

## 4 Tools for Developing Innovative Solutions

### 4.3 Method 635

#### Keywords

Brainstorming, Brainwriting, Method 635, Creative Technique, Problem Solving, Idea Generation.

#### Learning Objective



After reading this component you will understand how to implement the group creative technique – Method 635. You will be able to understand what the technique is, as well as how and where to use it particularly in situations where they may want to generate new product ideas, find solutions for a problem or find a new way of doing things.

#### Time

This component should take 20 minutes to read and the actual 635 Method should take approximately 40-60 minutes to conduct with a group of six people.

#### Introduction

We explored **Brainstorming** in module 4.2 and found that it involves a group of people working together to create ideas and potential solutions to a problem. However, do you feel that brainstorming might be too vague or that members of your team might need more direction or focus? You might also be afraid that not all members will participate in brainstorming as they might not like to speak in a group situation or might feel that their suggestions will not be valued or recognised or maybe worse stolen! Then Method 635 might just be the solution you are looking for.



Method 635 is a written form of brainstorming often referred to as “**brainwriting**” and basically involves writing down the ideas on paper. Other members of the group take the initial ideas generated and expand upon them.

#### 4.3.1 What is Method 635?

The name method 635 is a **creative technique** which expands upon the principles of brainstorming. Method 635 is often referred to as brainwriting and involves a group of people generating ideas to a specific problem or issue using a specific process.

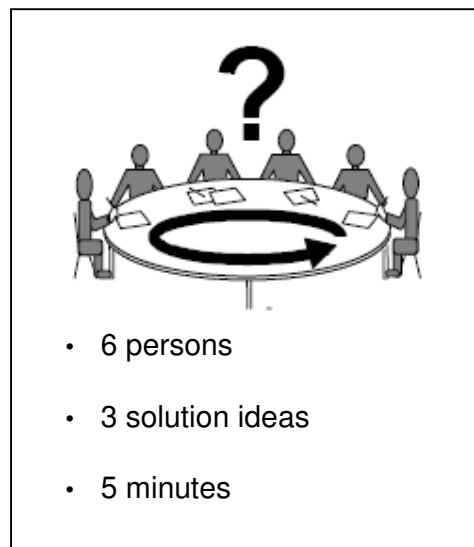


Image Source<sup>1</sup>

This process asks 6 people to write down 3 solution ideas in 5 minutes. After a set period of time (usually 5 minutes), the solution ideas are handed to the participants neighbour, who then either further develops the original three solution ideas or provides three new ones. The handing over of the potential solutions to the next person continues until everyone in the group gets a chance to see each of the original three solutions and contribute to the document.



Method 635 was first developed by Rohrbach in 1969

#### 4.3.2 Why Use Method 635?

Like many other creative techniques Method 635 can be used in a variety of situations, including

- Idea generating – approx 108 ideas can be generated in less than one hour

<sup>1</sup> [www.wzl.rwth-aachen.de/en/080d8d8c949a1ac0c1256f190035d886/pm\\_a\\_l03.pdf](http://www.wzl.rwth-aachen.de/en/080d8d8c949a1ac0c1256f190035d886/pm_a_l03.pdf)

- Finding solutions to a problem
- Finding new ways of doing things – new systems and processes
- Team/Network building process (getting to know each other and the competencies of colleagues, working together on a solution)
- Improving communication within a team or organisation
- Encouraging team members to impart ideas and solutions as the source of the idea can be easily identified.

The technique can also be applied to more complex problems and is particularly useful when you want to focus the group and get everyone involved in the process.

There are a number of pros and cons for using Method 635, these are summarised in table 1:

Table 1: Pros and Cons of using Method 635

Possible advantages	Possible disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The method is very easy to use</li> <li>• The method does not require a specially qualified moderator</li> <li>• The innovative potential of a group can be exploited / used (experts in different fields of knowledge)</li> <li>• Exchange of knowledge –(learning from others)</li> <li>• All participants are active (which is not necessarily achieved by a brainstorming session)</li> <li>• It is useful in addressing conflicts within the group - conflicts in a group could have a negative effect when using the oral method of brainstorming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some participants might have problems describing their ideas concisely so that the idea is not clear enough for the other participants (handwriting must also be clear!).</li> <li>• As there is a fixed time limit of five minutes, participants might feel pressured and restricted in their thinking.</li> <li>• May generate less creative solutions because of the mostly individual nature of the contributions does not take advantage of group discussions<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> (Pahl and Beitz, 1996)

<p>as some participants may be reluctant / hesitate to bring ideas forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A useful idea is systematically developed further</li> <li>• The "author" of a creative idea can be identified. This can be an important motivational factor.</li> </ul>	
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Do you see particular situation where method 635 might be better than other brainstorming techniques?

#### 4.3.3 Where can method 635 be used?

Brainwriting and method 635 can be used as an alternative to Brainstorming when:

- A team needs another technique for producing ideas
- Personalities require a different approach
- Team members come from different levels of an organisation
- The number of participants makes the **classical brainstorming** impractical: with many people, several 635 groups can be established, or the worksheet can be passed fewer times.

#### 4.3.4 How to use Method 635?

The objective of Method 635 is to find and develop ideas and/or solutions to a particular problem

##### Prerequisites

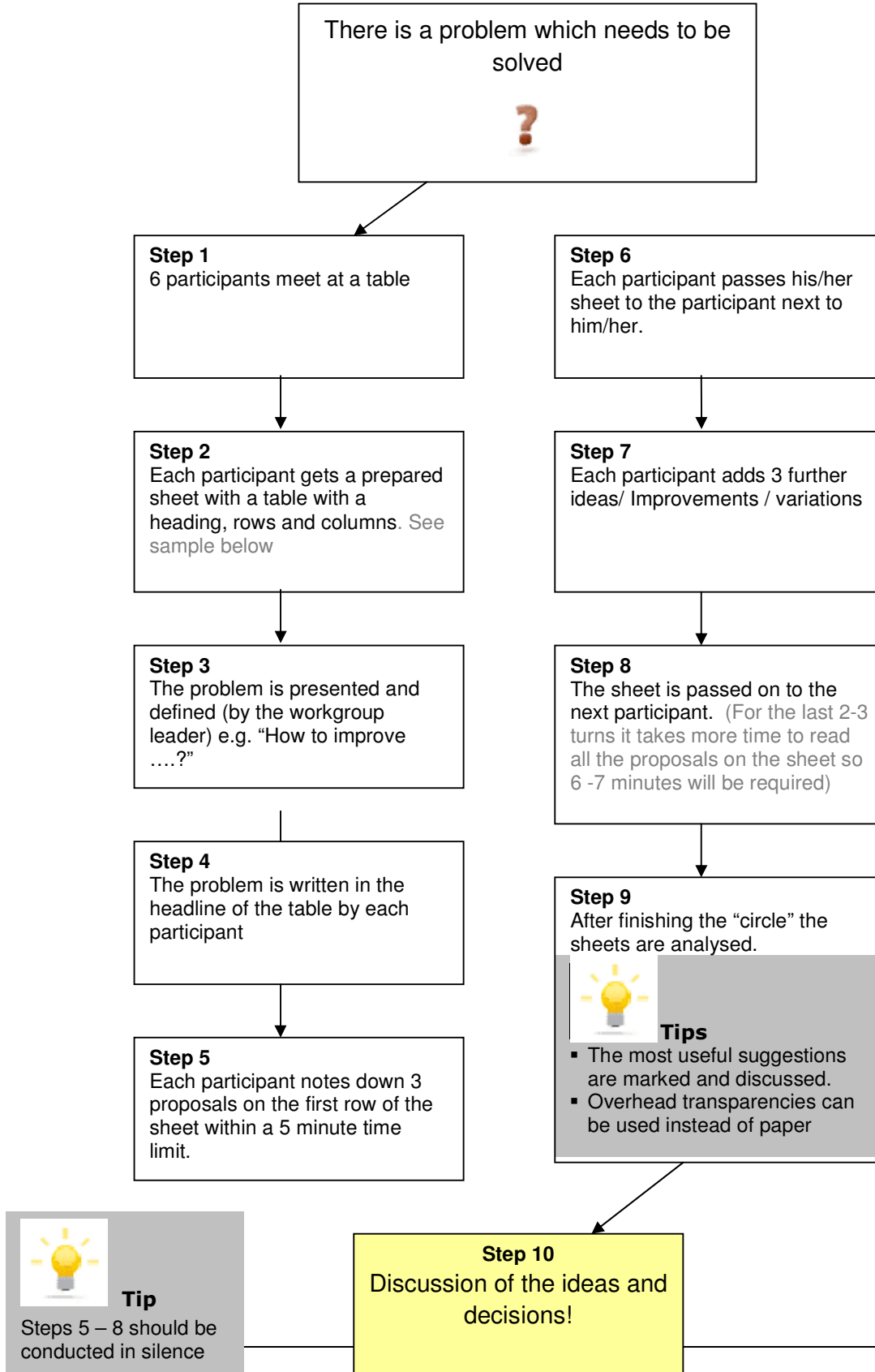
- 6 participants (from different fields of knowledge)
- Prepared forms (see table 4.3.2 below)

- A room without any disturbances
- Certain aspects of the exercise should be carried out in silence
- About 30-40 minutes with further time for discussion

Table 2: An example of a **Prepared Form**

<b>Problem Statement: How to .....</b>			
Name	Idea 1	Idea 2	Idea 3
Name			
Name			
Name			
Name			
Name			

Table 3: Work Steps



#### 4.3.5 Application of Example

Table 4: Example of ideas generated using Method 635

<b>Problem Statement: How can we improve the knowledge of English in the Service Department</b>			
<b>Nikos</b>	Evening classes	Motivation for holiday abroad	“English Speaking Day” each week in the department
<b>Vald</b>	Evening class paid by company	Motivation for summer university in English	Project meetings in English
<b>Aideen</b>	Evening classes with 2 hours off	Contribution by the company for summer university in GB, Ireland or US	Conversation circle once a month after work
<b>Linda</b>	2 hours per week with a teacher in the company	Higher remuneration for a certificated qualification	English version of professional literature
<b>Lalia</b>	E-learning with a tutor and classes in the company	English “library” at the company	Conversation circle with foreign colleagues from the company
<b>Caron</b>	Intensive course twice a year on the weekend	Going to the Irish pub as often as possible	Intercultural evening with foreign colleagues from the company

#### Results Achieved

- Max  $6 \times 3 \times 6 = 108$  idea solutions
- A number of documents containing suggested solutions which can be investigated further using focus groups etc.



A video demonstration is available in the online guide only ([www.innosupport.net](http://www.innosupport.net)).



Why not try out the Method 635 with some of your work colleagues? Pick a hypothetical or simple problem before embarking on finding a solution to a more complex problem. Ask a group of people to participate and put aside one hour with no distractions.

Why not play around with the method – would you use an electronic means i.e. email, virtual classroom, to circulate the sheet instead of meeting in a room?

### 4.3.6 Summary of Key Points

Method 635 is a Creative Technique used to find solutions to a specific problem. It derives from three basic principles:

- 6 participants note down
- ideas in a period of 5 minutes
- 5 times

The technique can be used to Idea generating, finding solutions to a problem, finding new ways of doing things, team building, improving and encouraging team members to impart ideas and solutions.



In this module you learned about the creative technique Method 635, you also learned how and where to use it particularly in situations where they may want to generate new product ideas, find solutions for a problem or find a new way of doing things.





## Test Questions

### 1. Why the technique is called “635”?

Answer:

- 6 participants note down
- 3 ideas in a period of
- 5 minutes, five times

### 2. Please name some prerequisites for implementing the technique

Answer: Some of the following prerequisites should be mentioned:

- 6 participants (in different fields of knowledge)
- Prepared forms (see paragraph implementation example)
- A room without any distractions
- About 30-40 minutes with further time for discussion

### 3. What can “Method 635” be used for?

Answer: The following possibilities could be mentioned:

- Creating new ideas
- Finding solutions to a problem
- Turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (making explicit knowledge tangible)
- Team building processes
- Network building processes
- Knowledge transfer

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## Further Reading

James C. Kaufman & Robert J. Sternberg (2006), The International Handbook of Creativity

Carol Kinsey Goman, Ph.D. (1999), Creativity in Business: A Practical Guide for Creative Thinking

Bjrn Andersen, Tom Fagerhaug (2006), Root Cause Analysis: Simplified Tools and Techniques

Arthur B. VanGundy (2007), Getting to Innovation: How Asking the Right Questions Generates the Great

## Websites

You can use search engines like Google to search for “method 635”. The terms “brainwriting”, “brainwriting 635” and “brainstorming 635” should also be used, as different authors use different terminology. Some suggested reading might include:

[www.mycoted.com/Brainwriting#BrainWriting\\_6-3-5](http://www.mycoted.com/Brainwriting#BrainWriting_6-3-5)

<http://creatingminds.org/tools/brainwriting.htm>

<http://cqi.ucok.edu/brainpres.pdf>

<http://ezinearticles.com/?Brainwriting,-A-More-Perfect-Brainstorm&id=510585>

<http://www.creativityatwork.com/articlesContent/brainwriting.htm>>

## German Sources

[www.teachsam.de/arb/krea/krea\\_brainst\\_2e.htm](http://www.teachsam.de/arb/krea/krea_brainst_2e.htm)

## GLOSSARY

**Brainstorming** is a group creativity technique that was designed to generate a large number of ideas for the solution of a problem. The method originated in a 1953 book called *Applied Imagination* by Alex Faickney Osborn, an advertising executive. Osborn proposed that groups could double their creative output by using the method of brainstorming... Although traditional brainstorming may not increase the productivity of groups, it has other potential benefits, such as enhancing the enjoyment of group work and improving morale. It may also serve as a useful exercise for team building. (source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brainstorming>)

The term **Classical Brainstorming** is often used to describe traditional brainstorming

**Brainwriting** is a variation of brainstorming where ideas are written down by individuals, and buzz groups.

**Creativity techniques** are the terms given to a wide range of techniques or methods which can be used with individuals or in team situations to facilitate a systematic approach to turning explicit individual experiences, knowledge and creative ideas (stored in peoples' brains) into a format which can be transferred to others and used to create new knowledge and to find innovative solutions". (source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creativity\\_technique](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creativity_technique))