

Divergent Thinking Activities

Diverging Tools –

The general idea of divergent (creative) thinking is to generate a rich set of ideas. This rich set includes a great volume of diverse ideas from which to choose the best. Competitive Thinking and Lateral Thinking are two general categories of creative thinking activities.

Competitive Thinking: (Creating volume- more ideas)

Competitive Thinking is about generating a volume of ideas. Quantity is the only goal. Quality does not matter. This approach taps into our need to reach goals, fill empty space and meet deadlines. There are three types of Competitive Thinking activities:

- Time
 - Speed Ideation – One person states the idea/question/issue to one other person. That person has 1 minute to offer as many ideas/suggestions as they can.
 - 1 Minute Frenzy – Challenge the person or group to write down as many ideas as possible in 1 minute (or any specific time frame)
- Space
 - Group – Fill up a flip chart page
 - Individual – fill up a 8.5x11 or half-sheet of paper
 - Draw a box or circle on a whiteboard and have the group write ideas on post-its until the space is full.
- Number
 - Give me 20 – Give a group goal of 20 more ideas
 - Give me 10 – challenge individuals to offer 10 more ideas
 - 3x5 cards – give each person 10 (or any number) note cards and challenge them to put one new idea on each card.

Cardstorming can use any of these factors. Use 3x5 cards or post-it notes. Have people write as many as they can in 5 minutes (time), fill a space or make a stack 5 inches tall (space), use 100 cards as a group or 20 cards each (number)

Lateral Thinking: (Creating variety – wild ideas)

Lateral Thinking encourages people to look differently at an issue. In general, it's about stepping out of your usual thinking to look at a question, problem or issue from a new perspective. If you start thinking from your usual angle you will come up with the usual ideas. If you start from a new place your brain might see new and different aspects to the issue.

A few lateral thinking activities:

- Lateral Thinking (a specific activity)
 - Have the group call out 5 random words (nouns work best)
 - Select one of the words
 - Have the group explore how that word connects to the topic you are brainstorming.
- Story Cubes – (commercial product)

- Role 1 or more story cubes at the table
- Write down anything the image brings up related to the topic
- Excursions
 - Use an activity or hobby that is common to the group.
 - How would the issue be handled if it were in the context of that hobby?
- Inter-galactic Thinking
 - Create a unique universe using a common context or activity (Baseball Universe, Snowboarding Universe, Gardening Universe, etc)
 - How would the issue be handled in that universe?
- Think Like an Alien
 - Imagine you are not from Earth
 - How would an alien view this issue or problem?
 - What would they notice?
- 180 degree Thinking
 - Instead of addressing the issue or solving the problem, how would you make things worse?
- No Limits (no budget)
 - What would you do around this issue if there were not limits (budget, culture, etc)?
- Headlines 2034
 - Imagine a newspaper (or company newsletter) in 20 years. What is it saying in general or what is it saying about the issue you're working on?