

SUPPORT METHODS: IDEA BRAINSTORMING

IF YOU DON'T YET HAVE AN IDEA THAT IS GOOD ENOUGH

What is this for?

Now that you know the problem you want to solve and who your customer or the user is, it is finally time to generate ideas. This is called brainstorming.

Several brainstorming methods have their roots in the 1950's, so this is like going back to basics. You might have heard the word Design Thinking (DT) already before, and these brainstorming methods are also familiar DT methods.

Instructions

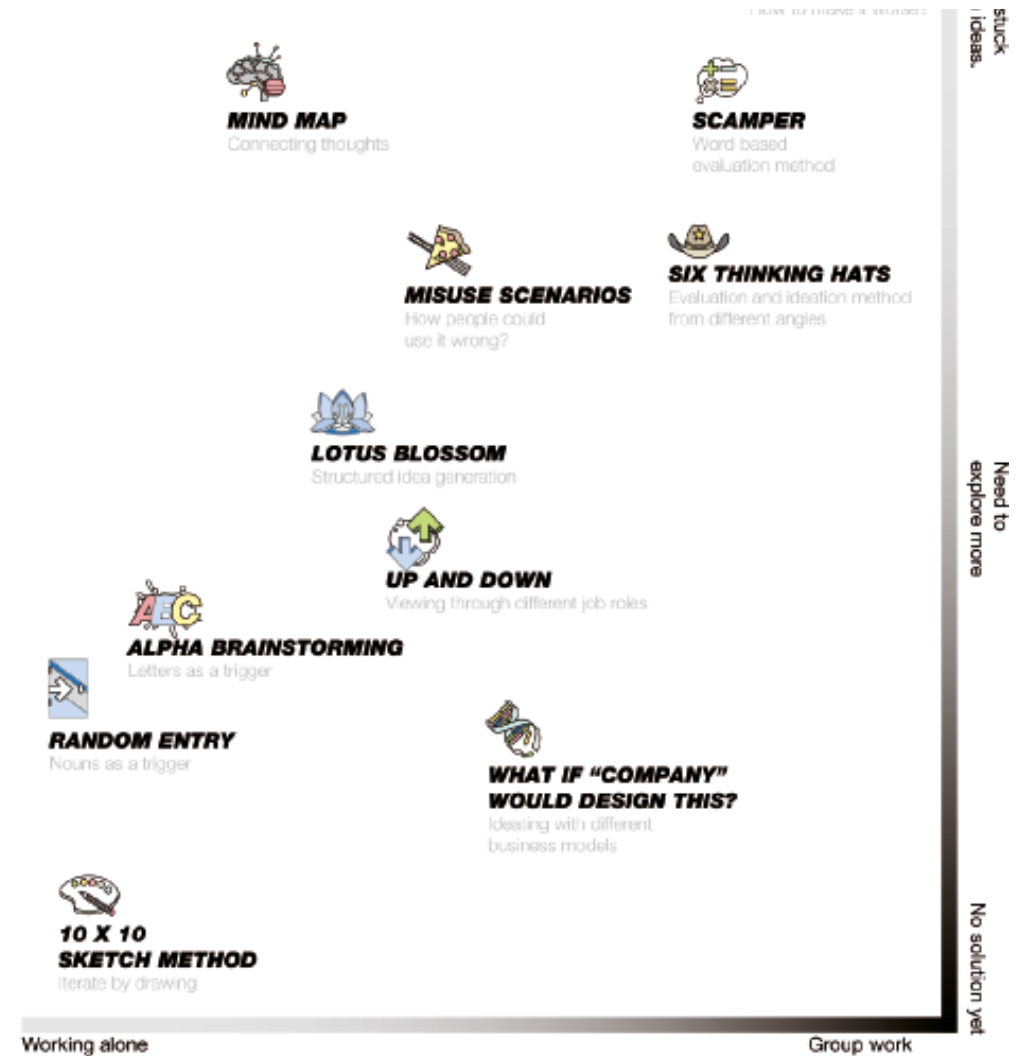
If you have a professional facilitator with you, they may facilitate using different methods than what is presented here. Whereas, the following methods can be used also when you brainstorm without support.

First, you can try out different methods and then select the ones that feel most comfortable. Some of these can be done alone, but it is highly recommended you do these together with other people. Great ideas are often built on top of the ideas of other people, even if the original idea would seem to be a bit too far from the box.. Involving others will help you ask the right questions, challenge the idea, and eventually you may even result in a better idea.

After reviewing the methods:

- Select the one that inspires you and the people ideating with you.
- Reserve post-its and a marker pen, paper and large drawing boards or walls so that all ideas are visible at the same time.
- Working in a group, allocate the brainstorming time for each step and keep track that all steps are done in time.

More methods can be found online – Look for 06 IDEATION at <https://www.thisisservice.design.doing.com/methods>.



ALPHA BRAINSTORMING

When & how to use?

Alpha brainstorming method can be used alone or with a group of people. It's a good exercise to force ideas in volumes if you don't have any ideas to start with. Note: even if some ideas seem a bit silly in the beginning, they may trigger new, better ideas. The method highlights the connections between ideas which is the starting point for a design solution.

STEPS

1. Define the problem you're about to solve.
2. Write down letters vertically and in alphabetical order (starting with A). If you do the exercise in a group, you can share the letters among the team.
3. Then, starting from the letter on the top, invent a solution that starts with that specific letter. Write it down.
4. If you get stuck in a certain letter, skip it and come back later.
5. Once all the letters entail an idea, cluster similar ideastgether. Note: if working in a group, multiple people may have the same idea, even if associated with a different letter.
6. Once the clusters are in place, select three best ideas. If working in a group, let each team member first vote for the three best solutions in silence by marking them with stickers (dot, star, heart) before together choosing the three best ideas.

ANTI-PROBLEM

When & how to use?

Anti-problem method helps you when you're stuck – e.g. if you feel like your ideas are not solving your problem. In this exercise, it's best to ask someone to work with you.

STEPS

1. Find a situation that needs to be resolved or a problem that needs a solution.
2. Describe what you're tackling together: what is the anti-problem, or the opposite for the current problem. (For example, if the problem is sales conversion, the players would brainstorm ways to get customers to avoid buying the product.) The more extreme the problem's opposite is, the better
3. In a group of three to four people, write down solutions for your anti-problem using markers and post-its. Do this in silence for 5-10 minutes and note that quantity is the key.
4. Discuss the insights and discoveries that you have made and try turning them into solutions for the original problem.
5. Write down the new ideas discovered for the original problem.

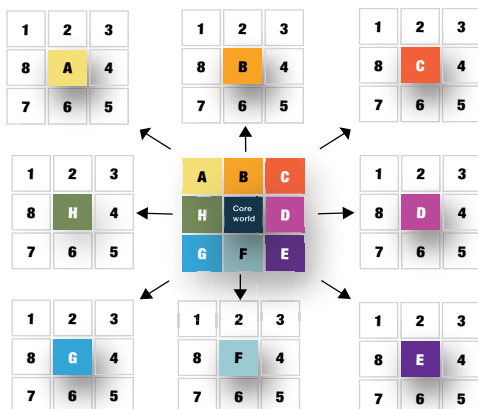
LOTUS BLOSSOM

When & how to use?

The Lotus blossom method can be used alone or in a group, and it helps you to explore the concept more. The method generates hierarchy and several new ideas. It allows you to widen the perspective and see the connections between problem components.

STEPS

1. Draw the lotus blossom diagram visible below.
2. Write the problem in the center box of the diagram.
3. Write eight related ideas around the center.
4. Each idea then becomes the central idea of a new theme or blossom.
5. Each idea then becomes the central idea of a new theme or blossom.
6. You can also use this method to first expand the problem into smaller parts and then create solutions for these eight core problems. I.e. in Step 3, instead of related ideas, you write eight problems around the center – and then start solving them.
7. Look for similarities or pattern and select the best solutions.



MIND MAP

When & how to use?

Mind map is suitable also when you work alone. This method helps you to understand connections, analyse information and summarise your thoughts.

STEPS

1. Reserve a big paper or a whiteboard.
2. Start at the center with a keyword or an idea and draw a box around this node.
3. Use images, symbols or words for nodes.
4. Select key words.
5. Keep the key word names of nodes as simple and as short as possible.
6. Associated nodes should be connected with lines to show affinities.
7. Make the lines same length as the word / image they support.
8. Use emphasis, such as thicker lines, to show the strength of associations in your mind map.
9. Use radial arrangement of nodes.
10. Goal is to identify relationships, summarise and memorise information.

MISUSE SCENARIOS

When & how to use?

You can use Misuse scenarios -method when brainstorming alone or with a group. However, in order to make your existing solution better, the key is to involve an actual internal user or an expert who knows the customer. This method helps you to identify possible misuse of the idea (both unintentional and malicious) thus preventing the failure of the solution in use.

STEPS

1. Think about scenarios where your customer / user may misuse the product or service.
2. Talk to experts and ask them to provide more scenarios of misuse.
3. Consider the context of use and how that may influence misuse.
4. Brainstorm to create scenarios of misuse.
5. Create list of misuse scenarios.
6. Brainstorm remedies for misuse cases and modify design to prevent misuse.

RANDOM ENTRY

When & how to use?

Random Entry is an individual ideation method that helps you to generate new ideas on a green field situation. It relies on the brain's capability to build patterns and enables the user to move laterally across the patterns to find ideas that are not generated by using logical thinking

STEPS

1. Select a focus, such as "new ideas for developing a propeller".
2. Take a list of words (nouns).
3. Close your eyes and randomly select a word from the list, "sunshine" for example.
4. Connect the random word with the focus and let your brain associate for one minute – e.g. a propeller and sunshine make me think of....
5. Write down all new ideas and repeat the steps 3-4 times until you have the needed number of ideas.

SCAMPER

When & how to use?

Scamper is a fun group brainstorming method where the group is asked to evaluate an existing idea. The method is about using seven words as prompts for generating solutions to your problem. Some ideas may again be impractical but those can lead to new and better ideas.

STEPS

1. Have a diverse group of people (3-8).
2. Select a product or a service to which you apply the method.
3. Ask questions about the product / service you identified using the scamper mnemonic as a guidance and create as many ideas as you can.
 - Substitute
 - Combine
 - Adapt
 - Modify
 - Put to another use
 - Eliminate
 - Reverse
4. Analyse ideas.
5. Prioritise ideas.
6. Select the best idea or several ideas for further brainstorming

SIX THINKING HATS

When & how to use?

Six thinking hats is a group exercise. The method is good when you want to explore a concept from different viewpoints or understand the effects of decision making. You can frame the insight and generate solutions.

STEPS

1. Get a group of 4-8 people.
2. Reserve at least 90 minutes.
3. State the problem or idea that you will discuss about.
4. Then it's time for the six hats -phase. Assign the below hats in your team. Then each one of you is to consider the idea/problem based on the hat color you've been assigned to. Write comments accordingly.
 - White hat: Write down facts about the subject; information, numbers, data needs and gaps.
 - Green hat: Generate ideas on how the issue should be handled.
 - Yellow hat: List all logical positive aspects and consequences of the ideas.
 - Black hat: List the possible drawbacks.
 - Green hat: Generate ideas on how these issues should be handled.
 - Red hat: Consider alternative solutions by using your intuition and feelings.
 - Blue hat: Summarise and finish the meeting

UP AND DOWN

When & how to use?

You can do the Up and Down -exercise alone if you understand different personas and the context. However, if you have any doubts, ask an expert. The Up and down-method is to give you insight on how differently the subject is approached even within the company.

STEPS

1. Select the subject.
2. Brainstorm the problem from the viewpoint of the customer's / user's CEO (or both).
3. Brainstorm the problem from the viewpoint of the customer's / user's employee (or both) who would use this in their daily work.
4. How does the problem differ when you approach it from different perspectives?
5. Formulate how to solve the problem when approaching it from these different viewpoints

WHAT IF "A COMPANY" WOULD DESIGN THIS

When & how to use?

Six thinking hats is a group exercise. The method is good when you want to explore a concept from different viewpoints or understand the effects of decision making. You can frame the insight and generate solutions.

STEPS

1. Define the problem.
2. Select inspiring companies from the same industry and from a totally different industry – e.g. Ikea, Tesla, Audi, Airbnb, Über, Apple, Microsoft.
3. Make sure participants understand the characteristics of each company's offering and their business model.
4. Brainstorm what solutions these different companies would offer to your problem and invent new solutions to your problem on that basis.
5. Evaluate and select best ideas for further development.
6. In a group, let each member first vote for top three solutions in silence by marking them with stickers (dot, star, heart) before together choosing the best three ideas.

10 X 10 SKETCH

When & how to use?

10 x 10 sketch method can be used alone or with help. This method is useful when designing a physical product – as you draw it, you understand the appearance and functions better. In this exercise, the goal is to create 10x10 fast cartoon like sketches around the idea.

STEPS

1. Create 10 main sketches, each on a paper of its own. Maximum size for each sketch is 1,5 dm times 2,5 dm.
2. Then take the first original sketch and create 10 new sketches about the same idea.
3. Repeat this Step 2 with the remaining nine original sketches.
4. Evaluate sketches with an expert.
5. Select some for more detailed sketchin

STILL HAVING PROBLEMS IN IDEATION?

Some other ways to trigger you mind

- Go for a walk, cycling or do some other exercise that doesn't take all your attention but allows you to think freely.
- Draw or doodle and keep the illustrations visible (ensure you have always paper and pen within arm's reach).
- Take a shower.
- Write ideas down and keep the lists visible.
- Ask your friends what they think about the subject.
- Ask from experts.
- Ask from users.
- Workshop together.
- Search from google.
- Build on top of the ideas you hear and see.
- Make more research to know the subject, user/customer and competition thoroughly.