

Critical Brainstorming, Bag of Junk and Pitching Activity (60 minutes)

Brainstorm (30 minutes)

Brainstorming is an effective way to generate lots of ideas. When brainstorming as a group it is easy to censor wild and crazy ideas. Resist doing this. To be most effective be sure to:

- ✓ defer judgment of ideas
- ✓ go for quantity over quality
- ✓ build on the ideas of others
- ✓ don't hold back
- ✓ move quickly to the next idea
- ✓ and record everything

Think about filling a customer need. **Identify a customer need that could use a solution. Write it in the centre of a large paper.** Attempt to answer the question “How might we solve this need?” Write your answers on sticky notes.

“The best ideas for companies often stem from attempting to solve personal problems or irritations. If we tried to think of a good idea, we wouldn't have been able to think of any ideas at all.”
- Brian Chesky, Founder AirBnB

Conduct the following 3 rounds of brainstorming with a short break in between each round.

- Individual (10 min) – Working individually, record as many ideas as possible.
- Pairs (10 min): Working with a partner, share ideas by taking turns. One person shares while the other person records.
- Group (10 min): Everyone shares their ideas in a lively, fast-paced group discussion. Remember not to judge ideas.

Overcoming challenges

Ideas don't seem big enough. Don't limit yourself to what is real and possible. Small ideas don't often have the ability to become big ideas without considering the seemingly impossible.

Snickering at ideas. There are no bad ideas. Introduce the phrase “Yes, and....” to encourage students to build on ideas that have been presented before.

You get stuck. Prompts often help to create breakthroughs. Consider asking the following prompting questions:

*What if you were in space? What if money was no object?
How would you deal with this if you were in a different time period?
What would you do if you were someone else?
How would you think about the problem if you were a different gender?
How would you think about the problem if you were 10 years younger?*

Bag of Junk & Pitching (30 minutes)

Preparation:

- Gather various random objects from home or office (i.e. spoons, screws, bar of soap, paper clips, foam cups, etc.)
- Make 3-5 bags out of these random objects

Instructions:

- Divide the group into teams consisting of three to six members. The teams should determine how they will work together and make decisions.
- Provide each team with a bag filled with assorted objects. These can be almost anything, i.e. a wooden spoon, a screw, a bar of soap, a computer disk, etc.
- Explain that the objective of the game is to create a potential new product or service using only the items in the bag. Encourage teams to think about a daily problem they run into personally or a bigger world issue as inspiration for their new product or service.
- Not all items must be used nor do they have to be utilized in their intended use.
- Inform students they will have 15 minutes for planning and creating.
- Once students have created their product or service, they must prepare a formal pitch. Each team will create a 1-minute pitch to be done in front of the group.

Pitches must include:

- ✓ A clearly stated problem.
- ✓ A description of the product or service solution.
- ✓ Who is the audience and/or customer? (target audience)
- ✓ What benefits will they enjoy?
- ✓ What will it cost?
- ✓ Why would a customer choose their product over another (competitive advantage)
- ✓ What catchy tag line will attract the attention the product deserves?

Give each group the opportunity to prepare and practice their pitch before presenting it. Mentors can provide feedback on product or service ideas as well as pitches.

Debrief Questions

1. How easy or difficult was it to identify a problem? How easy or difficult was it to create a solution with your bag of junk items?
2. How did the dynamics of your team help you be more innovative and creative?
3. How could the team improve the decision-making process?
4. Which presentation was most effective? Why?

