Tool 10: Innovation Methods

Brainstorming

Use of time and number of participants: 5–15min, 1–15 persons

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: Useful in most situation, particularly in the beginning of the process.

Method: The participants are told what needs innovating. If there are many participants a secretary is chosen. The participants tell each other all ideas that come to their mind. No criticism is allowed, all ideas are written down. The principle is that quantity will eventually produce quality. After the brainstorming the ideas are evaluated in the group.

Idea walk

Use of time and number of participants: 30–60 min, +5 persons

What you will need: A big space, large pieces of paper, tape and pens

When to use: Useful in most situation, particularly in the beginning of the process

Method: The participants are told what needs innovating. Put up large pieces of paper. You might want to write down the theme/questions to consider. Tell the participants, "You can now walk around the room and write your ideas to any paper on the wall. Moving around will help you to produce ideas. Feel free to develop any idea written down." Afterwards, the ideas are analysed. Secretaries might be selected if necessary.

6-3-5 (six people, three ideas in five minutes)

Use of time and number of participants: 5–20 min, any number of people

What you will need: Paper, pens and a clock

When to use: When you need many ideas in a short time

Method: Hand out pens and paper. Explain what needs innovating and then say, "Now, you have 5 minutes to jot down three ideas on the paper." After this, "Now please pass the paper on to the person on your right. You receive a paper with three ideas. Read them and add more ideas." The round is repeated at least one more time. At the end, the ideas are presented and the best ones chosen for the next stage.

Helicopter

Use of time and number of participants: 5–10 min and 10 min for discussion. Less than 10 persons

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: Suitable for fast production of ideas and finding new perspectives.

Method: The participants are given different roles and they start generating ideas as if they were that person, thinking what they would value and what would be typical for them. The ideas are written down, discussed and the best ones are chosen for the next stage.
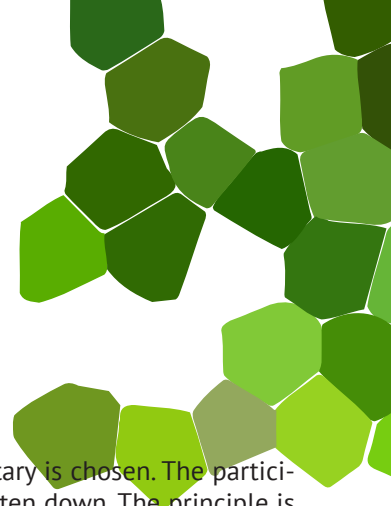
Random feed

Use of time and number of participants: 20–30 min, small groups

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: A good exercise when the team has got stuck and instant creativity is needed to generate new ideas.

Method: Write the theme that needs developing on the side of a piece of paper. Then say, "Give me a word, any word." Write the word someone gives next to the theme. You can also use images or objects. Start generating new ideas with the help of this new element, its use, properties etc. Write the ideas down, discuss and select some for the next round.

Distant connections

Use of time and number of participants: 15–30min, small groups

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: Particularly helpful in multidisciplinary teams as people will associate things with something in their own field.

Method: Say, "Pick up any word. Next to it, write 5–10 different qualities related to the word. Then start brainstorming on new ideas for your project using the qualities you have just described." (An example: The thing to develop is a comfortable working space. The word 'car' is used in the exercise. Cars are mobile, metallic, furnished, have an airbag, possibility to listen to music etc. Ideas rising from this: mobile furniture, small loudspeakers scattered around, a comfortable airbag and so on.)

Double team (by Innotiimi Ltd)

Use of time and number of participants: 1–2 hours, 8–15 persons

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: Particularly suitable for a large group.

Method: Start by desigining the question or the theme. Say, " Please write down 5–10 thoughts or ideas by yourself". After this ask people to pair up, discuss the idea and choose three. Ask the pairs to present their three ideas and publish them on a wall.

Say, " Please discuss the published ideas and, again, choose three. Go and mark your choices on the pieces of paper on the wall." You now have data on what the group considers important. The winners are then grouped and, if necessary, another vote can take place.

Six hats (by de Bono)

Use of time and number of participants: 30–45 min.

What you will need: a large space, paper on the walls and for the participants, pens and tape

When to use: When you want to separate the different aspects of a matter and concentrate on one of these at a time. Putting on a hat means taking on a role and for most people it is easier to generate ideas and express opinions when in role.

Method: Set up six large pieces of paper on the wall and title each sheet with the name of one colour: yellow, black, red, green, blue and white. Add the respective question from the list below. Ask people to move around in a space and jot down ideas with the respective "colour hat on" at each paper. Alternatively, you can allocate the hats in advance and ask people to generate ideas whilst someone acts as secretary and records these.

White Hat   What information do we need?

Yellow hat   What is the added value?

Black hat   What are the risks, what needs to be taken into account?

Red hat   What feelings does this arouse?

Green hat   What new ideas come to mind?

Blue hat   How is the whole thing managed?

Write down the ideas and perspectives and choose some ideas for further development.

10 ideas

Use of time and number of participants: 15min

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: When you want to get things started.

Method: Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen. Say, " You now have 15 minutes to write down ten ideas around our theme." Afterwards, let everyone explain their ideas.

8x8

Use of time and number of participants: 30min, small group

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: This method is best used among participants who know the basic concepts and the issues of the theme. No time should be spent in explaining the concepts to participants who lack this basic knowledge.

Method: **Say, "Please write our central theme in the middle of the paper. Add 8 perspectives on this theme around this. Then** add eight ideas around each of the perspectives."

SWOT

Use of time and number of participants: 15min, small groups.

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: This method provides a good initiation into the topic as it makes the participants think of the positives and negatives of the brief/theme/product/service.

Method: Say, "Please divide the paper into four squares (draw a quartered square. The two top squares are for strengths and weaknesses, the two two lower ones for opportunities and threats. Please start writing lists of each." Later go through these and document them.

"Yes, and…"

Use of time: Some 60 min.

What you will need: Paper and pens

When to use: When you need to move further with ideas that have been generated.

Method: The ideas that have been generated are written on separate pieces of paper. Tell the team, "Take one sheet of paper, read the idea and add the words 'Yes, and…' and then add something to the idea." Carry out as many rounds as is necessary for each idea to have at least two ideas that add value to it.

Discuss the ideas and choose three ideas to be evaluated in a matrix.