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SCAMPER

Type: group or solo working

Target: idea generation, exploring possibilities

This is an idea generation tool that can be used either solo or in groups. It is best used for generating ideas about something that you wish to modify in some way such as upgrade or enhance a current product or service. You need to create a 'problem statement' e.g. How might we make our car go faster?

SCAMPER is an acronym as defined below. Select a letter from the list and read its trigger word and associated questions. Ask yourself what new ideas do this word and questions suggest or try to associate the question and trigger word with your original statement. Record your ideas and then repeat this as many times as you want, each time picking a new letter from the SCAMPER list. Note you do not have to use the letters in sequence.



Substitute: what might you take away and put back in its place? What might you substitute, replace, exchange. Think of who else, what else, other ingredients, other material, different approach?

Combine: what two or more things might you put together? What could you combine this with, what sort of blend or alloy, assortment or ensemble?

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Adapt: how might you change something to solve the problem? What could you do differently, what else is similar, have we done this before, what can I copy?

Modify, magnify, minify: what can be made bigger or smaller? How would things change if the object were made bigger or smaller? What could be increased or reduced in size or which attributes could be enhanced or diminished?

Put to other uses: what might be used in a different way? Can this be used for different purposes, do its properties suggest other uses, do its properties such as size or weight suggest other uses, can it be used in another context?

Eliminate: what might you get rid of? Can you leave something out, condense or concentrate, remove parts, make lighter?

Rearrange or reverse: what might you mix up or move around? Can you reverse roles, turn upside down (backwards or inside out), change perspective, alter timing, change objectives?

Your recorded ideas may themselves be combined or investigated further if necessary. Note these may not be sensible ideas (although they could be) and may just suggest ways forward for you or your business.

Morphological Matrix

Type: group or solo working

Target: idea generation

This is a form of random stimulation that can be used solo or in groups. It is ideal for generating ideas when you have an idea about WHAT you wish to do but not HOW you might go about doing it. This is best explained by example rather than trying to describe the technique in detail.

If you were a TV producer you might ask the question "How might we go about creating a new soap opera?" To use this technique in such a case first create a table with **ten rows labelled 0 - 9** and **4 columns** initially numbered 1 to 4.

	1 Target Audience	2 Setting	3 Theme	4 Suggested Title
0	Teenagers	Australia	Western	Our Street
1	Retired	Inner City	School	
2	Girls	Rural		
3	Boys			
4	DIY ers			
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				

Next perform the following steps:

1. Label each column with a different parameter or characteristic of the problem or task e.g. for our example column 1 could be target audience, column 2 - setting, column 3 - theme, column 4 - suggested title.
2. For column 1 generate varied and/or unusual ideas and fill the column (you now have ten wacky suggestions for target audience).
3. Repeat for column 2, column 3 and column 4. Try not to refer to adjacent columns when filling a column.

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4. Randomly select four numbers in the range 0 - 9. To do this you could:
 - a. Turn over 2 dominoes, 2 numbers on each end gives four numbers
 - b. Use the last four digits of your telephone number
 - c. Use the last four digits of your National Insurance number
 - d. Use the day and month of your birthday
5. Use the four numbers to generate combinations by using each number in turn as an index into one of the columns. Each set of four random numbers thus selects a target audience, setting, theme and title. For example the 4 digits 0358 would select row 0 for column 1 (Target Audience), row 3 for column 2 (Setting), row 5 for column 3 (Theme) and row 8 for column 4 (Suggested Title). Record your combinations.
6. Repeat the previous step as many times as you wish (and keep recording the results). Note that this simple table can create 10,000 (ten to the power of 4) different combinations!
7. When you have sufficient combinations, choose one (or more if you have time) to examine in greater detail. You might use them as generated or they might suggest something else to you.

Note also that the more rows and columns that you have, the greater the number of possible combinations. You do not have to take each combination at face value, it may simply suggest something else to you. However you choose to use the generated combinations, you should record everything.

What Makes A Good Idea?

Well first of all it is a good, no really great, idea to have a good idea! Sounds silly but many ideas are just that. I could have a really great idea about growing bananas underwater but something tells me that I would be wasting my time. When the go/no go decision is a little less obvious we must be a little more logical about testing for a good idea.

Here are ten suggestions as to how to test your idea:

1. What problem (or business pain) is your idea targeted at?
2. Is your idea well-formed or do you have more work to do?
3. Do you understand why your idea will appeal to potential customers?
4. When you tell people about your idea do they get it immediately?
5. Do you have a prototype or have you conducted a trial? Have you received positive feedback?
6. Have you costed your idea, what will you sell it for?
7. How will you make your product or deliver your service?
8. Do you have the necessary skills and resources or will you buy them (where from)?
9. Have you checked that nobody has done this before?
10. Do you wish to retain ownership of your idea?



You may well have further tests in an organisation specific context e.g. does this fit with strategy or existing products but these are a good starting point. It is always best to test your ideas to avoid wasting time in a commercial environment. If not you may simply be playing.

The Right Questions

Asking the right questions can often get us off to a good start. Below is a list of some questions that you might like to ask yourself either as a group or as an individual. The answers might provide useful answers or lead you to explore other avenues.

1. What is the biggest (avoidable) hassle that our customers have to put up with?
2. Are there any recent changes in rules or regulations that affect our customers?
3. Who does/does not use our products/services?
4. Who is prevented from using our products/services?
5. Where do our products/services perform unexpectedly well/badly?
6. Does anyone use our products/services in ways that we never intended?
7. Who does this the best/worst? What can we learn from them?
8. How could this be improved if I had all of the resources that I needed?
9. Can we improve our products our services by changing people, materials or technology?
10. What are our top 5 sources of business?
11. What facilities are least used/most used?
12. Can we make our offerings easier to understand/buy?
13. Do we know the cost structure of our offerings?

**Why are we doing this?
What problem are we solving?
Is this actually useful?
Are we adding value?
Will this change behavior?
Is there an easier way?
What's the opportunity cost?
Is it really worth it?**

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14. Who benefits the most from our products/services?
15. Do we have all of the skills that we require?
16. Do we understand the competitive landscape?
17. Are we duplicating our efforts in any way?
18. What could we do better with more training?
19. Do we have the right resources/sufficient resources?
20. Can we bend the rules? Have we tested the rules?