

Ideation Techniques

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1. BRAINWRITING/BRAINWALKING

Brainwriting

What Is It?

As its name implies, Brainwriting uses writing as its creative modus operandi. Each participant writes down an idea they would like the group to consider. Then, they pass their sheet to their immediate neighbor who uses this idea to a) trigger a build-on the original idea or b) trigger an entirely new idea. Sheets are passed and passed again until each “idea sheet” arrives back at its original owner.

Brainwalking

What Is It?

We’ve invented a variation of Brainwriting that we call Brainwalking™. Instead of writing ideas on 8 x 11 sheets of paper, participants write their ideas on posted sheets of flip chart paper on the wall. (You’ll need as many posted sheets as there are participants.) There are two major advantages to doing it this way:

- 1) participants are up and moving. It’s more fun to generate ideas this way...and typically there’s greater group energy and
- 2) ideas end up being posted around the room for everyone to see and read. It’s reinforcing for participants to see so many ideas generated in such a short time. Also, participants will often find themselves reading (during breaks) and building on these ideas throughout the day.

Rationale:

This is the most powerful technique we know of for getting a lot of ideas out very quickly. Why? Because each person generates at least one (and possibly several) idea(s) on each pass of the paper. If you have twelve people in a group and pass the paper five times, in as little as fifteen minutes, the group has generated 60 ideas.

To Facilitate: Step 1: Pass out 8.5 x 11 inch paper and markers to all participants.

Step 2: Instruct each participant to write legibly.

Step 3: Have each participant write down one idea for the assigned topic.

Step 4: Pass this idea sheet (have everyone pass in the same direction) to the immediate neighbor and have them either build on/evolve the idea written on the paper – or create an entirely new one. Record this idea on the paper and then pass it to the immediate neighbor once again.

Step 5: Continue passing until each idea sheet has five (or more) ideas on it.

Step 6: Pass the sheets back to the original owner. (His/her handwriting will be at the top) and circle one or more “Best Ideas.”

Step 7: Have each participant read the best idea(s) from his paper to the group as a whole. Any builds?

Note: Facilitating Brainwalking is similar to facilitating Brainwriting except that instead of passing papers, the participants themselves are “being passed”/rotating.

Hints: The great advantage of this technique is that you get a lot of ideas very quickly. It also assures participation from everyone in the group. Note: If there are team members who are too shy or scared to say anything, this is a good technique to get them participating. The limitation of Brainwriting is that the ideas you do get, in spite of the amount, can sometimes be fairly “close in...” not tremendously “out of the box.” A variation of the basic Brainwriting technique is, on one of the passes, have each participant write down a silly – or just plain terrible idea – as a way to get more out of the box thinking. (See Worst Idea Technique).

Another possible limitation of the technique is that each participant is constantly following the thought stream/ideas of his neighbor. To get around this, have participants, on the second pass, pass the idea sheets two spaces to the right, on the third pass, pass three spaces to the right, etc.

2. THE WORST IDEA TECHNIQUE

What Is It?

The Worst Idea, as its name implies, is a creative technique in which the facilitator asks participants to come up with the worst possible idea they can. A really awful, occasionally disgusting, sometimes repulsive idea. Example: Think of the worst possible idea you can for soup. How about a soup with rocks in it? How about a soup that has green slime...eye of newt, or even snot in it? How about throw-up soup?

Rationale:

Sometimes a group can have “creative performance anxiety.” The group may be pressing too hard for a great idea—and coming up dry. The Worst Idea Technique relieves much of this performance anxiety. Why? Because what is someone going to say, “your idea wasn’t bad enough”!

To get a great idea, we often have to be willing to have a lot of bad ideas first. Because our analytic training has taught us to reject bad ideas quickly in our search for good or great ideas, we will often short circuit “bad” germs of ideas with internal chatter like, “that’s stupid” or “that would never work.” Paradoxically, it’s these “bad” ideas that can lead us to look at a problem in an entirely new, often unconventional, way...and ultimately lead to a breakthrough concept.

To Facilitate:

Step 1: The facilitator begins by simply asking the group for the “worst possible ideas you can think of” – and records on flip charts what’s being said.

Step 2: Invariably the first “worst idea” out of a participant’s mouth will not be that bad. i.e. “How about a vegetable soup that’s got no vegetables in it.” The facilitator should then “push the envelope” and give an example of a really awful idea, “How about soup that’s made of cement,” as a way to stimulate the group.

Step 3: After a sufficient number of “worst ideas” have been recorded on flip charts (usually 15 – 20), the facilitator picks one of the most interesting/awful ideas - - and tries to help the group turn it into a good or great idea by using one of two prompts.

Step 3A: Prompt #1: “As bad as this idea is, is there something of value in it that could turn it into a good idea?”

Step 3B: Prompt #2: “This idea is really bad. If we did exactly the reverse, or opposite of this idea, could we create a valuable new idea?”

Step 4: Facilitator encourages any builds from the group.

Hints:

This exercise should be fun. If you’re not having fun with it, you’re probably not facilitating it correctly. Don’t be afraid to be a little gross, ridiculous, and/or repulsive when facilitating this exercise.

3. QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS/20 QUESTIONS

What Is It?

As it's name implies, the Questioning Assumptions technique encourages the group to begin by questioning the assumptions they may have made about the particular creative challenge on which they're working. Example: If you've been asked to invent a new chair, did you assume, for instance, that the chair is for sitting in? Couldn't you instead design a "standing chair", for use at a space-cramped train station coffee shop?

Rationale:

As a way to function (some might say maintain a modicum of sanity) in the complex world in which we live, it's natural (and necessary) that we make assumptions about how the world operates. Otherwise, much like a child who continually asks why, we'd never get anything done. However, from a creative, idea-generating standpoint, it's often useful (if not absolutely critical) that, at times, we question the most basic assumptions about the task on which we're working.

To Facilitate:

Step 1: Have the group agree on what problem/creative opportunity it is they'd like to work on. (i.e. Let's get ideas to increase the sales of women's electric razors by 30%).

Step 2: Have the group generate a list of 20 – 30 assumptions they're making about the assignment. For example, an assumption they might be making about the sale of women's electric razors is that women buy them. Is this true? It may or may not be. A man might buy a woman's electric razor as a gift – or even for himself. Who knows?

Step 3: After the group has generated 20-30 assumptions, have the group go back through each assumption and try to generate new ideas/new ways of looking at the problem based on the newly-questioned assumption. The above example, for instance, might imply a marketing campaign targeted to men to encourage giving an electric razor as a gift.

Note: It's important for the facilitator (and the group) to understand that many (if not most) of the assumptions will be true. However, some assumptions will not be true – or at the very least—worth examining, and as such, can lead to unexpected, often breakthrough ideas.

Hints:

It's important to separate Step 2 from Step 3. (The “generating of the list of the assumptions” step, from the idea generation step.) Thinking of the assumptions is a very different mental activity from using those assumptions to then generate new ideas, so it's important to keep them separate.

The Questioning Assumptions technique is especially useful for strategic planning and new product, and new business development assignments.

Alternative:**20 Questions**

Instead of generating a list of assumptions, simply generate a list of questions that re-frame the problem/issue/opportunity. Then use these questions to stimulate new ideas.

4.. PROBLEM RE-DEFINITION

What Is It? The Problem Re-Definition Technique helps you invent new ways of looking at a problem -- and ultimately come up with other, even better answers -- by first, re-defining that problem.

Rationale: Words carry with them their own creative limitations. Put another way, how a problem is defined will often determine the kind and quality of ideas that will be generated to solve it. The problem re-definition technique allow you to literally create 1000's of different ways to define a problem... and therefore helps you generate potentially 1000's of different ideas to solve that problem.

To Facilitate: Step 1: Start with an opportunity/problem statement, or creative challenge. "How do we..." is a good way to begin the statement.

Step #2: Write this creative challenge on a flip chart at the front of the room.

Example: "How do we sell more insurance to Catholics?" (From a real-world challenge from the Catholic Knights Insurance Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.)

Step#3: Next, pick three of the more interesting words in the sentence and generate creative alternatives (8 to 10) for each choice.

Hint: You might think of choosing words that represent a "who, when, when, where and/or how." In the above example, the three words you might choose therefore are: "we", "sell", and "Catholics".

So for the first word: "we", the eight to ten creative alternatives for "we" could be: 1) the sales force, 2) the clergy, 3) friends of Catholics, 4) church-goers, 5) Catholic family members, 6) Catholic Knights (CK) board members, 7) CK customer service reps, 8) sales force relatives, 9) CK's PR department, 10) policy holders.

Step #4: Continue creating alternatives for the other two selected words, writing them on the flip chart in columns as below (under the original opportunity challenge):

How do we sell more life insurance to Catholics?

sales force	license	Catholic doctors
the clergy	give away	Catholic athletes
friends of Catholics	test run	Catholic students
church goers	co-market	Catholic donators
family members	promote	Catholic schools
CK Board members	advertise	Catholic dioceses
CK customer service	tele-market	Catholic summer camps
sales force relatives	network	Catholic grandparents
CK's PR department	incentivize	The Vatican
policy holders	reward	Catholic Evangelists

Step #5: Re-define the opportunity by randomly combining words from each of the three to give us an entirely new opportunity statement.

Here are a few examples:

- 1) “How do we get friends of Catholics to be incentivized to sell life insurance to Catholic grandparents?”
- 2) “How do we get Catholic Knight Board Members to license the selling of life insurance to Catholic schools.”
- 3) “How do we get policy holders to be rewarded for the selling more life insurance at (or to) the Vatican?”

These fairly crazy combination sentences are then used as starting points/brainstorming triggers to generate new ideas. So, for instance, in opportunity re-statement #1, it could be taken literally: Maybe you really could figure out a way to incentivize friends of Catholics to sell life insurance to Catholic Grandparents: i.e. “Could you create a sales force of retirees (friends of Catholics) to network and sell life insurance to Catholic Grandparents?”

More likely though, you’ll want to take the statement less literally, and simply use it as a jumping off point for the team’s brainstorming. As such, it might inspire an idea like: “How about a program to incentivize grandparents to give life insurance policies to their children for the sake of their grandchildren?”

By the way, how many possible opportunity re-definitions would you have in the above example? Right! $10 \times 10 \times 10$ or 1000 possible re-definitions. Of course, many (or most) of these re-definitions may not get you any new or exciting ideas. But some certainly will. And you only need a few big ideas to dramatically impact your business.

Hints:

Beyond increasing sales, how else might you use this technique? In the broadest sense, anything you can put into a sentence could be “opportunity re-defined.” The technique is particularly useful however, when you have a seemingly “impossible” problem.

5. IDEA HOOKS

What Is It?

This technique uses associated metaphors as jumping off points for new ways of thinking about a problem or opportunity.

Example: If a company is trying to think of new ways to improve intra-company communication, Idea Hooks® such as “Smoke Signals”, “Body Language”, and “Love” might be three “communication” metaphors that the group uses as “jumping off points” to get new ideas.

Rationale:

Associated metaphors have contained within them principles that can help participants look at a problem in an entirely new way. They have the advantage of being related (i.e. the communication associations above), and therefore potentially more relevant than entirely random stimuli; and yet are sufficiently different from the original problem as to offer the possibility of creating a truly breakthrough idea.

To Facilitate:

Step 1: Select a key theme from the problem on which you are working.

Step 2: Use the IdeaFisher software program to generate a list of twenty or more metaphors/associations/examples of this key theme.

Note #1: We have found concrete nouns are the best stimuli for this exercise – most often found in the people/animals, and things/places sub-categories of IdeaFisher.

Note #2: The IdeaFisher software can be obtained from IdeaFisher Systems, Inc., www.ideafisher.com.

Step 3: Post these twenty or more associations on flip chart paper.

Note: We recommend against using computer programs in actual sessions – they take energy away from the group and often slow it down.

Step 4: Each participant selects an Idea Hook that they have an attraction and/or emotional response to.

Step 5: Participants write down the things they associate with this Idea Hook.

Step 6: Then they go back over their list of associations – and see if they trigger any new ideas on the original problem.

Hints:

It is very important to make Steps 4, 5, & 6 discreet steps. Otherwise, some people will most likely find it “too much of a stretch” to relate the Idea Hook to the problem on which they are working.

6. SEMANTIC INTUITION/IDEA NAMING

- What Is It?** Semantic Intuition generates new ideas by having participants combine associated key words – and name a possible new idea – before they have any idea what this newly named idea is.
Example: How would you play a new game called: Hand Signal Roulette, or Killer Cactus, or Hopping Hyenas.
- Rationale:** Key words – related to the opportunity for which you are trying to create ideas – have the advantage of being “relevant,” and yet different enough from your original problem as to yield entirely new ways of thinking.
- To Facilitate:** Step 1: Have the group as a whole generate lists of key words that relate to your particular creative challenge.
- Step 2: Group these associated key words into categories: ie. Nouns, verbs, and adjectives.
- Step 3: Combine words from each category to create possible new ideas.
Example: Suppose you are trying to invent a new customer service program. Associated key words might be: Verb: “moving fast”; nouns: “telephone”, and/or “survey”; adjective: “automated”. The resulting combination of words “fast-moving, automated, telephone, & survey” might suggest a service that uses voice-recognition computers to get immediate customer satisfaction feedback from customers.
- Hints:** This technique works especially well with new product development assignments. One thing to watch out for: if your original key words are too “inside the box,” many if not all the resulting ideas/word combinations will also be “too inside the box.”

7. HEADLINER

What Is It?

The Headliner Technique uses a database of almost 90,000 word phrases, headlines, tag lines, and slogans to stimulate new ideas. The power of the software/technique is that it allows you to pre-select (by inputting key words) those phrases, that are specifically related to brand equities and essences.

Rationale:

The paradox of designing effective ideation techniques in a business environment is that you want techniques that will get you thinking differently, while at the same time be relevant to the creative challenge you are trying to address. Put another way, you simultaneously want blue sky thinking, while your feet are firmly grounded in the strategies of the business and the equities of the brand. Headliner resolves this essential paradox of business creativity, by allowing you to be focus your creative efforts in specific arenas.

The Headliner Technique is particularly good for positioning, promotion, and new product/line extension creative challenges.

Set-Up:

Identify several of the key essences/equities of the brand or arena of your creative challenge. For example, if you want to generate new positioning ideas for Advil, you might use such essences as “strong,” “pain,” “fast” and “relief.” Run these key words in the Headliner program to generate the appropriate expressions. For example, here are four expressions from Headliner:

- 1) Stronger than Red Devil Lye
- 2) Growing Pains
- 3) Think Fast, Mr. Moto.
- 4) Relief with the Touch of Your Hand

To Facilitate:

Step #1: The facilitator simply passes out copies of these expressions to each participant, and asks each participant to circle those expressions that could stimulate an idea for the particular assignment.

Step #2: Create table teams to share their circled expressions, and use these as a stimulus to create new ideas.

Step #3: Each team presents their ideas to the group as a whole for further building.

Hints:

Headliner can be a fun, energizing (and very productive) exercise, especially when participants are feeling a little tired from previous exercises. It also has the advantage of being able to be facilitated very quickly, often in 45 minutes or less.

Headliner is available from Namestormers in Austin, Texas: (512) 267-1814, or on-line at namestormers.com.

8. MINDMAPPING

What Is It? Mindmapping was invented in the mid-sixties by Englishman Tony Buzan. It is essentially a way to more creatively – and effectively – remember, organize, process, and combine information in the brain. Mindmapping has four key visual-oriented facets/elements that enable users to achieve increased mental efficiency:

- 1) Key Words
- 2) Diagramming
- 3) Symbols
- 4) Colors

Each thought is recorded in one or two representational key words. Relationships amongst key words are shown by diagramming. (Much like diagramming in junior-high grammar classes). Symbols are used to add visual variety and increase memorability. Different colors are used to represent different groups of ideas.

Rationale: Mindmapping mirrors the way the creative brain processes, records, remembers, retrieves, and re-combines input/stimuli. The right brain thinks visually and associationally. Mindmapping allows the participant to speak the “same language” as the right brain.

As a creative technique, we use Mindmapping to identify 1) “the facts” about a problem, from which 2) great ideas can grow. We will often have participants do a mindmap/ “brain dump” on a particular topic (often one they know a great deal about) and use the output from the “brain dump” (presented in mindmap form) to help other participants get to know a particular subject area better. Then they combine these “facts” with their own ideas/insights to create new ideas.

Note: Mindmapping can be used for everything from note taking, to speech organizing, memorizing, to writing better business plans.

To Facilitate:

Step 1: Write a key word that represents the problem/assignment on which you are working in the center of the page and circle it.

Step 2: Free associate off of this circled word – writing down everything that comes to mind in key word form. Connect related thoughts with lines – and have them branch off the center word much like limbs from the trunk of a tree. Use different colors to start new branches/limbs off the center key word for thoughts not directly associated with a previous thought. Continue to fill up the page with these diagrammed key words.

Step 3: Draw relevant symbols to improve the visual excitement/memorability of your mindmap.

Step 4: Step back and consider the mindmap as whole. What thoughts/key words – previously unrelated – now seem to be very much related to one another? What are the most important ideas on your mindmap? What might be the most fertile areas for new product development?

Step 5: Now that you have mapped your mind/thoughts on the problem in question, what other ideas does your mindmap suggest?

Step 6: Any builds from the group as a whole.

9. MAGAZINE RIP AND RAP/COLLAGING

What Is It? The Magazine Rip and Rap exercise (also known as collaging when extra time is taken to arrange the magazine “rips” on the page) uses words or phrases (taken from magazines) relevant to the problem being worked on.

Rationale: M.R.& R. is particularly useful for both initiating seminal ideas, as well as developing germs of ideas into full-blown concepts. Visuals, because of their right brain orientation, have a way of eliciting useful feelings and intuitions about a particular idea. M.R.&R. is especially valuable for branding, positioning, and customer mindset identification.

To Facilitate:

Step 1: Pass out a wide variety of visually-oriented magazines. (House and Garden, Sports Illustrated, Architectural Digest, OMNI, etc.)

Step 2: Pass out scissors and glue sticks to all participants.

Note: Collaging can be done as an individual exercise or in small groups – two or three people.

Step 3: Have each participant/team cut out words, phrases, or images that contribute ideas in some way to the problem being worked on.

Note: The facilitator should encourage participants not to be overly analytical in this exercise. The prompt: “Select those words, and pictures that your intuition or gut is telling you are relevant.”

Step 4: Now begin pasting. Place a key/representative visual word or phrase in the center of the page. Relate the other images and words to this key theme. Feel free to add your own handwritten phrases, words, or drawings. Try to tell a story (beginning, middle and end) with your collage.

Step 5: After allowing sufficient time to build the collage (20-30 minutes), have each participant/team present their collage in front of the group as a whole. (Typically the presentations are quite entertaining and fun to listen to).

Step 6: Encourage the group as a whole to build on any ideas that are triggered by the collage presentations.

Hints:

This can be a time-consuming, but very powerful exercise. We will often reserve it for the late afternoon because, after a long day of brainstorming – with everyone feeling a little burnt out – this can be a fun, mentally stimulating and yet very productive exercise. If time is an issue, use the Picture Prompts exercise as an alternative to Magazine Rip and Rap.

10. THE WISH TECHNIQUE

What Is It? The Wish Technique begins with the assumption that anything is possible. Money, energy, time...are no object. Whatever you can imagine, you can have. As a creative technique, wishing helps you start fresh, moving beyond the often limiting constraints of “reality.”

Rationale: Because anything is possible in the world of “wishing”, as a technique it helps you challenge basic and limiting assumptions around any given creative challenge / opportunity. The paradox of The Wish Technique is that it’s only by first considering the “impossible” that we can know the outer limits of what is possible, and therefore the potentially most exciting ideas. Typically, the output from “wishing” session will be entirely new and original points of view, and concepts.

To Facilitate:

Step 1. As the facilitator, start by having the group generate a list of 20 to 25 wishes for the problem / creative opportunity on which you are working. Encourage the group to pretend that they can have anything they want, whenever and wherever they want it.

To encourage even more fanciful wishes, ask them even to break laws of nature. You want to be invisible? So be it! Instantaneously travel to the past or future? Your wish is the facilitator's command.

Step 2. After generating a list of 20 – 25 wishes, have the group go back to several of the most interesting and / or far out wishes, and try to turn the impossible into the possible. You want to improve customer service at ATM machines – and wish you could beam tellers through the machine to talk directly to customers? How about an ATM with an interactive videophone? Or maybe, better yet, a team of roving / mobile tellers that travel throughout the city to meet customers at ATM machines, to handle questions and problems personally.

Step 3. Keep working through the list of wishes until you've generated a half-dozen or so new, exciting, and ultimately very practical ideas.

Hints:

Some groups/teams find it hard to allow themselves to “make a wish”. As adults, we've been trained to be “realistic” and “practical” in our jobs – and our lives. To encourage the fanciful thinking of The Wish Technique, you may, as the facilitator, have to model the behavior you want. Prompt the participants by saying things like: “Anybody here wish they could exist in two dimensions at once?” “What if you could change form at will?” “How about a machine that would record your potential customers' every thought?!”

Essentially, as facilitator you want to encourage the participants to think and say the impossible by thinking and saying the impossible yourself.

Finally, it's critically important to separate the “wishing” stage of this technique, from the “turn-the-wishes-into-reality” stage. Make sure you generate a list of fanciful wishes first (again, 20-25 is a good number) before you go back and try to turn several of those wishes into realistic new ideas.

11. BILLBOARDING

What Is It? Billboarding is a concept development technique designed to help group participants take the day's best ideas from an ideation session – and turn them into testable concepts. The technique itself involves having teams create a “billboard” for the idea that includes: a short headline, an appropriate visual, and a tag line.

Rationale: Over the years we have experimented with different methods for helping group participants develop “raw ideas” into testable concepts. After much trial and error, we’ve found Billboarding to be the most fun and effective way to:

- 1) help participants focus on the most important potential consumer benefit(s) of an idea and
- 2) develop the idea into a concept that can ultimately be tested with consumers/customers. When a team goes through the process of creating a billboard for an idea, it helps them determine just how good an idea is.

Occasionally, ideas that seemed quite exciting in the ideation session, turn out to be less so after the Billboarding, because the team discovers the idea's anticipated consumer benefit simply is not new, exciting, or compelling enough.

Conversely, teams that have billboarded good (but not necessarily great) ideas from the ideation session have suddenly realized that they do indeed have a breakthrough concept, because in part, the consumer benefit is so unique, needed and/or compelling.

To Facilitate:

Step 1: Form sub-teams of four to five participants each.

Step 2: Give each team a flipchart and ask them to create a billboard (much like you might see on a highway) for their assigned idea.

Step 3: Post the following steps/questions for each team to address/answer:

- 1) What is the idea? (Often “raw ideas” need to be developed further before they can be “billboarded”.) Note: As part of developing the idea further, teams will want to give the idea/product a name.
- 2) List all the benefits of the idea.
- 3) Pick the single most important benefit and create a short headline that communicates this benefit.
- 4) Create a visual that communicates key features and/or benefits.
- 5) Create a reason-to-believe, or call-to action tagline.

Example:

Headline: Bounty, The Quicker Picker Upper.

Visual: Paper towel absorbing a spill.

Reason to believe: Bounty has special, ridged “thirst pockets” to soak up spills faster.

Call-to-action: Call 1-800-Bounty to get a free sample.

12. WHITEBOARDING

What Is It?

Whiteboarding is a personal, departmental, or even organization-wide idea generation technique/process designed to help co-workers generate “big ideas”/Eureka insights by stimulating connections between seemingly un-related or random thoughts, facts, insights, intuitions, and/or idea fragments.

You might think of Whiteboarding as a kind of **interactive suggestion box**: in part, because of its ability to elicit ideas from co-workers in a non-threatening and non-judgmental way; and in part, because it encourages dynamic/on-going “idea building” from a wide variety of employees.

The technique entails having co-workers scribble/record ideas against a specific topic/creative challenge on a whiteboard in an employees office, in a departmental or organization-wide common area over a pre-determined length of time – usually from two to four weeks.

Rationale:

We developed the very simple Whiteboarding technique for three reasons:

- 1) To improve on the ability of a person, department or organization to collaborate on generating breakthrough ideas on an on-going basis.
- 2) To leverage/exploit the inherent ability of the human brain to make connections, recognize patterns, and generate breakthrough insights and ideas **over time**.
- 3) To capture some of the energy, excitement, and “concept-productivity” that comes from group ideation, without the organization having to devote planned or dedicated time and resources.

To Facilitate:

Step 1: Post a blank white-board in an appropriate location: your office or a common area.

Step 2: Decide on a topic/creative challenge for which you want new ideas, and write a short description of it in the center of the whiteboard. Example: “How do we cut costs in this department by 15%,” or “Skin Care New Product Ideas.”

Step 3: “Seed” the whiteboard by putting down a few facts, idea fragments, areas for research, etc. around the topic/creative challenge.

Step 4: Put a timeline on the board, typically 14 to 28 days depending on the nature of the topic/creative challenge.

Step 5: Try to add something to the whiteboard each day, no matter how seemingly insignificant or trivial.

Step 6: Each day, look for connections/ideas between all the seemingly random notes on the whiteboard.

Step 7: On each successive day, cross out a day on the timeline to give the project sense of urgency and impending closure.

Step 8: Encourage your co-workers to add their ideas.

Step 9: At the end of the allotted time, summarize the ideas on the whiteboard for yourself and interested co-workers. Above all, take some kind of action, to demonstrate to yourself and your co-workers, the value of doing the whiteboard technique.

Step 10: Select a new creative challenge to work on and repeat the above steps.

Hints:

Feel free to add un-related ideas, factoids, or trends to the whiteboard, and then “force fit” these against the creative challenge to generate surprising/unexpected new ideas and insights.