“I wish the park brought back memories of good places and times”*
 3. *“How to be the theme park that doesn’t feel rushed and feels friendly”*
 4. *“How to use artificial sunrises and sunsets to create a full day every two hours”*

EXERCISE:

How to organize an unforgettable bachelor(ette) party.



EASY TO DO ON PRESEMO AND OTHERS

How to improve learning during Covid-19

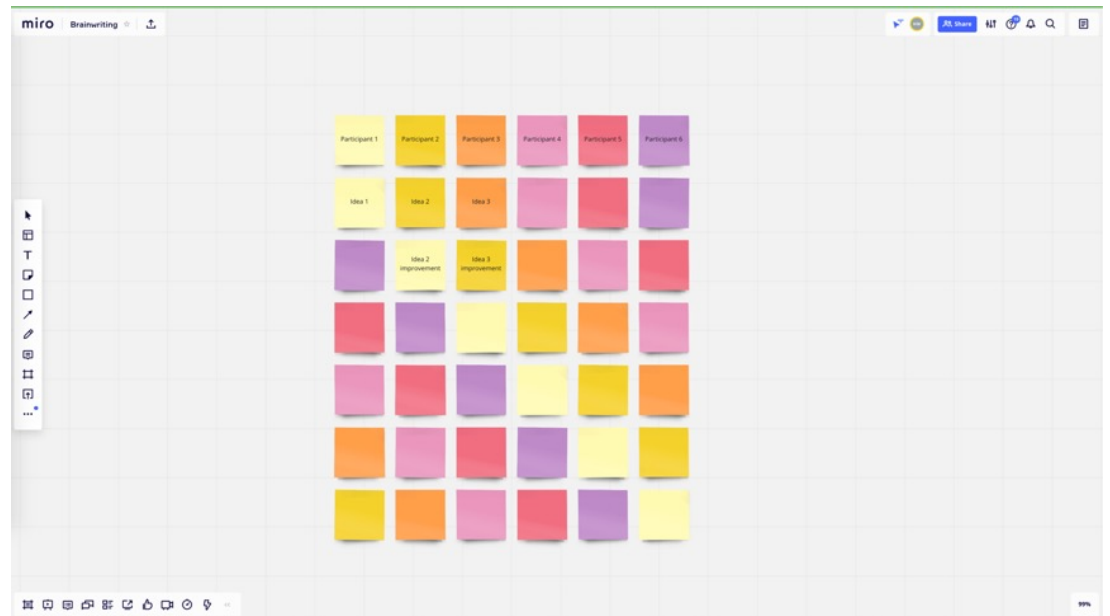
Send

Choose how to inspire without being corny

Chosen **I wish there were candy**

Choose How to improve the classroom experience

Choose I wish there was more support for those lacking a computer



OVERALL COURSE FOCUS: CREATIVITY AS A PROCESS

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NEXT STEPS AFTER THE INITIAL ROUND

- After each round, the team usually votes on the best ideas that give the most interesting future directions for the next round of springboards (**remember, convergence**)
- **Selection criteria:**
 1. A good springboard leads into an interesting direction
 2. It is not too broad, not too narrow
 3. Diversity: the chosen springboards need to lead to multiple directions
 4. Similar springboards can be combined to get a sense of direction

CONVERGENCE & BOUNDARY EXPLORATION

- If you have an emergent direction that you want to explore, assert conditions!
- You do this by saying “I wish... **AND/BUT....**” or “How to... **AND/BUT...**”
- This creates stronger connections between ideas, but also makes limitations or pitfalls more salient
 - *“I wish the theme park felt Japanese, but not too Japanese*
 - *“How to make the theme park feel exclusive, but also inviting”*
 - *“I wish the theme park had a lot of parking space, and good walkability.”*

FUN AND EFFECTIVE VARIATIONS

1. **Send them off:** send people off (e.g. during a break) and ask them to bring back something and use it in the next IdeaGen round
2. **World of...:** How the problem would look if the “world” would be a certain way (e.g. world of Star Wars, world war III, end of oil dependency...)
3. **Absurd or worst possible solution**



"How to organize an unforgettable bachelor(ette) party"

(Creativity in Marketing, spring, 2020)

IW we could go the afternoon at the wedding
 so that there would still be the surprise
 HT we stopped and not giving the baby guard
 HT host all parties in Dec 1
 IW it was broadcasted the next
 weekend
 IW Plectra eat the cake
 IW I could take money
 from it also leave
 IW by the time the party had
 about 2000 people
 HT there was professional
 about the event but they
 would be outside
 IW the party would need
 organization and about outdoor
 discussions
 HT keep on schedule do not
 stress about it

IW everyone had good time
 -1- because friends
 there were just the
 subscribers + members
 no limitations
 keep on schedule
 make things open up
 no regrets
 keep in touch
 find a place
 minimize cost and
 maximize comfort
 document party
 no special planning
 IW it can be hard to get together
 IW something about how to do it
 IW it will be easy to organize
 IW a "theme" thing
 HT what to budget
 HT get into trouble
 IW everyone feels "not done"
 IW it's not possible to do both
 HT make another by yourself
 HT great to do it
 HT know who you
 HT make sure things run smooth
 IW no one is disappointed
 HT of "hangover"
 HT to - responsibility

HT FIND OUT EVERYONE'S BUDGET
 IW THERE WAS NO TRAVELING
 IW WE COULD EASILY MEET EVERYONE'S EXPECTATIONS
 HT DRINKS/SMOKE COMPLETELY FREE
 IW EVERYTHING WAS BASED ON AI
 HT USE ALL 7 SENSES OF HUMAN
 IW THE BACHELOR/ETTE WOULD PLAN THE PARTY HIM/HER THEMSELVES
 HT USE THE PARTY MATERIAL IN A WEDDING

HT do an in the middle of
 include TECTONICS
 HT night not too quiet
 HT plan for bad weather
 HT wear fun
 HT everyone had the fun
 HT include anyone in planning
 HT include children
 HT NO CHILDREN!
 HT include drinks / surprise
 HT to buy that fits all
 IW there were 2 parties
 IW climate + happy
 HT climatic really climatic
 IW to ask everybody what expect
 IW climatic answer is the party was
 HT make game

HT to make sure people are safe
 IW decreasing quantity
 IW that counts + atmosphere
 IW decreasing music volume
 HT keep on time
 IW to have good background music
 IW to buy money from
 HT share money + wedding
 IW there's a plan B
 IW everyone from the other
 side of the world could come

IW party was wild but
 not to destroy wedding
 HW make party affordable but
 luxurious
 HW memorable but not
 shocking
 HW find sponsors but
 without bribes
 HW have enough food but no excess
 HW minimize travel time but have
 new locations
 HW to know sponsors availability
 but call sponsor
 IW everyone were progress party
 didn't cost anything
 IW there was stress and also fun
 everyone enjoyed it and had fun
 HT to use atmosphere of the wedding
 IW to have enough about the wedding party
 IW it has to be fun
 IW the party could be off the
 other side of the world
 HT stick to help and get to travel
 HT mix the material but not too much
 HT make it perfect for the bride but not
 make her on the planning
 HT there representing what coming events
 HT find a good theme that's not too hard
 HT get that picture but make it as small as
 possible
 HT everyone will see the wedding they would rather
 have it, not see it on their phone

IW China made the outfits
 IW we had hunting accessories
 IW the lady host was invited
 IW the party ended in liberation
 IW sponsors would send gift gifts
 IW everyone had a money belt
 IW it was hosted in the games
 location
 IW party in a capital
 IW all participants were outside
 IW no one gets killed
 IW everyone had fabric dresses
 IW bachelor party was a competition
 of who was cooler
 IW the winner is the one who gets married
 IW candidates were each other's
 IW there was enough food
 IW that Gabe was responsible
 IW everyone had magic skills
 HT make better to something productive

HT get sponsors
 HT differentiate following
 HT ensure everyone survives
 IW people come to the party
 HT make the party a game
 HT find 2 dates fit everyone
 IW there's an APP for that
 HT surprise the organizer
 HT keep everything a secret

IW it would trouble the marriage
 HT surprise the bride or groom?
 HT know what they want for the party?
 HT prevent incidents?
 HT avoid admissions? notes?
 HT make it different from traditional bachelor/ette parties
 HT divide the organization around?
 IW there was a follow-up party
 IW multiple parties were held together
 HT be children

FINISHING UP

- The best overall ideas are voted on best on pre-determined criteria (e.g. **feasibility**, **distinct**, **newness**, **interesting**, **potential**...)
- The facilitator opens the floor for debate and criticism:
 1. Check for understandings vis-à-vis original problem
 2. Positives / Likes / Dislikes / Potentials / Missed opportunities
 3. Find consensus on key concerns
 4. Turn lingering concerns into “How to...”
 5. **Figure out next steps:**
 1. More research into problem based on IdeaGen results
 2. When to do more IdeaGen rounds

A hand-drawn diagram on a whiteboard. The diagram consists of several interconnected boxes and lines, with various sticky notes attached to it. The sticky notes contain handwritten text such as 'MARK IT DOES', 'COMMITTER', 'MEETING (Central App)', 'LOCAL', 'VOICE', 'CARD', 'UNDERGE', 'TUBE', 'GR SOLUTION', 'TIME APP', 'CONVULSION', 'MOBILE RECEIVER DETECTOR', 'TIME/STATS', 'CREDIT', 'ELEVATOR FITCH', and 'Never get signal'. A hand is visible on the right side of the whiteboard, pointing towards the diagram. The background is a light-colored wall.

SUMMARIZING

- Brainstorming can—and should—be learned, and is greatly improved when there is a process
- IdeaGen is a powerful, efficient, and above all flexible brainstorming process
- You will only improve through practice!

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THANK YOU!

Q&A?