

# IDEA-GENERATION TECHNIQUES

**Introduction**

**Guidelines**

**Idea-Generators for:**

*Modifying*

*Experimenting*

*Visioning*

*Exploring*

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## Techniques for Idea-Generation

This booklet provides simple, easy-to-use concepts and techniques to help you and your team conduct successful idea-generation sessions, particularly in conjunction with individual and team insights based on Innovation Styles. This booklet is divided into 3 sections:

### **Part I: Introduction to Innovation Styles®** **PAGE** **5**

This section provides an overview of the four Innovation Styles and how they help to categorize and strategize the selection of idea-generation techniques. The topics in this section include:

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# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction to the four Innovation Styles

Recognizing the different ways we like to innovate is a key to working together successfully – in a team or in an organization. We all have our own unique approach to meeting a creative challenge, using our own mixture of four Innovation Styles: **Visioning**, **Modifying**, **Exploring**, and **Experimenting**. To nurture a healthy team environment for innovation, each approach must be recognized, valued, and put to its best use... while practicing versatility among all four approaches.

**How do you approach the innovation process?**

Modifying and Visioning styles are more **focused**, well-planned, and results-oriented

### VISIONING

People who have *Visioning* profiles like to imagine an ideal future and let long-term goals be their guide – they *envision* and *idealize*

**What stimulates your innovative thinking?**

Visioning and Exploring styles primarily use **intuition**, insights, and images

### MODIFYING

People who have *Modifying* profiles like to refine and improve what has already been done – they *refine* and *optimize*



### EXPLORING

People who have *Exploring* profiles like to question assumptions and discover novel possibilities – they *challenge* and *discover*

**What stimulates your innovative thinking?**

Experimenting and Modifying styles primarily use **facts**, details, and analysis

### EXPERIMENTING

People who have *Experimenting* profiles like to test out various combinations of new ideas and learn from the results – they *combine* and *test*

**How do you approach the Innovation process?**

Exploring and Experimenting styles are more **broad**, perceptive, and learning-oriented

# INTRODUCTION

## Innovation Styles and Idea-Generation Techniques

Often the hardest part of generating new innovative solutions is knowing where and how to begin looking for them. Whether you are wanting to inspire your staff or facilitate an idea-generation session, you'll benefit greatly by knowing which techniques belong to which Innovation Style. Then, when you also know the specific Innovation Styles Profiles of the individuals in your group, as well as the group's overall profile, you can better select the techniques that will work for a particular mix of people, or which tools to introduce first and last. For example, a group of people who strongly prefer Modifying will not start well with Exploring techniques, but could use them well if they were introduced later.

*Modifying* and *Experimenting* idea-generation techniques begin by gathering facts, details and other data. *Modifying* builds on what is known, while *Experimenting* combines the components in new ways. These techniques are more linear than intuitive in their approach to generating ideas. They take advantage of different ways of organizing known information so as to approach problems from new and more comprehensive angles. Using a logical pattern or a sequence of steps, they help focus the attention on where to look for innovations.

*Visioning* and *Exploring* idea-generation techniques start with an intuitive insight, hunch or hypothesis; then they gather information to confirm and fill out the intuition. The difference between these two techniques is that *Visioning* searches for a clear mental picture of the future, while *Exploring* often employs symbols to sense what is metaphorically possible. These techniques take advantage of the right-brain capability to perceive whole solutions in sudden leaps of logic.

The graph to the right shows the idea-generation techniques that are included in Part III of this booklet. Also included in this section is the "Compass" exercise, which uses all four Innovation Styles. To learn more about how to use idea generation techniques with the Innovation Styles, you can read Chapters 9 and 10 of *Flash of Brilliance* by William C. Miller.



## Facilitation Guidelines

Here are a few guidelines for facilitating successful creativity/idea-generation sessions:

- It's up to you to promote a safe environment where participants can try out their creative wings. If wacky ideas are shot down, you can expect creative thought to shut down. You must protect individuals and their ideas from attack.
- As a facilitator, you are a neutral servant to the group; it is not up to you to contribute or evaluate ideas.
- Good facilitation means being in charge without controlling; and having fun without losing control.
- It is your job to get everyone to participate, and to prevent anyone from dominating the session. Encourage the group. Show your enthusiasm. You may need to be their cheerleader.
- Stay in the moment. Pay attention to what is going on with your group and individuals, and adapt to the situation at hand.
- If necessary, set "ground rules" for the creativity session (e.g. the more ideas the better, no "devil's advocates" allowed, impractical ideas are OK, etc.)
- If a technique doesn't seem to be working, don't be discouraged, try another one.
- Watch out for those who will want to discontinue the process after a few ideas are generated—don't quit too soon. Sometimes it is the 127th idea that ends up being used.
- Continue to suggest additional tools, techniques and approaches to keep the creative juices flowing.
- If an activity doesn't work as planned, embrace the risk you took. Debrief the exercise and discuss it to discover what you and the group can learn from it.

In addition:

- Explain the Innovation Styles model, with special emphasis on how each style brings an important perspective and different "starting point" for generating ideas.
- Review the Innovation Styles Profile for each participant as well as the group's overall profile, so the group can see and appreciate the diversity that can help them generate a comprehensive as well as creative set of ideas

# GUIDELINES

## Preparing the Physical Environment

It is important to take your physical environment into consideration. It can add to or detract from the creative process. Here are some suggestions for setting up a space that promotes creativity by being both comfortable and stimulating.

### Comfort:

- Provide plenty of refreshments and snacks
- Have comfortable chairs and tables
- Have plenty of room to move around
- Select a room with windows

### Stimulation:

- Use music
- Provide toys for people to play with and hold
- Vary presentation and discussion, media and techniques
- Vary data collection methods (flip-charts, post-it notes, notepads)
- Put up a graffiti wall, posters and quotes
- Hold idea-generation sessions off-site
- Use anything that promotes fun, whimsy, delight and surprise

These hints can be applied to the everyday work environment as well as sites for one-time meetings.



## Preparing the Participants

To hold successful idea-generation sessions, prepare your participants. Preparation might include:

- Creating ownership/buy-in for the session up front
- Setting the context for the session and changes
- Affirming that “open-minded skepticism” can be useful in stimulating ideas
- Setting and managing expectations for the meeting
- Setting ground-rules for your session to create safety and process controls
- Ensuring everyone understands basic creativity/idea-generation concepts
- Opening up participants’ creative juices and warming up their creativity muscles

## Setting Up Sub-Groups Using Innovation Styles

You can use your knowledge of the Innovation Styles Profile for each participant to help you set up sub-groups for generating ideas. Two options to consider are:

- Create “homogeneous” sub-groups where the members have similar Innovation Styles profiles. Have each sub-group work on the same topic. After they generate their ideas, see the similarities and differences in the ideas generated by the sub-groups depending on their dominant Innovation Style.
- Create “heterogeneous” sub-groups where each has a mixture of different Innovation Styles Profiles. You can have the different sub-groups work on the same topic or different topics. This arrangement helps the members of each sub-group develop versatility as they learn to synergize the different approaches.

# GUIDELINES

## Generating Creative Thought

Make your sessions more productive by having participants follow these guidelines:

- **Build on ideas (say “Yes and...” instead of “Yes but...”)**

We are accustomed to shooting down others’ ideas. We are taught that critical thinking (finding fault in ideas) is important. We look good by finding these faults. A new idea might mean more work for us. We might be afraid of implementing an idea. The list goes on and on. When someone’s idea gets shot down, they are less likely to continue offering new ideas. The brainstorming process can easily break down. When generating ideas, we can choose to counteract our natural tendencies and build on others’ ideas.

- **Don’t self-censor**

During idea generation, it is common to judge our own thoughts and ideas. We then only verbalize the “good” or “practical” ones. This inhibits the creative flow. A wild, crazy or bad idea often leads to an important idea. So, allow all your ideas to come forward. The more ideas, the better. Take the attitude that there are no “bad ideas,” and jump in with any idea. If you get stuck, ask a question again in a different way. Don’t worry about quality.

- **Pay attention and be present**

We often get so caught up in our own thoughts, agendas and ideas that we stop listening and paying attention to each other. Sometimes, instead of listening to what someone is saying, we listen to when they are going to be finished. We call this “talking and waiting to talk,” instead of “talking and listening.” Other times, we get distracted—thinking about the future or past. Whatever the reason, when we are not fully present and paying attention to each other, we cannot respond as creatively and spontaneously to what has just been said. We can train ourselves to quiet our minds and pay more attention, resulting in more productive idea-generation sessions.

- **Embrace mistakes and take risks**

People are often afraid of looking bad or making mistakes. This is useful and defensible in many business situations. When generating ideas, however, the opposite is true. If we are afraid of making mistakes, we will self-censor our ideas. Create an atmosphere where mistakes are more than OK, where they are celebrated. This will help everyone take more risks and share more ideas with each other.

# WARM-UP EXERCISE

## Yes And / Yes But

### Use

This is an excellent exercise to use as a warm-up before starting an idea-generating session. It will remind the participants, through direct experience, to be open to other's ideas as well as to the value of building on the ideas of others.

### Duration

10—20 minutes

### Instructions

In round 1, participants act as a high school reunion committee. Someone starts with a statement, such as, "Let's have it in Hawaii." Every subsequent participant must start their sentence with "Yes but..." In round 2, participants again act as the committee. Someone starts with a statement, such as, "Let's have a band." Every subsequent participant starts their sentence with "Yes, and..."

### Examples:

Let's have the reunion in Hawaii. Yes, but that would cost too much. Let's have it at the high school. Yes, but that's an old, dreary place. Let's have it at a nice hotel.

Let's have a band. Yes, and we could have dancers. Yes, and we could play 50's music.

### Facilitator Notes

Divide the participants into 2 groups. Have Group 1 do the "Yes But" round as Group 2 watches. Then have Group 2 do the "Yes And" round as Group 1 watches. If desired, finish by having Group 1 play "Yes And." Have the participants use statements and avoid questions. Have them really say and mean "Yes but" or "Yes and." As facilitator you can determine the length of time for this role-play.

### Discussion

- To players:
  - How did that feel?
  - What was it like to have your ideas rejected? What was it like to have your ideas accepted?
  - Why do we say "Yes, but"? In what situations is "yes, and" useful?
- To observers:
  - How far did they get?
  - Which reunion would you rather go to?

### Concepts

Build on the ideas of others—say "Yes, and" instead of "Yes, but."

Look at ideas in new ways—listen without judgment.

# WARM-UP EXERCISE

## Quick Draw

### Use

This is a good warm-up exercise to help participants to experience the power of team creativity.

### Duration

10—15 minutes

### Instructions

Have the participants work in pairs. Have each pair of participants draw a picture one line at a time. One person starts by placing two small circles on a page to represent eyes. Participants then alternate adding one line or feature, going as quickly as possible. When a person hesitates, the drawing is done. The participants then title the drawing one letter at a time, again alternating and ending when one player hesitates.

### Variations:

Try starting with something other than circles or with nothing at all.

Can be done with an entire team working together. Sitting in a circle, participants each start with one page, adding lines or features and passing the drawings around to their left or right.

### Facilitator Notes

Have the participants do this exercise without talking and drawing as quickly as possible. Tell them not to give their partner any verbal cues of what they are trying to draw. Have them work together with their partner and when there is a hesitation, the drawing is done. Have each pair do at least 2 drawings. You can set the mood with music in the background and display the artwork for all to see.

### Discussion

- What was that like?
- Were you surprised by some of the drawings?
- What do you think helped make the drawings more creative?
- Did you ever find yourself trying to lead your partner?
- Did you feel you were following?

### Concepts

Build on the ideas of other—share responsibility.

Say the next obvious thing—embrace failure and don't self-censor.

Let go—share control.

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Compass

### Purpose

To generate ideas using all four Innovation Styles.

### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Define and describe an issue for which you want some new, creative ideas.
2. Take four to six minutes to generate new ideas using each of the Innovation Styles questions below:
  - **Visioning:** What can we imagine as the ideal long-term solution?
  - **Experimenting:** What can we combine to form a new solution?
  - **Modifying:** What can we adapt to improve on what we have already done?
  - **Exploring:** What can we invent starting with entirely new assumptions?

### Facilitator Notes

Prepare your four questions ahead of time or arrive at a group consensus on which questions to use. This process can also be self-facilitated by any group. This exercise is the fastest and easiest way to get ideas from all four styles. Don't constrain the group to list only Visioning answers to the Visioning question, etc.; use the style to prompt ideas, but not to censor them.

### Customized Questions

You can also customize the four Compass questions to your specific issue. For example:

	<i><b>Visioning</b></i>	<i><b>Modifying</b></i>	<i><b>Exploring</b></i>	<i><b>Experimenting</b></i>
<b>Promote strategic thinking by asking:</b>	<i>"How can we be ideally positioned within our industry?"</i>	<i>"How can we improve upon our core strengths and competencies?"</i>	<i>"How can we re-write the rules of competition?"</i>	<i>"How can we synergize different markets / technologies / partnerships?"</i>
<b>Meet customer needs by asking:</b>	<i>"What could represent the ultimate wishes of our customers?"</i>	<i>"How can we build on what our customer is already doing?"</i>	<i>"How can we offer our customers radically new and exciting solutions?"</i>	<i>"How can we give customers the best mix of features and benefits?"</i>
<b>Improve quality / work processes by asking:</b>	<i>"What could give us a 'world class' process?"</i>	<i>"What could simplify or refine our processes?"</i>	<i>"What could totally re-engineer our processes?"</i>	<i>"What processes could we integrate and synergize?"</i>

More examples of customized questions can be found in the booklet titled "Understanding and Applying Your Innovation Styles Profile" on the Innovation Styles website at [www.InnovationStyles.com](http://www.InnovationStyles.com).



# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Force Field

### Purpose

To generate ideas that optimize the forces that can contribute to resolving a situation and ideas that can minimize the forces that are hindering a resolution, using the *Modifying* Innovation Style.



### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Write a brief statement of the problem or challenge you wish to solve (write objectively, as if you were a newspaper reporter).
2. On the left side of a paper/white board, describe what the situation would be like if everything fell apart - the worst possible outcome.
3. On the right side of a paper/white board, describe the best possible outcome you can imagine.
4. Presume a center line represents your current situation. "Catastrophic" and "ideal" are playing tug-of-war. Fill in what forces are tugging *right now* at your situation to help make it more ideal and what forces are trying *right now* to make it more catastrophic.

### Facilitator Notes

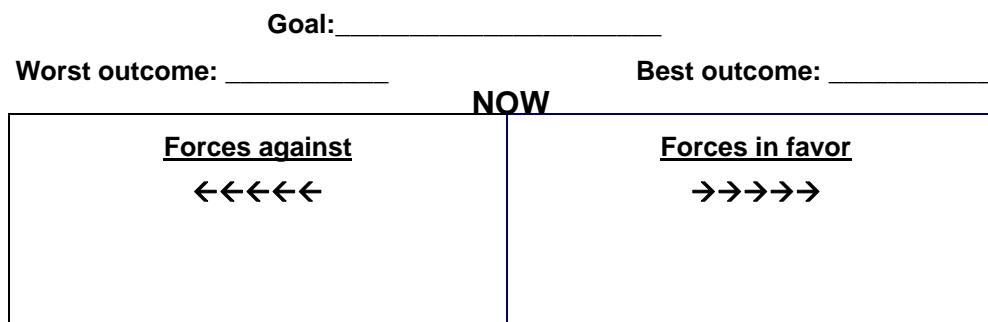
The primary function of the force field is to present three different stimuli for thinking of new options or solutions. There are three ways to move the center line in the direction of the more desirable future:

1. Strengthen an already present positive force
2. Weaken an already present negative force
3. Add a new positive force

### Source

This method was first developed by Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist.

### Example



# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Attribute Listing

### Purpose

To generate ideas that improve the components or attributes of a current situation, using the *Modifying* Innovation Style.



### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Describe the key attributes or components of a situation you wish to improve or change.
2. Brainstorm how you can improve upon any one or all of the attributes or components.

### Facilitator Notes

Attribute listing is similar to the force-field analysis. The force field provides specific negative and positive aspects of the problem, whereas attribute listing provides neutral aspects. Both identify categories in which improvements might be found.

### Example

A bicycle has the following attributes: frame, pedals, drive sprocket, chain, brakes, tires, handlebars...

Each attribute has seen dramatic improvements and innovations in the last thirty years, including:

- Much lighter weight frames based on new materials
- Pedal grips that strap to secure feet better
- Stronger chains with special clamps for easier changing
- Improved derailleur gears for rear sprocket
- Racing handlebars for more ergo dynamic racing position
- New rear wheel materials to replace spokes

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## SCAMPER

### Purpose

To generate ideas for altering and improving a current situation, using the *Modifying* Innovation Style.



### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Describe the key attributes or components of a situation you wish to improve or change.
2. Apply the SCAMPER questions to your situation to generate ideas for achieving your goal:
  - **S** = Simplify or substitute? (other ingredients, materials, etc.)
  - **C** = Combine or condense?
  - **A** = Adapt or alter (pace, etc.) ?
  - **M** = Modify, magnify or miniaturize?
  - **P** = Put to other uses?
  - **E** = Eliminate or expand?
  - **R** = Reverse (roles, etc.) or rearrange (patterns, etc.) ?

### Facilitator Notes

For each of the letters in the mnemonic SCAMPER, you may want to start by listing the applicable components of your situation.

### Source

Alex Osborn, a pioneer in facilitating creativity, developed this list of "idea-spurring questions." They were later arranged by Bob Eberle as the mnemonic SCAMPER.

### Example

The original telephone had a rotary dial for "dialing" the phone number, a hand-held device for speaking and listening, and a base — all connected by wires. Here's how SCAMPER could help create the next generation of telephones:

- Substitute buttons with numbers/letters to push, instead of using a rotary dial
- Combine a telephone with the idea of "TV" — and see the person you are talking to
- Put the phone to other uses — send data rather than talking into it
- Magnify the button size (and the numbers/letters on them) for those with limited eyesight
- Eliminate the cords by using "radio" signals to transmit the sound





# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Matrix Analysis

### Purpose

To generate ideas based on the intersection (combination) of various factors that comprise a solution, using an *Experimenting* Innovation Style.



### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Briefly describe a problem or challenge for which you need a creative solution.
2. Select two key variables that impact this problem.
3. On a piece of paper, make a two-dimensional matrix and label one axis with the first variable and the other axis with the second variable.
4. Along each axis, write all the possible sub-variables for each variable.
5. Draw lines from each axis so that "squares" are formed, representing the combination of one sub-variable from each axis.
6. Brainstorm ideas for each square combination, for those squares that seem most promising, or for random squares in order to spur out-of-the-box solutions.

### Facilitator Notes

Put extra effort into determining the variables and sub-variables as this will help make this exercise most effective. Share the example below to clarify the exercise.

### Example

Perhaps the two most important variables in a new food product would be the kinds of food and forms of food. For each combination, such as "Fruit/Drink" or "Grain/Topping" brainstorm specific ideas for an improved or new product.

Kinds of food	Forms of food				
		Drink	Soup	Chips	Topping
	Fruit				
	Grain				
	Spice				
	Vegetable				

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Alternate Scenarios

### Purpose

To generate ideas for new strategies when the future business environment is quite uncertain and unpredictable, using an *Experimenting* Innovation Style.



### Instructions

1. Briefly state a specific business decision that needs to be made.
2. Identify the major environmental forces that could impact the decision.
3. Build three or four scenarios based on the principal forces that could affect your decision. Be sure to identify four plausible and qualitatively different possibilities for each force.
4. Assemble the alternatives for each force into consistent "stories," with both a narrative and a table of forces and scenarios.
5. Identify the business opportunities within each scenario.
6. Examine the links and synergies of opportunities across the range of scenarios in order to formulate a more realistic strategy.

### Facilitator Notes

Scenarios are qualitatively different descriptions of plausible futures. They can give you a deeper understanding of the potential environments in which you might have to operate and what you may need to do in the present. Using these scenarios can help to identify the environmental factors that need to be monitored over time. When the environment shifts, you can more quickly recognize where it is shifting to.

### Example

A bank used scenarios to stimulate ideas for competing with new kinds of financial service providers.

Driving Forces	Business Today	Heated	Isolation
<b><u>Economic</u></b> Foreign trade Economic health	Deficit Relatively slow growth	Balanced Rapid growth, inflation	Deficit Recession
<b><u>Technological</u></b> Home computers Cable/satellite available	40% of households 80% of households	50% of households 90% of households	30% of households 50% of households
<b><u>Industry</u></b> Intensity Consolidation	Very intense High	Intense Moderate	Less intense Moderate

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Morphological Analysis



### Purpose

To generate ideas based on new and unusual combinations of elements, especially when there are many variables to consider, using an *Experimenting* Innovation Style.

### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Briefly describe a challenge for which you need a creative solution.
2. Identify a set of factors (variables) that you must take into account to address this challenge.
3. Under each factor (variable), identify the alternatives for that factor that might be considered.
4. Start developing ideas by combining an alternative from one column with an alternative from another column. Continue to combine alternatives from different columns until you have a wide range of ideas, from the practical to the bizarre.

### Facilitator Notes

Although some of the ideas from this method will be eliminated after the first evaluation, it will still open up many new alternatives to consider. And even if the particular option isn't the correct solution, it may provide the stimulus for someone to devise the winning idea.

### Example

Suppose you want to generate new ideas within the food industry. Some of the main issues you would have to deal with would be the properties, processes and packages. Here's what a table of the issues and alternatives might look like. Pick one or two items from each list to make a complete idea.

<u>Properties</u>	<u>Processes</u>	<u>Packages</u>
cost	ferment	bottle
convenience	freeze dry	can
nutrition	compact	pouch
taste	blend	foil/paper
texture	bake	box

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Nature of the Business

### Purpose

To generate ideas using the most fundamental drivers that define the business, using an *Experimenting* Innovation Style.



### Instructions

1. Describe the set of categories (variables) that are involved in what a business delivers, or could deliver, to its present and potential customers.
2. Under each category (variable), identify key words for some (or all) of the alternatives involved.
3. Brainstorm a list of all the opportunities for serving various customers, now and in the future — and phrase those opportunities using the key words from the list (#2 above).
4. Sort (with the help of a computer) the ideas according to key words used, and see which category is most involved in defining the business. (Is it more technology-driven? Market-driven? etc.)

### Facilitator Notes

Businesses can define and organize themselves in many different ways, according to: their products or services; the markets they serve; the functions they provide; their technologies. A change in definition can have a tremendous impact on vision, strategy, values, etc..

### Example

A company that made plastics products re-defined themselves by using the following categories and key words. After generating ideas for a day, they sorted the ideas, using the key words, and saw their business was best defined as a technology-driven business, rather than a product- or market-driven one.

<u>Markets</u>	<u>Functions</u>	<u>Technologies</u>
beverage	damage resistance	adhesives
medical	moisture barrier	laminates
industrial	lightweight	thermoform
toys	reusable	co-extrusion

<u>Products</u>	<u>Services</u>	<u>Process Equipment</u>
cans	leasing	case opener
cups	manufacturing supply	wrap machine
pouches	repair	lidding maching
cartons	training	conveyor

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## History of the Future



### Purpose

To generate new ideas by imagining an ideal future state in which a goal was achieved even better than was hoped for, using the *Visioning* Innovation Style.

### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Imagine that it is 3 years in the future... Reflecting back on the goal you were striving for 3 years earlier, you realize that it has been achieved even beyond what you thought was possible, better than you had ideally wished and hoped for.
2. Write a “bullet point” list of what has been achieved, including all of the “ideal wishes” that have come true.
3. Looking back from that future state, tell the story of what it took to get to that ideal.

### Facilitator Notes

You can set this exercise up by telling the participants that it is 3 years in the future and they are to write an article for the company’s annual report about how a challenge “of 3 years ago” had been successfully met. Or you can say that it is 3 years in the future and a famous business magazine wants to interview them about how a challenge “of 3 years ago” had been successfully met. They are to make an outline of that annual report or business magazine article. If you wish, you can have them write the text in addition to the bullet point list.

### Example

“For the last 3 years, sales of our division have grown at a rate of 35% annually, and we have more than doubled in size in that time. Even more astounding, our morale has dramatically improved, due to the breakthrough work of our quality teams. We established a new quality program, educated our employees on breakthrough creativity techniques, and even got our customers involved. We cut product development time by 50%. We received the industry award for most outstanding customer satisfaction.”

Our ideal achievements were:

- Establishing a new Quantum Quality program
- Educating all employees in breakthrough creativity techniques
- Getting our customers involved
- Cutting product development time tenfold
- Receiving the industry award for most outstanding customer satisfaction

## Guided Visualization

### Purpose

To generate ideas based on imagining a concrete, vivid scene for an ideal future, using the *Visioning* Innovation Style.



### Duration

10 - 20 minutes

### Instructions

1. Have each participant identify a work challenge for which he/she currently has no solution.
2. Bring the participants to a state of relaxation, with their eyes either closed or looking down to the floor. Tell them to relax as they listen to you guide them into a future scene related to their situation.
3. Have them imagine that in front of them are 5 calendars, each representing a coming year. A gust of wind starts blowing away all the pages until all that is left is the final day of the last calendar. They are now in the future, 5 years from now.
4. Have them “look around” and describe to themselves an ideal situation in which the work challenge they were facing 5 years previously is now resolved in a way that is well-beyond anything they could have imagined. Have them give as much detail as they can — what people are doing and saying, what the physical circumstances are, etc.
5. At the end, have the participants write down what they saw in their visualization, share their vision, and then generate even more ideas that build on and actualize what they saw..

### Facilitator Notes

This exercise is different from the “Guided Imagery” exercise under *Exploring* techniques in that the participants are to come up with a very clear picture of the future, one that has a tangible reality to it.

### Example

A person imagined their ideal job and work week “5 years in the future” using this process:

- Imagine you are getting ready to go to work. What day is it? Ideally, how are you getting there? How do you feel? What are you thinking (as you look forward to this ideal day)?
- Go into your workplace — what do you see? Who is there with you? What tasks await you? What conversations are you having? What values are most important to you?
- Check on a situation that troubled you 5 years previously... How did it turn out in an ideal way? How do you feel about that? What happened after that? What did you learn?
- Looking back from this time (5 years in the future), what events unfolded to get you to that point? What else (other new ideas) could have helped you get there?

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Vision Circle

### Purpose

To generate ideas that formulate a group vision of an ideal future, using the *Visioning* Innovation Style.



### Duration

10 - 20 minutes

### Instructions

1. Have the participants seated in a circle. Have a person from outside of the group record the ideas that are being spoken.
2. The Facilitator gives a brief description of the challenge question as a future vision that the group is describing. For example, if the challenge question is "What are ideas for making our organization more innovative?" you might say "It is 5 years from now (use the date). We have been extremely successful at making this organization a great, innovative company. What does it look like?"
3. One at a time, and in any order, have participants describe the attributes of this vision.
4. Finish the visualization when it feels that all or enough ideas have been expressed.

### Facilitator Notes

Try having the participants close their eyes. This creates a stronger sense of visualizing a future. Allow for long pauses in the ebb and flow of ideas. Encourage everyone to participate.

### Example

A vision for making the organization more innovative could be:

- People build on each others' ideas
- There is a clear mission and focus for what kinds of innovative ideas are needed — what will help us grow the business?
- New ideas are encouraged and respected
- People are rewarded for creating new knowledge, even when there's a failure
- Resources are available to help implement the best ideas
- We have lots of time to dream and play



# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Wish List

### Purpose

To generate ideas based on what would be the ideal outcomes, using the *Visioning* Innovation Style.



### Duration

10 - 20 minutes

### Instructions

1. Have the participants identify a situation they wish to address.
2. Ask them to assume that they have *all* the resources they would ever need, and that they can have *anything* that they desire — all they have to do is *wish* for something and it will happen.
3. Have them brainstorm their ideal list of wishes, until they have come up with everything they can think of. There may be some pauses as people stretch beyond the first or second wave of wishes.
4. For each idea, then generate ideas for how it might be brought into practical reality — so the wish can “come true.”

### Facilitator Notes

A difficulty some people have with this technique is that it starts with the premise of unlimited resources, which they might say is unrealistic. However, this technique can often uncover the “seed” of an idea that could become real. The purpose is to stretch beyond conventional thinking and then see what can be made with the ideas that emerge.

### Example

If participants were focusing on developing new career paths, they could imagine that they were independently wealthy and could do anything with their lives they might want to. Would they wish to:

- Travel throughout the world for a year? Race sports cars or horses? Be a sportscaster or professional athlete? Help poor children get a better education? Start their own business — of what type? Study animal behavior? Visit and study in monasteries around the world?

From whatever ideas are wished for, some may stand out as being more meaningful. These can be the source for further brainstorming, based on the question, “What would it take to make this happen?”

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Guided Imagery

### Purpose

To use symbols, scenes, or images as windows to intuitive creative thought, using the *Exploring Innovation Style*.

### Duration

30 - 40 minutes

### Instructions

1. Have each participant identify a work challenge for which he/she currently has no solution.
2. Bring the participants to a state of relaxation, with their eyes either closed or looking down to the floor. Tell them to relax as they listen to you guide them into an imaginary scene.
3. After reading the guided imagery to them, debrief what insights they gained as to how to address their work challenge.

### Facilitator Notes

You can make up your own guided imagery that would be relevant to the group, or use the example below. Remind the participants to imagine the scene as vividly as they can and to incorporate all of their senses. Ask them to accept whatever comes to their mind as they listen, without analyzing it. When you debrief, emphasize that there can be no wrong interpretations — whatever strikes a person as insightful is important and valid.

### Example

(Read by the facilitator...) *Imagine that you are hiking on a warm, sunny day in the mountains. It is late spring and the grasses are vividly green, and there are colorful flowers everywhere — their colors blend into a grand mixture of reds, yellows, blues, and purples all mixed together. The trees are full of young, yellow-green leaves moving gently in the soft, refreshing breeze. You are walking along a smooth, dirt road and there is a stream flowing near the road, gurgling as the water runs over the rocks. As you gaze upwards at the few clouds in the azure-blue sky, you see a variety of birds flying above — some drifting on the high air currents, others flying from tree to tree.*

*As you walk along further, you notice a trail that branches off from the main road. It leads up the mountain to a meadow you can just barely see. Curious as to where it might lead, you follow the trail and see that the meadow is on the other side of the stream and borders a large grove of trees. As you arrive at the foot of the pine trees, you can see how old and grand they are, towering over your head. You step in among the trees, gazing upwards to see them surrounding you even as you see the blue sky and occasional cloud appearing among all the branches.*

*Then, looking down, something captures your attention. You notice a small, sealed box nestled in at the base of one tree. You pick it up, and open the box. Inside, you find a piece of paper folded in half; and as you unfold the paper, you see that on it is written the message that, amazingly, gives you an important insight to your work situation. You come back out to the meadow and lie back on the cool grass while allowing the sun to warm you as refreshing breezes flow over you, you reflect on the message, noting many ways in which it offers a practical way to address your work challenge.*



## Forced Association



### Purpose

To put two concepts together that seemingly have nothing in common, to see what ideas emerge, using an *Exploring* Innovation Style.

### Duration

20 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Describe a situation you wish to change, improve or transform.
2. Select a concept that seems to have nothing to do with the situation.
3. Ask, "How is this situation like (the concept)?"
4. From your answers, generate ideas that can change, improve or transform the situation.

### Facilitator Notes

This can be a very playful exercise, one that often brings laughter even in the midst of "serious" insights and discoveries. It can quickly bring to light some of the "hard to say" qualities of the situation.

### Example

Suppose you wish to improve or transform your relationship with your manager. You could select the concept of "a pencil" and ask, "How is this relationship like a pencil?" If you imagine a yellow pencil with an eraser, you might think...

- Lead... We make promises, but they're not "written in ink" — they aren't put into action.
- The point on the lead... We speak sharply to each other, without thinking.
- Eraser... We are both capable of forgiveness — erasing the past — when we want to.
- Yellow... I feel timid to speak up.
- Wood shaft... When we're honest and "straight" with each other, we can get a lot accomplished.

From these insights, you can identify ways to improve each aspect of the relationship.

# IDEA-GENERATORS

## Nature Symbol



### Purpose

To generate ideas based on a radically different perspective to a situation, using the *Exploring Innovation Style*.

### Duration

15 - 30 minutes

### Instructions

1. Think of a goal you are working towards.
2. Select a symbol or metaphor from nature that best captures the spirit and essence of achieving that goal.
3. List the attributes of your nature symbol.
4. For each attribute, brainstorm ways to bring that attribute into a solution for achieving your goal.

### Facilitator Notes

You can use more than one nature symbol in order to access the imagination of all the participants. This can also be used as an individual exercise.

### Example

Suppose you want to improve the corporate culture for innovation... and the nature symbol you choose is a TREE. Some attributes of a tree are: roots, seasonality, hard outer bark, unpredictable limb patterns, leaves that breathe, etc.

For each attribute, what ideas do you get for improving the corporate culture?

- What would provide more "roots" to the culture?
- What would give better cycles and "seasons" to it?
- What could protect the culture like "hard outer bark"?
- What unpredictability might actually stimulate the culture?
- What mutually profitable exchanges might occur (like the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide in leaves)?

## Alter Ego

### Purpose

To generate out-of-the-box ideas by imagining solutions through the eyes of well-known characters, using the *Exploring Innovation Style*.



### Duration

30 - 40 minutes

### Instructions

1. If there is a large group, form sub-teams of three to five people, and determine a situation they wish to address.
2. Assign each sub-team a different well-known leadership figure (see examples below). Pick a leadership figure at random (they can be real or fictional), or one that seems the antithesis of whom you would first think of for the task. By doing this you will help the sub-teams explore new assumptions and ways of generating ideas.
3. Assume the leadership figure is now leading this project. Tell the story of what this leader might think, say, or do in the situation they identified in step #1. Encourage the sub-groups to be dramatic in bringing that story to life.
4. Have each sub-team identify key ideas that they believe could lead to a successful resolution of their situation.
5. If they wish, they can choose another "leader" and repeat steps #3 and #4 a number of times.

### Facilitator Notes

Prepare the challenge, settings and list of leadership figures in advance. Pick leadership figures who are provocative or who embody important qualities you want the sub-teams to emulate. For example, you might select:

Queen Elizabeth	Bill Gates	Madame Curie
Albert Einstein	Oprah Winfrey	Mahatma Gandhi
Florence Nightingale	Genghis Khan	John Lennon
Sigmund Freud	Mother Teresa	Konosuke Matsushita

After the brainstorming, have each group share their results with the others. During your debriefing, identify ideas that can be practically applied to your current situation.

You can also use this technique as an *Visioning Innovation Style*. To do this have the team imagine some point in the future. The solution they implemented, through the leadership of the well-known figure, is extremely successful. The future state includes many of the characteristics of the leader. Have them identify the steps they took to arrive at this successful future, as well as the attributes of that future state.

# HISTORY

The story of Innovation Styles begins with the pioneering work of Michael Kirton in the late 1970's, who first established that people could be equally creative yet have two different approaches to creative problem solving (which he called *Adaptor* and *Innovator*). Then, in the second half of the 1980's, William Miller established the second breakthrough while he was head of the Innovation Management Program at SRI International (formerly Stanford research Institute).

Using proprietary data from SRI's "Values and Lifestyles" Program, William first saw there were actually four creative problem-solving styles, not two. What he called the *Modifying* style was similar to Kirton's *Adaptor* style and what he called the *Exploring* style was similar to Kirton's *Innovator* style. The discovery of the vertical dimension provided the other two styles – *Visioning* and *Experimenting* as distinct from *Modifying* and *Exploring*.

In 1987, William left SRI and started his own consultancy, the Global Creativity Corporation. There, he finished formulating the model, realizing that his four styles applied to more than just creative problem-solving. They were integral to the entire process of innovation, which includes steps such as: setting a goal, assessing risks, developing confidence to overcome barriers, analyzing key issues, generating creative options, making decisions, implementing solutions, and evaluating results. Thus, he termed his discovery *Innovation Styles* to reinforce how they can be applied throughout the entire innovation process, not just generating creative ideas.

Also in 1987, while teaching a course on "Creativity" at the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, William began to create and validate an Innovation Styles self-assessment with clients in Canada, England, Singapore, and the USA and had the results analyzed by a well-known specialist in social research: Paul Ray, author of *The Cultural Creatives*. In 2006, a second validation study was conducted using a data base of over 4,000 corporate professionals who had taken the ISP on-line. The results reconfirmed the Innovation Styles model. New items, based on observations of individual and team tendencies related to the Innovation Styles, are currently being tested as possible additions to the core ISP items.

The Innovation Styles have been highlighted in William Miller's book *Flash of Brilliance*, selected by Soundview Executive Book Summaries as among the top 30 business books of 1999. Today, William Miller is an internationally recognized expert on values-driven innovation who was named by *Leadership Excellence* as one of the top 30 leadership consultants worldwide from 2004-2006.

**A special feature of the Innovation Styles model and profile is its applicability in multi-national settings and in multi-cultural, "intact" work teams—having been successfully applied in over two dozen countries and cultures, including:**

Shell Oil (Canada)  
Motorola (China)  
Eli Lilly (England)  
Marion-Merrill Dow (France)  
ACC Cement (India)  
Starwood Hotels (Mexico)  
Philips (Netherlands)  
Overseas Bank (Singapore)  
Hewlett Packard (Spain)  
ATT, IBM, Kraft, P&G,  
DuPont, and Schwab (USA)