

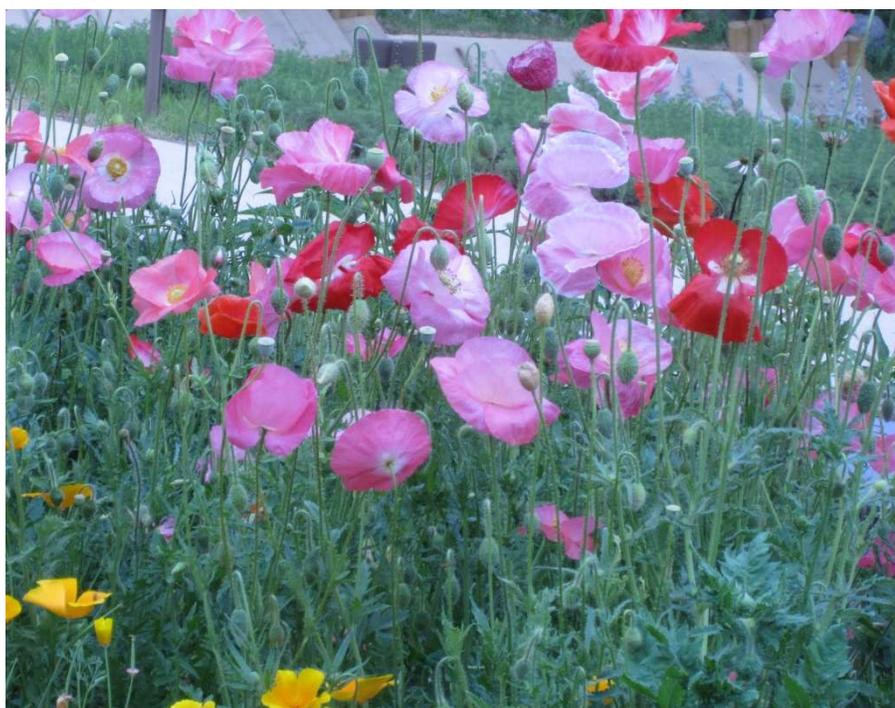
# MEETINGS THAT ROCK!

By North Star Facilitators



## *Enhancing Your Facilitator Creativity Competency<sup>®</sup>*

**Handout 5**



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# Introduction to This Competency

## *Evoke Group Creativity*



### What will we cover?

The focus of this handout is to help you grow in your competency to work with groups and individuals to generate creative new ideas. New ideas are used to solve problems, move forward from challenges, or create better ways of doing or being. To create the conditions necessary for creative thinking, facilitators intentionally “set the stage<sup>1</sup>” to affect the group mood and setting. Thus we will cover how to set the stage and context for creative idea generation. Creative idea generation includes both new ideas (bold and new) as well ways that are “tried and true”. Tried and true ideas are ones that have worked in either this situation or in other comparable situations.

Please note although we will cover the classic brainstorming techniques and theory, we are not keen on using the term brainstorming too much. It seems like everyone does brainstorming but leaves the group with no tangible end product. We do not advocate brainstorming lists which have no closure or product at the end of brainstorming. See more on this in this handout.

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<sup>1</sup> “Stage” means you are orchestrating or creating an atmosphere with props, tone, visuals, relevant information, etc.

### In this handout, you will have a chance to learn and/or practice:

- Typical scenarios for when idea generation is best used
- A framework for generating ideas
- Why classical brainstorming often does not work and how to fix it
- Tips to ensure your idea generating sessions go well
- Five great visual and kinesthetic tools/techniques for generating ideas
- Practice exercises with each tool
- A great list of props and supplies to help your groups do great idea generation
- “Best in the market” books and other resources you may want to consult to further your journey to becoming a leader of idea generation sessions.

### In the Appendix, we include:

- FAQ’s (Frequently Asked Questions)
- Examples of idea generation methods
- Sample agendas for when generating ideas



## WHY do you want a group to **Generate Ideas?**

Some groups resist creative thinking or anything new – they just want to stick with the same old way of doing things. So it is best to use idea generating techniques when one or more of the following conditions exist:

- There is a tough problem to solve. It requires a lot of different perspectives to get a good solution.
- The question or issue has perplexed decision-makers – they cannot seem to see a way to resolve it.
- People have not changed the way they do things and are being challenged by outside competition.
- The technology, products or policies are no longer compatible with current similar products, policies or programs.

*“There is no doubt that creativity is the most important human resource of all. Without creativity, there would be no progress, and we would be forever repeating the same patterns.”*

-Edward de Bono

*“The significant problems that we face cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”*

-Albert Einstein

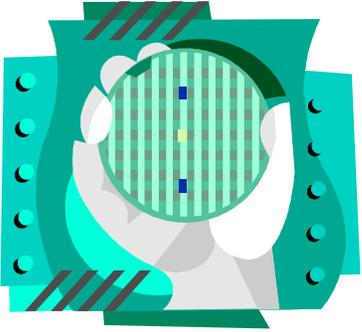
*“Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it.”*

-Henry Ford

Source: [www.unthinkablethinking.com](http://www.unthinkablethinking.com)

# WHEN do you want a group to Generate Ideas?

See our ideas below for some typical scenarios.

Typical scenarios that need idea generating	The image
<p>- In house teams are not collaborating on projects that would go better if they shared resources, ideas and skill-sets. The idea generating session might focus on:</p> <p><i>What are some easy ways we could collaborate more on our projects and leverage our resources?</i></p>	
<p>- A group of academics in the health field are proposing to create curriculum for health programs for indigenous people around the world. The idea generating sessions might focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What topics are typically included in other public health curriculums?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are all the factors that we need to consider in designing the curriculum?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the key components of an indigenous global health program we'd like to include?</i></li> </ul>	
<p>- A private school is not keeping as many international students as they like. The idea generating session might focus on:</p> <p><i>What can we do to retain and attract more international students to our school?</i></p>	
<p>- A Not-For-Profit agency is struggling to stay focused on their mission because they go after funding wherever they can find it. The idea generating session might focus on:</p> <p><i>What decision- making criteria should we apply as we consider new funding sources?</i></p>	

## Exercise 1 – Your Scenarios

What organizational scenarios have you encountered that would benefit from creative idea generation?

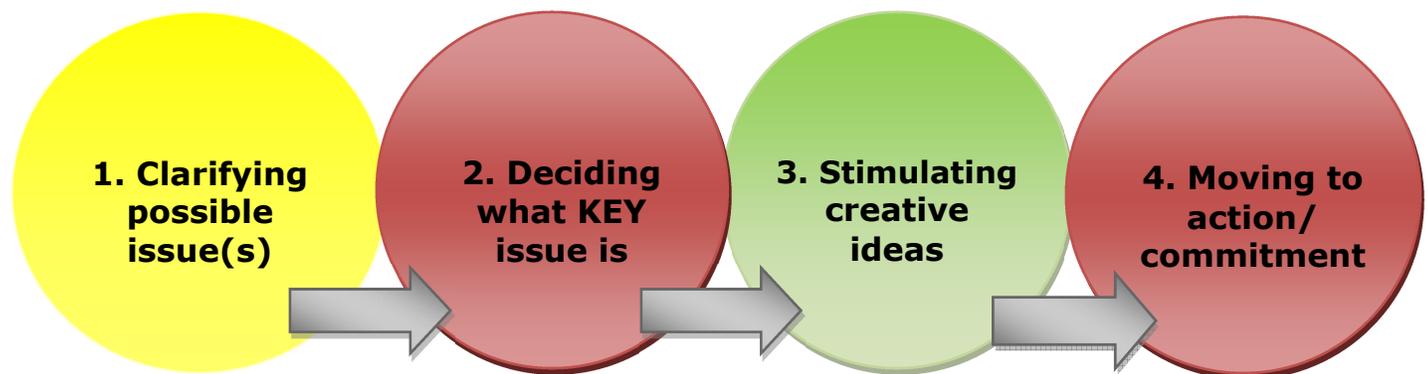
What personal or community scenarios can you think of that would benefit from creative idea generation?

What is one scenario of your own you'd like to practice using one of our tools in this module?

# A Framework for Generating Ideas

Remember in the “The Consensus Facilitator competency” handout, we introduced Bob Wiele’s “Smart for Life” traffic light system as a framework for consensus. We can use the traffic light analogy here too.

In this case, we propose a framework for every idea generating session as follows:



In summary,

Go Slow----- Stop-----GO! -----Stop

**In Step 1**, we are slowing the group down to help the group really understand the problem (thus the yellow traffic light signal). We might use dialogue frameworks to do that.

**In Step 2**, we are stopping until we are clear about what the problem is or what we are trying to solve; thus the red traffic light signal. We might use Six Hats or consensus methods for this.

**In Step 3**, we are deliberately and creatively setting the stage for the group to be free flowing and moving with as many ideas as they can, thus the green traffic light signal. We might use brainstorming with sticky notes, mind-mapping or graphic visual flow charts for this.

**In Step 4**, we are getting the group to stop again and conclude which ideas are the best and then commit to action (thus the red traffic light signal). It does not always have to happen this way but this a good framework to help you do masterful idea generation sessions. We might use criteria setting, ranking of ideas, dot voting or gradients of agreement scale for this.

Remember these 4 steps to idea generating to be more effective in your idea generating sessions.

# Why classical brainstorming often does not work and how to fix it

We suspect you have seen unskillful brainstorming technique by people who are not trained in facilitation skills.

Typically here is how (unskillful) brainstorming goes:

- The meeting person says: We have problem x. What can we solve it?.
- They write down as many ideas as they can get from whoever volunteers an answer on a flipchart or whiteboard
- Their writing is not legible or visible to everyone in the room.
- They thank everyone for their ideas.

## What's wrong with the above scenario?

Failure – danger!!! We hope you have never experienced this unskillful a session but we are reluctant to say we have seen it many times. Please do not be “guilty” of this type of scenario ever again.

### Exercise 2 - What was wrong?

Brainstorm up to five things that were not done optimally in the above description of typical brainstorming and then check the footnote below for our answers. Don't peek! Hide the answers.

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<sup>2</sup> They did not follow the framework given above. They did not give any warm up to generate ideas. They did not ensure everyone understands and agrees to the problem. They did not call on everyone to ensure all ideas are heard. They did not narrow down this vast number of ideas. They did not offer any prioritizing process for making a decision about which ideas to use and how to use them.

# Three tips to ensure your idea generating sessions go well

**Tip: Make the room and context setting conducive to creative idea generation.**

At the beginning of the session, lay out many toys, rocks, and other props. Have participants choose one object that appeals to them and tell their small group why this toy or prop symbolizes what energy or ideas they hope to bring to the group together. After the safety of small group sharing, you may wish to have them share the reasons for their choice with the whole group.

1. Spread long white paper on tables available for doodling. Doodling means random sketching and symbol making by participants at their own leisure. This paper can be usually be bought in art or restaurant supply stores.
2. Multi-colored markers & highlighters, post-it notes, stickers, etc. - Encourage participants to use various tools for their idea generation. You can tell them what to use for which process. See below for the tools we offer.
3. It often helps to encourage people to a) get up and move about b) talk to others or c) have a large group facilitated dialogue to warm up their brains to the topic – i.e., asking sequenced open-ended questions such as described in handout #3.

**Tip : Give clear instructions.**

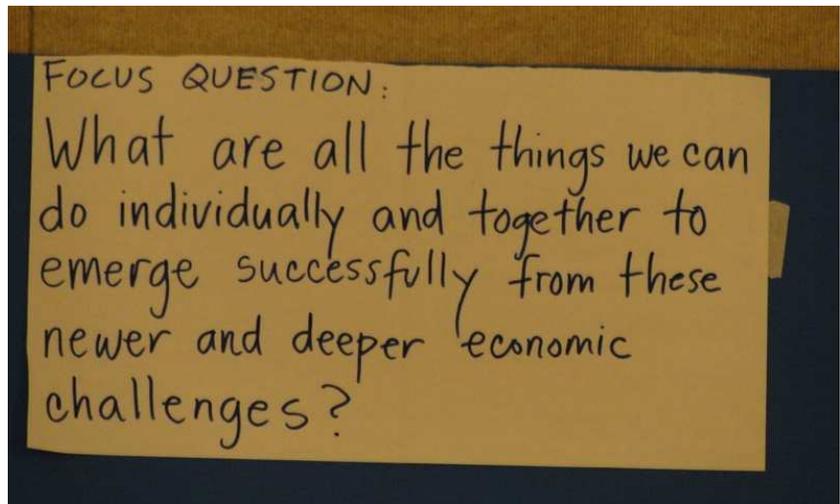
When undertaking a creative idea session, it's a good thing to be very clear in your instructions.

Here is a step by step list of things to do to ensure your instructions are clear.

1. Present a general description of the idea generating process – use visuals to help people understand.
2. Ask “any questions of clarity needed?” Pause. Answer succinctly any questions. Keep your answers very short because you will tire people out before they start if you do not.
3. Post the brainstorming or focus questions. Start the process.
4. Let everyone know the timing of each step of the process. When they start generating ideas, give everyone a clear “5 minutes left” timing reminder. Tell them again in 2 minutes.

5. Thank them for their work and continue with your process.

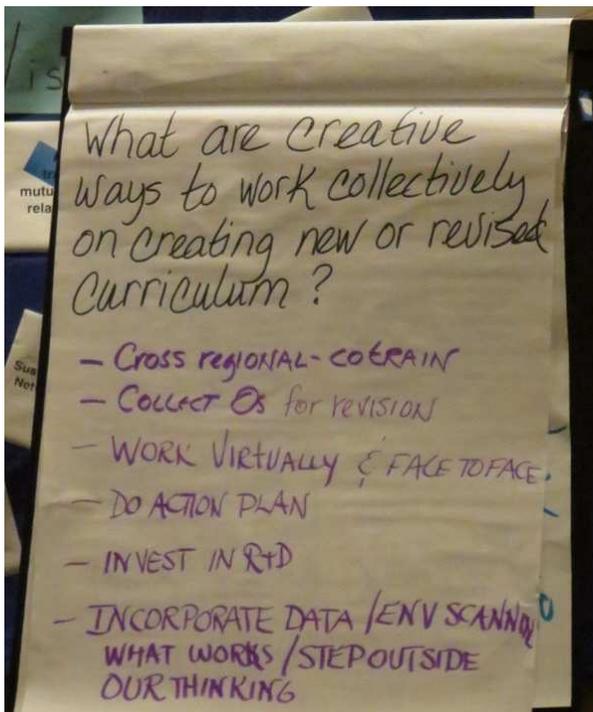
**Example focus question to post:**



**Tip : Follow this sequence: Individual - small group- large group.**

By this we mean:

- (i) Give each individual time to think on her or his own. This uses their intra-personal intelligence. Give them 2-5 minutes depending on complexity. Ask everyone to remain silent so all can think. Play music at low volume sometimes for a background aid to creativity. This uses our musical intelligence. See exercise below.



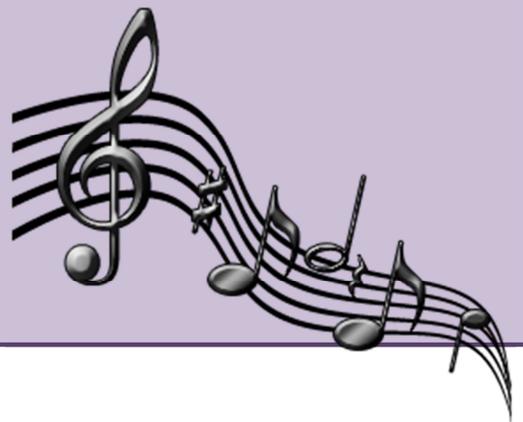
- (ii) Next, break the full group in to small groups of no more than 3-5 people. Ask them to share their best ideas with each other. Give them 10-15 minutes for this. This uses our interpersonal intelligence.

- (iii) Next, ask each small group to share their top 1-3 ideas with the whole group to resolve this issue. Write them neatly down on a flipchart, laptop with screen or other devices so all can see each answer. Ask the small group to clarify any ideas as they go along. This uses our linguistic and visual intelligences.

## Exercise 3 – Music for Creativity

What specific type, genre or title of music would you use to help stimulate creative idea generation during an individual brainstorm?

How would you set it up so people are not disturbed by it? There is some neuroscience research on this, but there are no wrong answers. E.g., quick paced classical music (no lyrics) at a low volume.



# Tools/Techniques for Generating Ideas



In this section we describe each tool in detail and provide you 1-3 ways to use each tool. If you do not have easy access to the tools or the props suggested, we provide you some simpler alternatives you can create yourself. You can also look around your own location and discover similar tools which we don't know about!

1. Creativity exercises/ mental energizers to start the thinking.
2. General brainstorming tools – Tips, tools and questions
3. Visual tools to stimulate thinking.
4. Kinesthetic (movement) exercises to stimulate creativity.

*"It is better to have enough ideas for some of them to be wrong, than to be always right by having no ideas at all."*

-Edward de Bono

*"You cannot mandate productivity, you must provide the tools to let people become their best."*

-Steve Jobs

*"The human mind once stretched by a new idea never goes back to its original dimensions."*

-Oliver Wendell Holmes

Source: [www.brainstorming.co.uk](http://www.brainstorming.co.uk)

# 1. Creativity Exercises/Mental Energizers

The creativity exercises and concepts presented here function to help the group gather and understand information they are working with, loosen their mental constraints, and produce potential solutions to their challenges.

The first exercise, “What is this?” opens people up to being playful and imaginative. It fosters flexible thinking. The second exercise, Group Juggle, is playful and physical, and addresses fluid thinking and idea elaboration.

## **Creativity Tool I: What is this?**

### Purpose:

To engage the imagination and awaken the mind.  
To show a paradigm shift/ habit break.  
To have some fun and get people acting.

### Time:

5-10+ minutes

### Materials/equipment:

One piece of flipchart paper rolled up and taped in the shape of a tube

### Group size:

3 - 20+

### Procedure:

1. Get the group in a circle.
2. Present the rolled up paper and tell the group when it is their turn they are to act out what they imagine the paper roll is, and wait until others have tried to guess before they tell.
3. Pass the paper around and enjoy the show and laughter.
4. Allow the paper to go around as long as you want but keep an eye out for if/when someone takes the tape off and turns the paper into something flat. Then they have broken the paradigm.
  - a. When this happens take note and discuss afterwards in the debrief.
  - b. If this doesn't happen the facilitator can undo the tape to move along, and then discuss in the debrief.
5. Stop when it seems appropriate. Either after a few 'open' paper imagined items, when people slow down, or 2-4 times around the group.

### Debrief:

How did this represent a paradigm shift?; What did you like about that activity?  
How do you think it was creative?; How might you expand on the ideas?

## Creativity Tool II: Group Juggle (with categories and story)

### Purpose/objectives:

Humour and physical movement  
Get the brain working  
Set up a theme or topic related to a following exercise/tool

### Time:

5-10 minutes

### Materials/equipment:

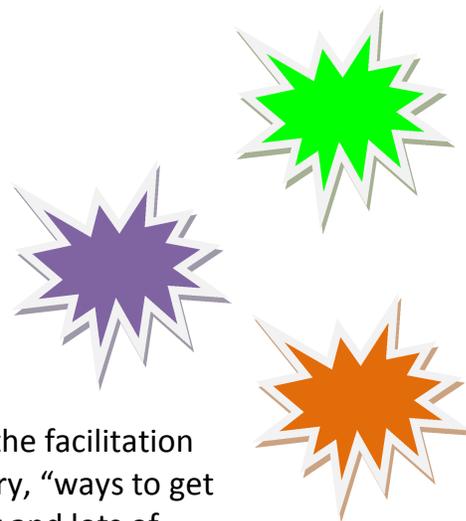
A ball or tossable object that is easy to catch.

### Group size:

3-15

### Procedure:

1. Arrange participants in a circle.
2. Tell them to toss the ball around the group in any order.
3. When they get the ball they must say something in the chosen category, then they can throw the ball to the next person.
4. The facilitator should start by picking a category (types of candy, movies, cars, etc...).
5. While in play the facilitator should change the categories and move them towards some relationship to the facilitation topic. If the facilitation is about transportation the category, "ways to get around" would work. Try to keep open to allow for humor and lots of options.
6. After a few rounds, as the energy is picking up, stop the group and tell them, "Ok, now we are going to tell a story. When you get the ball you should say a sentence that continues the story. Anything is fair game, there is no right answer."
7. The facilitator starts the story and tosses the ball. Start the story by relating it to the facilitation topic to move the group's thoughts in that direction. But don't try to control the story, let it go wherever it may and the results should be interesting and fun.
8. Stop the group juggle before it lags and move forward with the energy produced.



### Debrief:

No debrief. Move directly into brainstorming or productive tools.

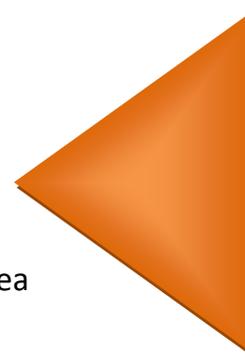
Source: These two exercises are both provided by my esteemed colleague, Shane Sasnow, owner of "Forward Motion", a firm specializing in creativity and facilitation. [www.taofm.com](http://www.taofm.com)

## 2. General Brainstorming Tips, Tools and Questions

Creative thinking is best done when mental energy is focused in a singular direction. Producing ideas is called diverging, and selecting ideas is called converging. Trying to do both at the same time it is like driving while pressing the gas and the brake simultaneously. It doesn't work. Separating the two processes makes them more effective. Following are the guidelines for doing diverging and converging. The unaware facilitator may often forget the converging step, essential to making the work much more manageable and focused.

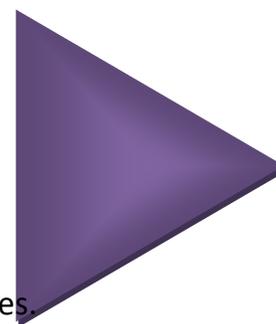
**Tip: Divergent Guidelines (going from a single topic to generating many ideas/solutions around the topic)**

1. Defer Judgment
  - a. Suspend evaluation and critique- do the judging later
2. Go for quantity
  - a. The more ideas you have the more good ones you get.
3. Freewheel and seek wild ideas
  - a. Allow for craziness- seek novel associations
  - b. It's easier to tame a wild idea down than to make a tame idea wild.
4. Piggy back- hitch hike
  - a. Build on others ideas – elaborate



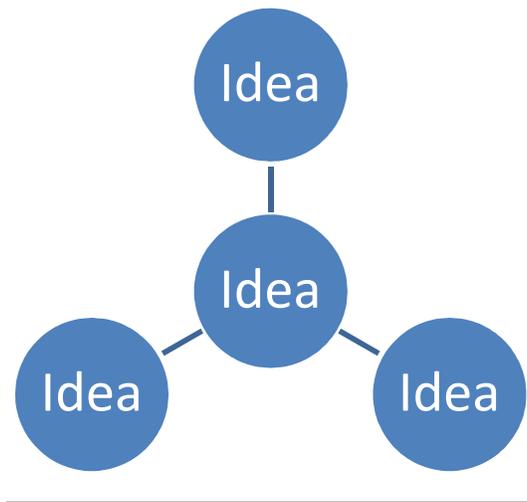
**Tip: Converging Guidelines (going from many idea to a few or one key idea/strategy)**

1. Affirmative judgment
  - a. Think positively while judging
  - b. Find the advantages first
2. Consider your criteria.
  - a. Does the idea have the potential to do what is needed?
3. Be deliberate.
  - a. Have a plan and be systematic in examining the ideas.
4. Be open to novelty
  - a. Look for new and unusual options; they may be your best ones.
5. Work to improve options
  - a. If something attracts you but isn't quite right, think how to make it better.



Source: Shane Sasnow, Forward Motion, [www.taofm.com](http://www.taofm.com)

## Brainstorming Tool I: 'Go for it' Brainstorming - Diverging



### Purpose/objectives:

To diverge and come up with lots of ideas.

### Time:

Highly variable.

### Materials/equipment:

Flip chart and a pen

### Group size:

Optimal group size is 7-12 per facilitator.

### Procedure:

1. Write an open-ended (simple and focused) question on the flipchart, whiteboard or wall.
2. Review the divergent guidelines (see above), clarify procedure, and answer questions.
3. Tell the group, their goal is 30-50 ideas
4. Tell the group to say their ideas as they think of them.
5. Record the ideas as stated. For long ones ask for a headline or short 3-5 word phrase.
6. Number ideas for easier clustering.
7. When you have about 15 ideas, remind them of your focus question. Do this again after every 15 ideas.
8. Go until you meet or exceed the goal.

Remember you should get group to converge this list of ideas. See tool III how on next page.

Source: Shane Sasnow, Forward Motion, [www.taofm.com](http://www.taofm.com)

## Brainstorming Tool II: Sticky Brain Storming – Diverging

### Purpose/objectives:

Generating a high volume of ideas quickly.  
Makes the ideas easier to move around and cluster.  
Easier on the facilitator's writing hand.

### Time:

Varies

### Group size:

7-12 per facilitator is optimal.

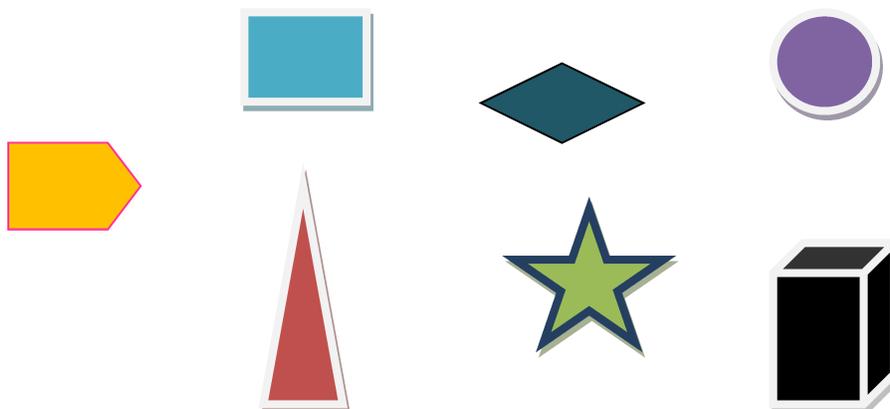
### Materials/equipment:

Flip chart and pen  
Post-its; 3x3 or 3x5  
Darker colored felt tip pens, enough for the group

### Procedure:

1. Write the question on a flip chart.
2. Review divergent guidelines, clarify procedure and take questions.
3. Set a goal of 30-50 ideas minimum.
4. The group will write their ideas on post-its with dark pen, legibly, and in headline (short phrase) form.
5. Then they call out their idea for others to hear and the facilitator places it on the flipchart in rows and columns.
6. At about every 15 options, check with group that the ideas are still answering your focus question.
7. Go until you meet or exceed the quota.

Source: adapted from Shane Sasnow, Forward Motion, [www.taofm.com](http://www.taofm.com)



## Brainstorming Tool III: Our Top Choices – Converging

### Purpose/objectives:

To select good options, ideas or “hits” should be...

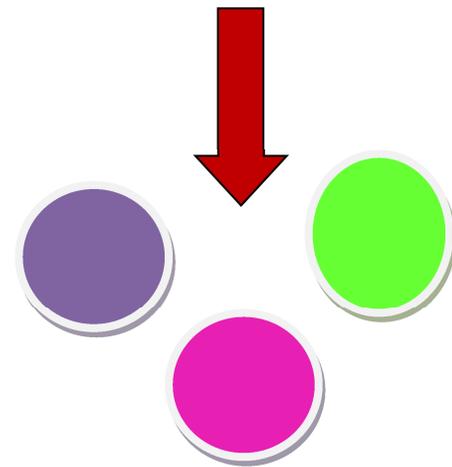
- On target
- Feel right
- Promising
- Intriguing
- Stand out
- Compelling
- Clear
- Interesting
- Innovative

### Time:

Varies

### Group size:

7-12 per facilitator is optimal



### Materials/equipment:

Either felt pen markers or sticky dots.

### Procedure:

1. After brain storming ideas review the convergent guidelines and have each person select and mark ideas that appeal to them.
  - a. Mark the choices clearly with sticky dots or with a check mark, using a felt pen marker.
  - b. Use guiding questions like:
    - i. “Which options seem most interesting, useful or intriguing?”
    - ii. “Which options seem to jump off the page at you?”
    - iii. “Which options will be easy to implement and have the greatest impact?”
2. A good guideline for the number of choices each person gets is about 10% of the total ideas. So if 50 ideas were produced each person gets to choose 5.

When everyone has selected their top choices, continue the process with a group conversation to determine what to do with these top choices. See also our modules on consensus building.

Source: Adapted from Shane Sasnow, Forward Motion, [www.taofm.com](http://www.taofm.com)

## Brainstorming Tool IV: Sample Brainstorming Questions

The question you ask of the group must be “open-ended” (i.e., cannot be answered with a yes or a no) and be simple in structure (e.g., has only one question). Here are 30 sample questions you can use or adapt to get your group started on brainstorming:

1. What are all the implications of this (event, situation, policy...)?
2. What do you really want to see happening in this team? Organization? Community? (This is a visioning question.)?
3. What are all the options open to us to solve this problem?
4. What do we need to learn from this?
5. What will be different if we do this?
6. What are our possible negotiating points?
7. How will we provide better service to our customers?
8. What assumptions are we making about this situation?
9. What values do we want to be sure to practice together as a company?
10. Which of our practices demonstrate our values?
11. What is the victory we are looking for?
12. What really is the problem?
13. What strategies will move us in the right direction?
14. What will make us truly satisfied?
15. How can we measure our success?
16. What criteria will help us know if we are successful or effective?
17. What are the needs that are not being addressed?
18. What role could our organization play in this situation/initiative?
19. What are all the benefits of doing the project this way?
20. What are our strengths in doing this project? (SWOT question)
21. What are our weaknesses in doing this project? (SWOT question)
22. What are the opportunities of doing this project? (SWOT question)
23. What are the threats of doing this project? (SWOT question)
24. What incentives could we provide to our customers?
25. Who are all our customers?
26. What are all the risks?
27. Where are we vulnerable in this situation?
28. What issues do we want to be sure to address?
29. What are ways we can accomplish this task in the timeframe we have?
30. What do we want to be sure to include at our conference (or retreat)?

### 3. Visual Tools to Stimulate Thinking

Images and words are a great way to connect people and stimulate conversation even in the toughest situations. Visuals often engage the brain in different ways – appealing to the emotional limbic brain and the right creative brain. Here are five primarily visual products and processes we highly recommend.

#### Visual Tool I: PictureThis Cards

A beautiful set of 75 color photographs you can use in many ways for conversation and reflection

Source: St Luke's Innovative Resources – Australia email [info@innovativeresources.org](mailto:info@innovativeresources.org)

- Example activity: Set all photos out on a table. Have every group member choose one and introduce themselves with the photo using this question: this picture is like me .... Because or this photo reminds me of my work right now because..... Use your imagination and these cards to introduce many new activities.

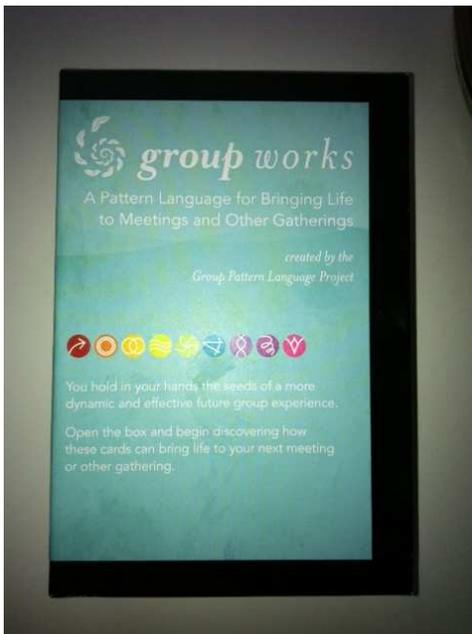


#### Visual Tool II: Visuals Speak Cards

- A smaller set for ice-breaker activities or a large 200 photo set to use for ice-breakers, strategic visioning, team-building, goal-setting, conflict resolution, career and life coaching and intercultural communications. These images have been carefully chosen and come with many ideas on how to use them. Check out the ideas on the website at:

<http://www.visualsspeak.com/products/>

## Visual Tool III: Group Works Cards



This tool was developed by a volunteer group of experienced facilitators in NW Canada and USA in 2011. You can download the images free of charge from [www.groupworksdeck.org](http://www.groupworksdeck.org). The deck is amazingly versatile and can be used for action and reflection by the group. They have found 91 success factors for facilitators and divided these into nine categories: intention; context; relationship; flow; creativity; perspective; modeling; inquiry and synthesis; and faith. These 91 success factor words with images are printed on the cards.

Here are a few ways you could use the cards to help a group brainstorm around various (these ideas came out of a workshop led by Tree Bressen, NW USA facilitator)

- Put out 15-20 cards per group of four. Choose two cards: each person answers what doing well and what needs work. Note: Cards can actually indicate 1) the trouble or 2) the antidote to the trouble
- Planning a retreat with a team to ensure all the essentials of the retreat are covered. For example, use as a team to throw out ideas - as sort through cards, set up a grid: what to do before retreat; what to do just before; what do to during; and what to do after.
- Facilitator draws card for inspiration for the day (like a Tarot card).  
Group draws a card to shift tension in group –
- Choose a card where it demonstrates “a time I failed to do this” – i.e., to show vulnerability.
- Design Ground Rules - come up with them based on cards. Ask people to self-profess what they need support or help around.
- Use cards to talk about strengths in this group.  
Draw out shared values. Pick a card - what does this mean to you? What do you long for in your group work?  
SWOT - internal and external team cohesion- greatest challenge and hope for this team.  
Talk about roles: or what is my perceived role in this group? This can be very affirming.
- Use for debrief and reflection. Ask: how did we do on any of these success factors?

## Visual Tool IV: Rune Stones

Rune stones are a large number of small smooth stones with inspirational words written on them. You could make your own or buy them in some alternative gift stores. They are both visual and kinesthetic so appeal to two intelligences! 😊

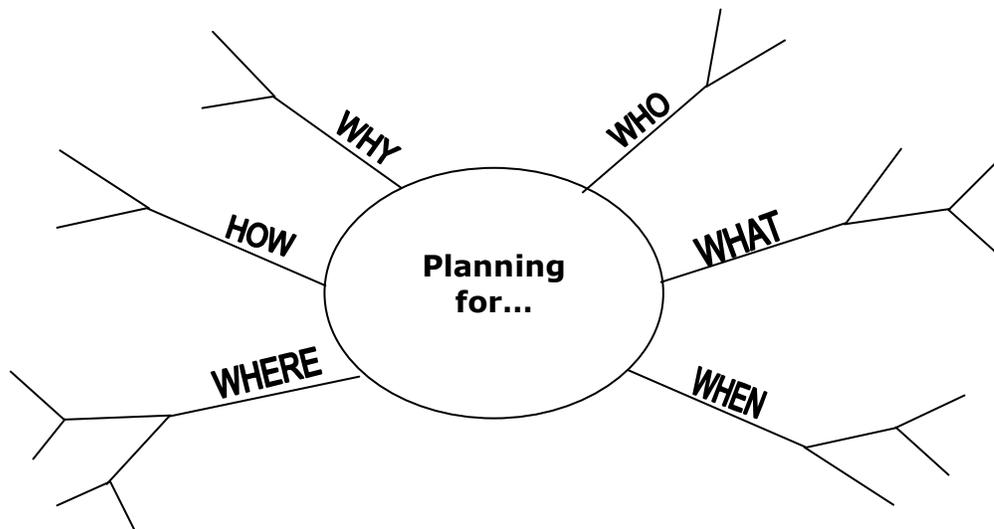
I typically have everyone take one stone from the bag of stones at the beginning of an event or after lunch. They can then turn to their neighbours on both sides and each shares what the word is answering the question: how does this word related to what I hope to get out of the day? Or, how I am feeling right now? Or, how does this word relate to the topic we are discussing? E.g. if they choose the word adventure, they might say "My word is adventure – I realize I need to view this project as more of an adventure than a problem".

The purpose of all these visual tools is to get the brain to think "laterally" to borrow a phrase from Dr. De bono – or "think outside the box"



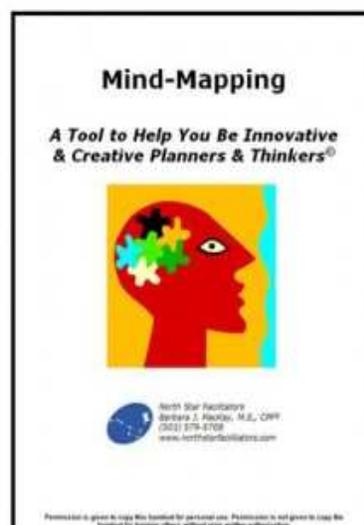
## Visual Tool V: Mind-mapping by Tony Buzan

When a mindmap is complete, it is a visual depiction of ideas offered by a group in the form of a central image surrounded by branches off the central image. Words and images are used to highlight key concepts. This technique is very useful as an organizing, brainstorming and decision-making tool for both individuals and group work by using color, key words, and images to summarize, sort, and retain information on any topic. It allows the thinking mind to be flexible and make associations between different ideas and aids long term memory retention.



You can learn more by purchasing the book “The Mindmap Book” by Tony Buzan or our PDF module written especially for consultants and facilitators with multiple ideas for using in group settings. See: <http://www.northstarfacilitators.com/products/facilitator-learning-modules/>

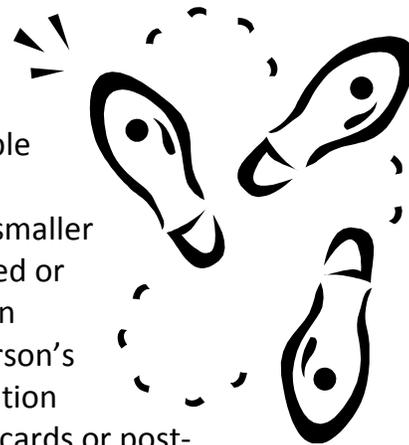
Mind Mapping: A Tool to Help You Be Innovative and Creative Planners and Thinkers



## 4. Kinesthetic (Movement) Exercises to Stimulate Creativity

### Kinesthetic Tool I: Walk-Abouts or Gallery Walk

This gets people up and moving while they are thinking together. You can set up three to five “stations” around the room. We use flipchart stands with paper or simply post paper on the walls where several people can attain easy access. Each station can have a different activities or different questions to answer. Divide the large group into three to five smaller groups randomly. Be sure to make it accessible to those who are disabled or movement challenged. This might mean you make sure a wheelchair can reach each station or there is someone to write down and carry this person’s ideas to each station. Give each group 5 minutes or less to visit each station and put down their ideas. They can write the ideas on a flipchart, or on cards or post-it notes. Each subsequent visiting group adds new ideas or indicates agreement with an existing idea by marking it with a check mark. Be sure to provide good writing supplies and post-it notes, cards or flipchart paper for each station. Time each visit. Ring a bell or chime at the end of each three to five minute period so groups know when to move onto their next station. This avoids congestion at some stations. Collect the data at the end and review it with the entire group. Complete the process using a type of converging or prioritizing technique as noted above, or another one you know and use well.



### Kinesthetic Tool II: Metaphoric Sculpture Exercise



Here is an exercise I invented and called “Metaphoric Sculpture”. It works best with 8-30 people. It takes about 10 minutes to do and 20 minutes to debrief. Invite each small group of 3-6 persons to choose up to ten objects from the prop table. Your prop table can consist of colored cloths, slinky toys, balls, and other fun objects such as wands, play dough, small musical instruments, yoyo’s, stuffed animals, etc. Ask that each group also choose at least one colored cloth. Give them five minutes to sculpt a topic e.g., their vision for a brighter organization future; or the obstacles the group faces in moving forward; or the possible solutions to a problem they face. Hint it is often more revealing to tell them to sculpt in silence without knowing what they are sculpting. Only give them 5-7 minutes to do this. Ask all the participants to stand close to one of the sculptures. Then have the group that created that “sculpture” explain to the other small groups how their sculpture shows the solutions to the problem or the vision of the future etc.

# Conclusion

Creative idea generation can be the most fun and favorite activity of a group's day. It is a good idea to really learn and practice how to do these techniques smoothly. Try bringing a group of colleagues or friends together to practice. Write out your script. You will be amazed at how effective these techniques are once you try them.

## Our Favorite "Best on the Market" Resources

(Other than those noted in this module)



"The Power of Smart Problem-Solving – How to Achieve the Best Solution to Any Problem". Wiele, Bob. OneSmartWorld, Inc. 2003.

Isaksen, S. G., Dorval, K. B., & Treffinger, D. J.. (1998). *Toolbox for Creative Problem Solving*. Williamsville NY; The Creative Problem Solving Group-Buffalo.

Miller, B., Vehar, J. & Firestien, R.. (2001). *Facilitation: A door to creative leadership*. Williamsville NY; Innovation Resources, Inc.

Vehar, J., Miller, B., & Firestien, R.. (2001). *Creativity Unbound: an introduction to creative process*. Williamsville NY; Innovation Resources, Inc.

Fox, M. (2007). *Creative Studies: student course organizer, facilitation strand*. Not published and not meant as a source of citation.

Osborn, A. F. (1953). *Applied imagination: Principles and procedures of creative thinking*. New York: Scribner.

<http://wilderdom.com/>

<http://www.teambuildingusa.com/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellis\\_Paul\\_Torrance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellis_Paul_Torrance)

<http://www.buffalostate.edu/orgs/cbir/readingroom/>



Your Guide and Author of This Module:

# Barbara MacKay

**Barbara MacKay, MS, CPF©, principal of North Star Facilitators,** specializes in strategic planning, facilitation processes, training, and consulting.

Barbara is currently mentoring facilitators from all over the world and cares deeply about passing on the skills to others so the world becomes a just, peaceful and creative place. Barbara's strong interpersonal communication skills and experience allow her to work skillfully with a wide variety of participant perspectives. Barbara specializes in helping groups participate, problem-solve, plan and make progress in challenging and complex situations. She has an energetic, respectful style and clear delivery. Barbara has worked with 100's of clients from all sectors with her own company since 1995. She provided social, economic and environmental consulting and facilitation services with many cultures throughout Canada from 1981 to 1995.

Barbara is a: Certified facilitator and USA trainer with the International Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA and Canada); Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF) and assessor of other facilitators worldwide with the International Association of Facilitators (IAF); Professional Development Strategic Initiative Coordinator for the IAF for four years; has been an Adjunct professor with University of Oregon (Eugene) (teaching the only required facilitation skills (4 credits) class of all Oregon universities at graduate level in Conflict and Dispute Resolution Studies); an adjunct professor teaching facilitation skills at Portland State University (Not for Profit Management Institute); certified OneSmartWorld™ trainer; trained in Disaster Crisis Intervention for facilitators; certified accelerated learning trainer; trained extensively in: Constructivist Listening and Cross Cultural Communication and Alliance Building; visioning processes; Mind Mapping™; Behavior styles model "Why Are You Like That?™"; and Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI). She is also trained and teaches about Learning Organizations; Organizational Journey (ICA); conciliation; "shifting from positions to interests"; conflict resolution; negotiation skills; anger management; risk communication; training for trainers; and curriculum development.



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[www.twitter.com/BarbaraJMacKay](http://www.twitter.com/BarbaraJMacKay)

# Appendix



## FAQ's

**Q: What if my group is made up of very senior people or people who do not respond well to too much creativity or “touchy-feely” exercises?**

*A: I always say it is all about context setting. Tell your group why you are doing an exercise and how it will help them think. Let them know it will only take e.g., 5-10 minutes but the results will be much more impactful from having taken this time. I have had the greatest receptivity from the so-called people who do not want to “play”. Remember it is a basic human need to play.*

**Q: How do you generate a powerful simple brainstorming question?**

*A: Three things:*

*1) The key is to ensure you only have one question. For example: How can we improve our client turn-around time?( one question) VS How can we serve our clients and improve client response rate? (two related but different questions). If you have multiple questions, break them down into single questions and use the “walk about “process to generate ideas to both questions.*

*2) The other key is to test your question on a representative group. Does it really answer what they need to know? Try getting them to generate 5 or more answers to your proposed question and ask them if these are the types of answers that will help the situation being addressed.*

*3) Almost always start your question with what or how. These words typically generate the most useful and numerous responses.*

**Q: What do you do with all the brainstorming ideas to make sure they are all implemented at some point?**

*A: First of all, not all the ideas can likely be implemented. You need to caution the group at the outset of brainstorming that you will be looking for ideas that seem to be emerging as the most common or agreed upon tactics or strategies. Then get the group to identify which are the top 3-8 most repeated ideas that warrant further consideration. You can have the group then generate criteria to choose the most implementable ideas. See the next module of “Helping Groups Make lasting Decisions” on how to do this. You can then have groups of people volunteer to take these ideas to next steps. These smaller groups need to have authority and knowledge on how to do this. They can be called action teams or task forces.*