

CREATIVITY CHALLENGE #3:

JUMP-START AN IDEATION SESSION.

Here's one quick, simple exercise to get your creative muscles warmed up. We learned it from David's mentor, Bob McKim, back when David was a product design student. It's called Thirty Circles, and you can do it on your own or in a group. The goal is to push people to test their creativity by turning circles into recognizable objects in a very short period of time.



TOOL: Thirty Circles Exercise

PARTICIPANTS: Solo or groups of any size

TIME: 3 minutes, plus discussion

SUPPLIES: Pen and a piece of paper (per person) with thirty blank circles on it of approximately the same size. (We usually preprint identical circles on an oversized sheet of paper, but you can also just ask everyone to draw their own thirty circles on a blank piece of paper.)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give each participant one Thirty Circles sheet of paper and something to draw with.
2. Ask them to turn as many of the blank circles as possible into recognizable objects in three minutes (think clock faces, billiard balls, etc.).

MOVE
219

CREATIVITY CHALLENGE #4:

LEARN FROM OBSERVING HUMAN BEHAVIOR.

A fundamental principle of innovation or creative thinking is to start with empathy. On the path from blank page to insight, sometimes people need a tool to help with what comes *next*: synthesis. You've gone into the field in search of knowledge, meeting people on their home turf, watching and listening intently. But synthesizing all that data can be a little daunting.

Take control of your field observations by organizing them with an "empathy map"—a tool inspired by IDEO and further developed at the d.school.



CREATIVE CONFIDENCE

CREATIVITY CHALLENGE #5:

ENCOURAGE AND ACCEPT CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK.

To practice creative confidence on a team, members need to feel free to experiment, even during early efforts when results will be far from perfect. For that experimentation to translate into learning, however, at some point you need feedback, in order to identify weaknesses and make adjustments the next time. We all instinctively know that constructive critique is essential. And yet it can be hard to listen to and absorb feedback without letting our egos and defensiveness distract us from what may be a valuable message.

We have found the tool "I like/I wish" immensely useful in introducing constructive critique into the innovation process. I like/I wish is helpful anytime feedback is needed. This framework can be used in a small group to review concepts or in a large group to receive feedback about a class or workshop experience. Feedback starts with honest praise, in the form of positive sentences that begin with the words "I like..." Suggestions for improvement then begin with "I wish..."

TOOL: I Like/I Wish

PARTICIPANTS: Groups of any size

TIME: 10–30 minutes

SUPPLIES: A means of recording feedback. For example, in a large group we frequently keep a Word document open and type up notes in real time. In a smaller setting, Post-its or index cards will work.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Set the tone for a constructive conversation and explain the "I like/I wish" method. For example, you could say, "I am

MOVE
225

TOOL: Empathy Maps

PARTICIPANTS: Solo or groups of two to eight people

TIME: 30–90 minutes

SUPPLIES: Whiteboard or large flip chart, Post-its, and pens

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On a whiteboard or a large flip chart, draw a four-quadrant map (see diagram). Label the sections with "say," "do," "think," and "feel," respectively.
2. Populate the left-hand quadrants with Post-its that capture each of your individual observations, using one Post-it per idea. Place observations about what people DO in the lower-left quadrant, and place observations of what people SAY in the upper-left quadrant. Try color-coding your observations, using green Post-its for positive things, yellow Post-its for neutral, and pink or red for frustrations, confusion, or pain points. The key is not to record everything, but instead to capture what stands out.
3. When you run out of observations (or room) on the left side, begin to fill the right side with Post-its, inferring what people THINK in the upper-right quadrant and what they FEEL in the lower-right quadrant. Pay attention to people's body language, tone, and choice of words.
4. Take a step back and look at the map as a whole. Try to draw some insights or conclusions from what you have just written down, shared, and talked about. These questions serve as a good prompt for a discussion of insights. What seems new or surprising? Are there contradictions or disconnects within or between quadrants? What unexpected patterns appear? What, if any, latent human needs emerge?

MOVE
223

interested in hearing about how this workshop experience has been for you. Please express feedback in the form of I like/I wish. You might say, 'I like that we have started on time every morning. I wish we had 30 minutes every afternoon to stretch our legs.' We have found it helpful to model good feedback by demonstrating "I like/I wish" in action.

2. The participants take turns, sharing I like/I wish statements, while the facilitator records their statements. For example, if you are reviewing work in progress for a new personal finance software tool, you might offer support such as "I like that you have incorporated five different ways for customers to view their current financial status." After describing other pluses, you might offer something like "I wish we could make the website easier for first-time users to navigate" or "I wish we could help people examine their financial situation from the long-term perspective of years, not the short-term perspective of months." Make sure people receiving feedback just listen. This is not a time to defend decisions or challenge the critique. Ask everyone to listen and accept it as a well-meaning offer of help. You can ask for clarification and engage in further discussion at a later time.
3. Stop when participants run out of things to say in both the "I like" and "I wish" categories.

TIPS FROM THE FIELD

You may want to gather just the "I like" comments first and then ask for the "I wish" statements. In other groups, it may make sense to let the give-and-take of statements flow organically. Feel free to play with the format.

"I like/I wish" signals that what you are stating is your opinion—it's not an absolute. Instead of pointing fingers, you are offering your view or perspective. The goal is to move the listener away from a defensive posture so that he or she can more objectively consider alternative ideas and take them to heart, when appropriate. We all tend naturally to become invested in our own ideas and seek to defend them. But in a creative culture, candid feedback that is sensitively conveyed is a sign that colleagues care enough to speak up. The message can be delivered quite clearly, without resorting to the negative language of "That will never work" or "We tried that before and it failed."

CREATIVITY CHALLENGE #6: WARM UP A GROUP.

Creativity thrives amidst free-flowing social discourse. To get a roomful of strangers to innovate, you may want to begin by breaking down some social barriers. When this exercise is done right, the room will be abuzz with chatter and laughter, and participants will be more open to what comes next.

TOOL: Speed Dating

PARTICIPANTS: Pairs in groups of any size

TIME: 15-20 minutes total, 3 minutes per round

SUPPLIES: Paper printed with a set of questions for each participant. Several different sets of questions will be needed to accommodate the entire group.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give each person a list of open-ended questions. Several different sets of questions should be spread throughout tables in the room so that people aren't continually being asked the same questions.

Examples of possible questions:

How would your closest family members describe you?

If you had a million euros to spend in a way that benefits humanity, what would you do?

What do you wish your parents had told you?

What was a live performance or show you really loved, and why?

2. Ask each person in the room to pair up with someone they don't know very well or have never met. This may involve getting up and moving seats.
3. Have one person in each pair ask a question from the list. Allow three minutes for the other person to answer.
4. Have each pair switch roles and repeat, asking a different question on the list.
5. Tell everyone to find a new partner and repeat the process for a couple more rounds.

TIPS FROM THE FIELD

You want to keep people moving to create a well-orchestrated round-robin. Be proactive about timekeeping. Assign someone to be a facilitator or timekeeper. To add a little fun, use a buzzer or gong to announce that time is up.

Depending on the nature of the working session that will follow the Speed Dating exercise, you can tailor some of the open-ended questions to be inspirational and loosely related to your topic. For example, if the objective of the meeting is to discuss the future workspace of the organization, one of the prompts may be "Describe an inspiring space you have worked in."

Give a little thought to the types of questions you use. Meaning-of-life questions and superlative questions (the most, the best, the worst) can cause people to stall out or draw a blank. The whole purpose is interaction. So if your question stumps your partner for even a handful of seconds, it's not quite right. Try the questions out on someone before you use them in a group setting.

CREATIVITY CHALLENGE #7:

ELIMINATE HIERARCHY TO IMPROVE IDEA FLOW.

While Speed Dating is useful in situations where people don't know each other well, sometimes in group meetings you will encounter the opposite problem: a group where people know each other *too* well. Or, more specifically, a group in which hierarchy is so well established that the more junior members in the room self-edit and defer to the executives rather than putting their best ideas on the table.

To reduce hierarchy (which inhibits conversation) and self-censoring (which is equally limiting), the d.school has recently been experimenting with a "nickname warm-up." Using a stack of colorful names the instructors have prepared in advance, the activity is a way to temporarily level out the organization during a creative working session. Each participant is given a persona to allow them to "try on" new behaviors.

TOOL: Nickname warm-up

PARTICIPANTS: Groups of six to twelve people per facilitator

TIME: A few minutes per person

SUPPLIES: Name tags for all participants with the fake names written out. A hat and a ball for each facilitator.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Each participant reaches into the hat, draws out a name tag, and puts it on. Use names that lend themselves to humor and emotion. Teams tend to produce their best work when the group is having fun. Some of the monikers can imply a big dose of street credibility, while others suggest quirky

personalities—for example, Dr. Fabulous, Squirt, Mr. Big Heart, The Clumsy Entertainer, or The Rooster.

2. The facilitator gathers the group in a circle and tosses the ball. Whoever catches it introduces themselves using their new nickname and then tells a short story (created on the spot) about how they acquired this nickname as a child.
3. After their self-introduction, they toss the ball to a new person, until everyone has had a chance to share their new name and story.
4. The rule for the rest of the workshop—strictly enforced—is that everyone must use only these nicknames when referring to themselves or others.

TIPS FROM THE FIELD

Do the name tags work? Although this is a relatively new exercise, experience so far suggests that the answer is yes. At a recent management event, the CEO of a global hospitality company drew the "Squirt" nickname. There was a pregnant pause in the room as everyone waited to see how he would react. But he gamely played along through the rest of the workshop, and the organizers felt it contributed to an open environment in which people could speak freely.

The goal is to flatten out the hierarchy, so it's important to get the senior people in the room to participate. Leading by example will naturally break some of the barriers to free-flowing collaboration.

CREATIVITY CHALLENGE #8:

EMPATHIZE WITH CUSTOMERS, EMPLOYEES, AND OTHER END USERS.

One way to develop more empathy with—and gain new insights about—your customers is to look beyond the narrow definition of your offering and consider the customer's total experience. The more broadly you define the customer experience, the more opportunities you can identify for improvement.

Say, for example, you make interior house paint. You could focus narrowly on the characteristics of the product itself, on making the paint less drippy or making it cover a surface in a single coat. But you'll find many more opportunities for innovation if you think about the arc of the customer experience. In something as simple as repainting a bedroom, there are probably a dozen steps (each one of which is a chance to innovate): from getting customers to realize it's time to repaint, to helping them choose the color, to scheduling the preparation and cleanup time, to keeping track of which colors are on which walls for future reference when it comes time for touch-up.

A journey map helps you think systematically through the steps your customers—internal or external—have when they interact with your product or service. We use maps to synthesize what we learn from interviews and observations. (Or, during field research, you can also try asking your end user to map out his or her own journey.)



TOOL: Customer Journey Map
PARTICIPANTS: Solo or groups of two to six people
TIME: 1-4 hours
SUPPLIES: Whiteboard or Post-its

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a process or journey that you want to map.
2. Write down the steps. Make sure to include even small steps that may seem trivial. The goal is to get you to consider the nuances of the experience that you may normally overlook.
3. Organize the steps into a map. Usually we display the steps sequentially in a timeline. Your map may include branches to show alternative paths in the customer journey. You could also use a series of pictures or whatever method fits your data.
4. Look for insights. What patterns emerge? Anything surprising or strange? Question why certain steps occur, the order they occur in, and so forth. Ask yourself how you might innovate each step.
5. If possible, show the map to people familiar with the journey and ask them what you've overlooked or gotten out of sequence.

TIPS FROM THE FIELD

Here is an example using this method:

Think about a trip to the hospital's emergency room. Of course the most important moment is at the point of care, when the doc is diagnosing the problem or delivering treatment. But when people complain about (or, less commonly,

rave about) their emergency room experience, it's not usually the skill of the doctor they are talking about. A simple version of the patient journey might include moments like these:

- Experience pain or discover the symptom.
- Consider home treatment versus going to the hospital; the go/no go decision.
- Choose transportation to the hospital.
- Arrive and park (or pay the taxi, etc.).
- Enter the hospital and find the emergency room.
- See the triage nurse.
- Fill out the insurance forms.
- Wait. And wait some more.
- Get ushered into a treatment room.
- Put on an uncomfortable hospital gown, and wait some more.
- See multiple secondary nurses and technicians.
- See the doctor for assessment and sometimes preliminary diagnosis.
- Undergo additional blood tests, X-rays, and so forth.
- Receive a firmer diagnosis, which can lead to getting instructions for home care, an outpatient procedure, a prescription, a follow-up appointment with a general practitioner or specialist, or admission to the hospital.

As you lay out every step, ask yourself how you might cost-effectively innovate and turn the ordinary experience into something extraordinary.

Because emergency health care is often high-anxiety, we've discovered that patients are calmer if you spell out