**BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES**

**6-3-5 Brainwriting or 635 Method, Method 635**: Aimed at aiding innovation processes by stimulating creativity.

- Consists originally of 6 participants supervised by a moderator who are required to write down 3 ideas on a specific worksheet within 5 minutes, this is also the etymology of the methodology's name. Number of participants can be also 4, 5 or 7.
- It is recommended that through a preliminary discussion, the group focuses on identifying the problem to be solved or the aim to be pursued.
- Once the topic of the session is narrowed down to a problem statement, this is announced and written on top of the Idea Form. This is a worksheet that has to be handed out to each participant and consists of a grid where the heading of the columns are Idea 1, Idea 2 and Idea 3 and the rows identify the name of who has contributed to that particular suggestion.
- At this point, the session is ready to start and participants are given 5 minutes to complete the first row and write down the first ideas working in silence. These may be expressed in any graphical form: written, drawn, through a symbol or however the author prefers.
- The supervisor signals the end of time, and the sheet is passed on to the next participant on the right. Now the process is repeated and each participant is free to get inspired from the idea he reads on the sheet written by his neighbour and contribute to them by integrating or completing them, or decide to ignore them and start a new one from scratch.
- The process goes on until the worksheet is completely filled in but if the supervisor deems it necessary, the time for each round may be extended to a maximum of 10 minutes.
- The conclusion of the brainstorming session is a preliminary screening of the ideas that have been gathered where exact duplicates are deleted, and a team evaluation perhaps using the Nominal Group Technique or Prioritisation Matrices to select 1 to 3 ideas the group can focus on.
- 6-3-5 brainwriting values different backgrounds of participants since it encourages sharing and exchanging knowledge. Differently than traditional brainstorming, it assures an active participation from all members and at the same time avoids issues of domination over introverts that are also likely to feel more free about expressing their own ideas instead of risking to have their potential inhibited by those who shout louder.
The **nominal group technique (NGT)** is a group process involving problem identification, solution generation, and decision making.

It can be used in groups of many sizes, who want to make their decision quickly, as by a vote, but want everyone's opinions taken into account.

Routinely, the NGT involves five stages:

- **Introduction and explanation:** The facilitator welcomes the participants and explains to them the purpose and procedure of the meeting.
- **Silent generation of ideas:** The Facilitator provides each participant with a sheet of paper with the question to be addressed and ask them to write down all ideas that come to mind when considering the question. During this period, the facilitator asks participants not to consult or discuss their ideas with others. This stage lasts approximately 10 minutes.
- **Sharing ideas:** The Facilitator invites participants to share the ideas they have generated. He records each idea on a flip chart using the words spoken by the participant. The round robin process continues until all ideas have been presented. There is no debate about items at this stage and participants are encouraged to write down any new ideas that may arise from what others share. This process ensures all participants get an opportunity to make an equal contribution and provides a written record of all ideas generated by the group. This stage may take 15–30 minutes.
- **Group discussion:** Participants are invited to seek verbal explanation or further details about any of the ideas that colleagues have produced that may not be clear to them. The facilitator’s task is to ensure that each person is allowed to contribute and that discussion of all ideas is thorough without spending too long on a single idea. It is important to ensure that the process is as neutral as possible, avoiding judgment and criticism. The group may suggest new items for discussion and combine items into categories, but no ideas should be eliminated. This stage lasts 30–45 minutes.
- **Voting and ranking:** This involves prioritizing the recorded ideas in relation to the original question. Following the voting and ranking process, immediate results in response to the question is available to participants so the meeting concludes having reached a specific outcome.
  - First, every member of the group gives their view of the solution, with a short explanation.
  - Then the members proceed to rank the solutions, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and so on.
  - Some facilitators will encourage the sharing and discussion of reasons for the choices made by each group member, thereby identifying common ground, and a plurality of ideas and approaches. This diversity often allows the creation of a hybrid idea (combining parts of two or more ideas), often found to be even better than those ideas being initially considered.
- **In the basic method,** the numbers each solution receives are totaled, and the solution with the highest (i.e. most favored) total ranking is selected as the final decision.
**Mind Map.** Great tool to work out as many ideas as you can in hierarchical tree and cluster format. Start off with your goal in the center, branch out into the major sub-topics, continue to branch out into as many sub-sub-topics as needed.

- tool for the visual elicitation of our thoughts and their connections
- Visualization begins with a problem or an idea put in the centre of the representation.
- Then signs, lines, words and drawings are used in order to build a system of thoughts around the starting point. Create mind maps with colored nodes and branches. Add comments or detailed notes to branches.
- The hand and the mind work simultaneously. Work alone or invite team members.
Prioritisation matrix tool

A prioritisation matrix is a framework to help prioritise a number of options or alternatives. Each option is rated in terms of the impact it would have if it were implemented and in terms of how 'do-able' the option is. All priorities which are rated as having both a high impact and being highly do-able are placed in the top right-hand segment of the quadrant and these are the options the team would be most advised to implement.

First column is the number of solution. Second column is called Option: list possible solutions to solve a problem in the table so that each solution stands on one raw. Third column is called Do-ability score. It is rated from 1 to 4, 1 being the lowest score. Fourth column is called Impact score. It is rated from 1 to 4, 1 being the lowest score.

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These scores are then transferred to the prioritisation matrix.

The outcomes of the table suggest that options 6, 4, and 10 are the highest priorities.
Teleportation: What if you were facing this problem in a different place? Different country? Different geographic region? Different universe? Different plane of existence? How would you handle it?

Attribute change. How would you think about this if you were a different gender? Age? Race? Intellect? Height? Weight? Nationality? Your Sanity? With each attribute change, you become exposed to a new spectrum of thinking you were subconsciously closed off from.

Rolestorming. What would you do if you were someone else? Your parent? Your teacher? Your manager? Your partner? Your best friend? Your enemy? Etc?


Superpowers. This is another spinoff of rolestorming. What if you suddenly have superpowers? Superman? Spiderman? Wonderwoman? X-Men? The Hulk? One of the Fantastic Four? What would you do?

Gap Filling. Identify your current spot – Point A – and your end goal – Point B. What is the gap that exists between A and B? What are all the things you need to fill up this gap? List them down and find out what it takes to get them.

Medici Effect. Medici Effect refers to how ideas in seemingly unrelated topics/fields intersect. Put your goal alongside similar goals in different areasCONTEXTS and identify parallel themes/solutions. For example, if your goal is to be an award winning artist, look at award winning musicians, educators, game developers, computer makers, businessmen, etc. Are there any commonalities that lie among all of them that you can apply to your situation? What worked for each of them that you can adopt?

SWOT Analysis. Do a SWOT of your situation – What are the Strengths? Weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats? The analysis will open you up to ideas you may not be aware before.
**Trigger Method.** Brainstorm on as many ideas as possible. Then select the best ones and brainstorm on those ideas as ‘triggers’ for more ideas. Repeat until you find the best solution.

The trigger method is analysis based on repetition. One idea triggers another and another and so on until as many thoughts as possible are generated.

- Problem is defined, debated and ideas noted.
- A selection of these ideas are collected then 5–10 are chosen for further ideation
- The 5–10 are displayed and used as ‘triggers’ to generate more ideas.
- Debating and discussing boosts teambuilding.

**Trigger Sessions** are a good way of getting lots of ideas down from untrained resources.

- The Problem owner defines the problem
- Each member of group writes down his ideas in shorthand (2 minutes only)
- One member reads out his list - others silently cross out ideas read out and write down “Hitch-hiked” ideas, i.e. ideas they get when listening to other members’ ideas
- The second member reads out his list of ideas not already covered, followed in turn by other members
- The last member reads out his original list and his “Hitch-hiked” list and procedure is repeated counter current (ie, if there are 6 folk, the order goes 1,2,3,4,5,6,5,4,3,2,1,2,3,4,5,6...)

A good group will be able to manage seven passes. Everyone’s paper is then collected and can be typed up into a single list of ideas - all duplicates should have been crossed out during the session.
Variable Brainstorming.

- Rather than free association of ideas in a standard brainstorming session, variable brainstorming focuses on the brainstorming session by basing the process on an outcome variable or goal.
- First, identify the variable in the end outcome you look to achieve. For example, if your goal is to achieve X visitors to your website, the variable is # of visitors.
- Second, list all the possibilities for that variable. Different variations of visitors are gender/age/race/nationality/occupation/interests/etc. Think about the question with each different variable. For example, for Genre: How can you get more females to your website? How can you get more males to your website? For age: How can you get more teenagers to your website? How can you get more adults to your website? And so on.

Niche. This is the next level of variable brainstorming method. From the variations of the variable you have listed, mix and match them in different ways and brainstorm against those niches. For example, using the previous example, how can you get more male teenagers to your website? (Gender & Age) How can you get more American female adults to your website? (Nationality, Gender & Age)

Challenger. List all the assumptions in your situation and challenge them. For example, your goal is to brainstorm on a list of ideas for your romance novel which you want to get published. There are several assumptions you are operating in here. #1: Genre to write: Romance. Why must it be that romance? Can it be a different genre? Another assumption is for a novel. #2: Length of the story: Novel. Why must it be a novel? Can it be a short story? A series of books? #3: Medium: Book. Why must be it a book? Can it be an ebook? Mp3? Video? And so on.

Escape Thinking. This is a variation of Challenger method. Look at the assumptions behind the goal you are trying to achieve, then flip that assumption around and look at your goal from that new angle. For example, you want to earn more income from selling books. Your assumption may be ‘People buy books for themselves’. Flip the assumption around such that ‘People do NOT buy books for reading’. What will this lead to? You may end up with people buy books as gifts, for collection purposes, etc. Another assumption may be ‘People read books’. The flip side of this assumption may be people look at books (drawings). Escaping from these assumptions will bring you to a different realm of thought on how to achieve your goal.

Reverse Thinking. Think about what everyone will typically do in your situation. Then do the opposite.
Counteraction Busting. What counteracting forces are you facing in your scenario? For example, if you want to increase traffic to your website, two counteracting forces may be the number of ads you put and the pageviews of your site. The more ads you put, the more users will likely be annoyed and surf away. What can you do such that the counteraction no longer exists or the counteraction is no longer an issue? Some solutions may be 1) Get ads that are closely related to the theme of your site 2) Get contextual ads that are part of your content rather than separate, and so on.

Resource Availability. What if money, time, people, supplies are not issues at all? What if you can ask for whatever you want and have it happen? What will you do?

Drivers Analysis. What are the forces that help drive you forward in your situation? What are the forces that are acting against you? Think about how you can magnify the former and reduce/eliminate the latter.

Exaggeration. Exaggerate your goal and see how you will deal with it now. Enlarge it: What if it is 10 times its current size? 100 times? 1000 times? Shrink it: What if it is 1/10 its current size? 1/100? 1/1000? Multiply it: What if you have 10 of these goals now? 100? 1000?

Get Random Input. Get a random stimuli and try to see how you can fit it into your situation. Get a random word/image from a dictionary/webpage/book/magazine/newspaper/TV/etc, a random object from your room/house/workplace/neighborhood/etc and so on.

Write a list of 101 ideas. Open your word processor and write a laundry list of at least 101 ideas to deal with your situation. Go wild and write whatever you can think of without restricting yourself. Do not stop until you have at least 101.