

#2

*THE IDEAGEN
METHOD*

AGENDA

- The IdeaGen method of, well, idea generation
- Applying the method for the first time for the rest of the lecture

***WHAT IS
BRAINSTORMING?***



PROS AND CONS OF REGULAR BRAINSTORMING

- **Pros:**

- Produces a lot of ideas
- Can be fun

- **Cons**

- Can be undisciplined, loss of problem focus
- Easily starts “going around in circles”
- Groupthink potential

INTRODUCING IDEAGEN

- IdeaGen is an idea generation process, designed to produce “possible solutions” for a particular task or problem
- A possible solution is new, feasible, and specific enough that the steps to implement it are clear → Ideal for business environments
- IdeaGen is informed by theories of creativity and techniques that elicit solutions beyond conventional thinking and improve creativity
- **Disclosure:** I’ve received extensive training in this, but don’t know the originator of this process (google didn’t help)

USUAL BREAKDOWN OF PARTICIPANTS

- Problem owner
- Facilitator
- Participants

PROBLEM OWNER

- The person with the most responsibility or authority to direct efforts of the IdeaGen team and take the next steps after the idea session
- For example, a marketing manager, brand manager, product manager etc.

FACILITATOR

- The person who runs the session
- This person focuses on the process itself and aims to be objective by staying out of the content itself
- Ensures that all ideas are captured and are given all due consideration
- **IMPORTANT!** Makes sure participants avoid negativity and judgment during the idea generation process

PARTICIPANTS

- Usually 5 to 8 people generating ideas for the problem owner
- When possible, it is a good idea to include who are not connected to the problem in some way

GROUND RULES 1/4

1. The goal is to solve a problem or generate ideas for the problem owner
2. **There are no right or wrong answers**
3. All points of view are as of now valid
4. Diversity of opinions ultimately leads to better solutions

GROUND RULES 2/4

5. If you disagree with an idea that's been expressed, build on it or offer a different solution
6. We want large quantities of ideas, not critique
7. Do not censor yourself and others
8. There will be plenty of opportunity to judge ideas later

GROUND RULES 3/4

9. Encourage others by acknowledging their thoughts and ideas, build on them
10. The ideas need to be fresh and new, which necessitates frequent "excursions"
to
 - Look at the problem from new angles
 - Moving away from the problem itself altogether
11. However, all the ideas are ultimately connected back to the problem

GROUND RULES 4/4

12. Embrace the absurd! Absurd things are easily made feasible.

— Einstein: "If at first an idea is not absurd then there is no hope for it."

13. If you are not speaking, write down your ideas for later

14. Enjoy yourself! If you unlock the feeling of play you'll do better

PREPARATION

- Seating arrangement for 5 to 8 (circle usually best), role clarification
- Timing of process (breaks, pace changes and “moving along” points)
- Materials: e.g. pyramid boards, easels, post-it notes, power dots, scotch tape, excursion materials
- Pre-reading materials, especially in organizations and marketing
 - For example, reading consumer reports or “A day in the life of...” stories of typical consumers

THE PROCESS (OFFICIAL)

1. Planning meeting
2. Consumer Familiarization
3. IdeaGen
 1. Introducing problem
 2. Briefing
 3. Springboards
 1. For each springboard:
 1. Initial ideas
 2. Excursions
 3. Absurd solutions
 4. Second generation solutions
4. Finishing and evaluating ideas
5. Next actions

SPRINGBOARDS

- Definition: one sentence headlines of thought and connections that have been formed as a result of thinking about and listening to others talk about the problem or opportunity
- **Springboards always start with “I wish...” or “How to...”**
- **WHY?**

MASSIVELY IMPORTANT INSIGHT!

- Having sentences start with “I wish...” or “How to...” forces the brain to adopt a solution-oriented mindset for idea generation
- Solves the ‘undisciplined’ problem of regular brainstorming
- Solutions always align with problem

SPRINGBOARDS

- **Definition: one sentence headlines of thought and/or connections that have been formed as a result of thinking about and/or listening to others talk about the problem or opportunity**
- Springboards can be:
 - Redefining the problem in your own words
 - Specific ideas and how to solve it
 - “pet ideas” or aspirations
 - Associations, facts, images, “absurd” ideas, jokes
 - ... basically, anything at all

SPRINGBOARDS (cont.)

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

EXERCISE:

How to improve the dining experience in Väre's top floor food court?

SPRINGBOARD SELECTION

- After a round of generation, the team usually votes on the best ideas that give the most interesting future directions → ultimate choice still with problem owner, usually
- Springboards with overlap are grouped together to get a sense of converging direction
- Selection criteria:
 - A good springboard leads into an interesting direction
 - It is not too broad (like an evaluation criteria)
 - It is not too narrow (like an idea itself)
 - Diversity: the chosen springboards need to lead to multiple directions
 - You can redefine the orienting phrase for future rounds

EXCURSIONS

- Sidesteps in the process to reinvigorate the team
- **Lateral excursions** unearth materials that are not readily apparent
- **Linear excursions** deepen problem-specific understanding or investigate the same problem from a different angle
- Encouraged to use both
- **REMEMBER: DIVERGENCE AND CONVERGENCE!**

BOUNDARY EXPLORATION

- If you have an emergent direction that you want to explore, there is a way to hone in on that direction by putting more emphasis on conditions of ideas
- You do this by saying “I wish... AND....” or “How to... BUT...”
 - “I wish the theme park felt Japanese, but not too Japanese
 - “How to make the theme park exclusive, and also friendly”
 - “How to make the theme park fun, but not too crazy.”
 - “I wish the theme park had a lot of parking space, and good walkability.”

LATERAL EXCURSION EXAMPLES

- **Word association:** A word is chosen at random (like “random page on Wikipedia”) and all associations to it are written down
- **Picture postcard gallery:** Group members choose a postcard from a random pile and are asked to tell them why they like it
- **Spin the globe:** Spin a globe ball and describe the positive emotions relating to that place
- **Send them off:** literally send people off (like during a break) and ask them to bring back something (unrelated) that inspired them, tell the group why and describe the emotions
- **Absurd solution**

LINEAR EXCURSION EXAMPLES

- **Collage:** Team uses magazine, pictures, pens to create a collage relevant to the problem (e.g. customer lifestyle)
- **Personal analogy:** Personify an aspect of the problem by telling a story of how you feel about the problem
- **Howework:** ask the team to do research on the problem, or a particularly interesting springboard (e.g. consumer research)
- **World of...:** Think 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...)

FINISHING UP

- The best overall ideas are voted on
- Ideas that are fresh and appealing are more valuable than feasible ones (big C vs. small c.)
- The solutions can be voted on based on criteria (newness, feasibility, distinct, funniest, brand fit)

EXERCISE:

*Vote based on these
criteria*

**feasibility, distinct, most
interesting, room for improvement**

FINISHING UP (cont.)

- **Discuss: the steps with itemized responses**
 1. Check for understandings of original problem
 2. Positives / Likes / Potentials
 3. Turn lingering concerns into “How to...”
 4. Select key concerns
 5. One more round of ideas to address concerns
 6. Potentially reframe the entire idea, and repeat the process