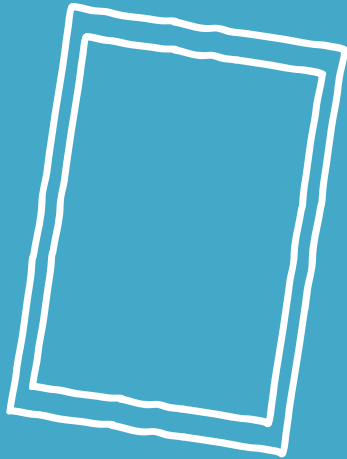




Creative approaches to problem solving

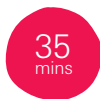
Reframing the problem



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TRIZ

Reframing the problem



FLIP CHART

MARKERS

POST-ITS

Enables teams to stop counterproductive activities or behaviours and make space for innovation.

How it works

1. Introduce TRIZ; decide what the worst imaginable unwanted result could be in relation to your top strategy/objective. **(5 mins)**
2. First alone, then in a small group, make a list all of the things that your organisation might do to ensure it achieves this unwanted outcome. Go wild! Facilitator gathers all feedback from whole group. **(10 mins)**
3. First alone, then in a small group, go through your list (from step 2) to find anything you currently do in your organisation that in any way resembles any of the items on it. Make these into a second list. **(10 mins)**
4. First alone, then in a small group, make a list of all the things that need to be stopped – and what the first steps could be to stopping them. Who can help? **(10 mins)**
5. Prioritise those solutions which feel more possible to achieve first or those with the most votes – or a combination. Potentially use a decision matrix to plot risk vs achievability.

Where to find further info:

www.liberatingstructures.com/6-making-space-with-triz



Creative approaches to problem solving

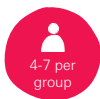
Prioritising solutions



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Min Specs

Prioritising solutions



FLIP CHART

A4 PAPER

MARKERS

By evaluating and deciding what is absolutely essential for success, you focus energies and resources and open possibilities.

How it works

1. Clearly define the problem/ task to tackle. **(2 mins)**
2. Ask each participant to write down a list of all the things they would need to do/steps they would take to achieve a successful outcome. **(5 mins)**
3. Split the group in two – each group nominates a ‘scribe’ and merges their lists to make one final big list of ‘max specs’ – a pooled list of all of the steps. **(5 mins)**
4. During this time facilitator writes on a board ‘if we ignored this step could we still achieve our purpose?’
5. Ask each group to spend 15 minutes going sequentially through their ‘max spec’ list, applying the question to each step. If you could achieve the purpose without the step, then cross it off the list. After 15 minutes you should have a final ‘min specs’ list. **(15 mins)**
6. Ask each group to write their list of ‘min specs’ on their flip chart and to present it to the whole group. **(5 mins)**
7. Compare ‘min specs’ lists – for similarities and differences etc. **(5 mins)**

Where to find further info:

www.liberatingstructures.com/14-min-specs



Creative approaches to problem solving

Harnessing new ideas



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Brand Thinking

Harnessing new ideas



FLIP CHART

MARKERS

LIST OF BRANDS

Thinking about how other organisations, or brands, would do something opens you up to new ways of approaching a problem.

How it works

1. Clearly define the problem/task to tackle. **(2 mins)**
2. Choose 1-4 innovative brands (if running a group session you can pre-prepare cards with each of the chosen brands' logo).
3. Individually think about, and note down, 5-10 words or phrases to describe the brand or organisation (eg for IKEA it might be 'encourages do-it-yourself attitude', 'simple and affordable' or Amazon might be 'personalised', 'easy customer feedback loops' or John Lewis, 'promotes employee engagement and partnership'). **(3 mins)**
4. Share your descriptions with the wider group and create a collated list of descriptor words and phrases. **(2 mins)**
5. Now go back to your problem/task and think about how your chosen brand/organisation would approach the problem. What would they do differently? What innovative ideas might they come up with? **(5-10 mins)**
6. Write down or draw your ideas. **(5-15 mins)**
7. Reflect on which of these new ideas, or aspects thereof, might be useful to take forward. **(3-10 mins)**



Creative approaches to problem solving

Seeking perspectives



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2 Brains: tell it & sell it

Seeking perspectives



FLIP CHART

MARKERS

POST-ITS

Enables teams to develop the right mix of rational and practical ideas useful for selling or pitching any idea.

How it works

1. Before the session create a 4-quadrant table on a flip chart or whiteboard. Label the vertical axis 'emotional (right brain)', with a scale from negative to neutral to positive appeal, going from bottom to top. Label the horizontal axis 'practical (left brain)', with a similar scale for practical appeal from left to right.
2. Clearly define the problem/task to address. **(2 mins)**
3. Ask each participant to write down their ideas for addressing the problem individually on post-it notes. **(3 mins)**
4. Introduce the '2 Brains' activity to the participants. **(3 mins)**
5. Have everyone divide their post-its into left brain and right brain ideas. **(2 mins)**
6. Ask everyone to add their post-its where they think they fit on the table. **(5 mins)**
7. Encourage the group to discuss, and move post-its around if needed. **(5 mins)**
8. Have a discussion about your findings. Which combination of right and left brain ideas will you take forward? **(5 mins)**

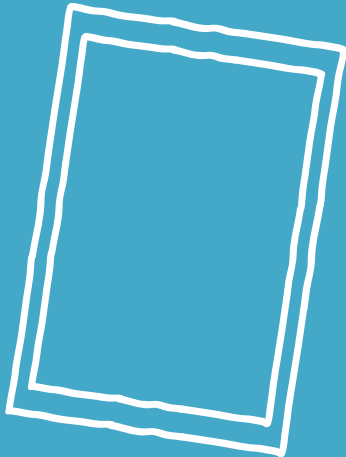
Where to find further info:

www.gamestorming.com/games-for-design/2-brains-tell-it-sell-it



Creative approaches to problem solving

Reframing the problem



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Journey mapping

Reframing the problem



FLIP CHART

MARKERS

POST ITS

Mapping the 'journey' a customer, patient or user takes through a service or experience makes it easier to identify opportunities and issues.

How it works

1. Using a large piece of paper or flipchart sketch out a grid with two axes. Along the top map the various stages along the customer/user/patient's journey (eg 'registers', 'uses service' and 'leaves service'). Along the left note what aspects of their journey you'd like to map eg what happened, how they felt, 'pain points', any opportunities, any points of interaction with the service.
(5 mins)
2. Once you have set up your grid begin mapping the person's journey, filling in the detail under each heading.
(20+ mins)
3. Try to gather many perspectives, ideally first-hand from the experience of the person whose journey you are mapping (eg chatting to a patient to gather information).
4. Continue to add layers of information to the map.
5. Once you have completed it, use it as a discussion point to identify issues relevant to your particular project or challenge (eg what are the low-points along the journey? What opportunities are there to improve this experience at that particular point?).
(10+ mins)
6. Continue to use, update or refer to the document as needed.



Creative approaches to problem solving

Gaining insights and input



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Skill Swap

Insight and input



These are all optional and should be tailored depending on the most suitable platform for your organisation:

- 'Offer' and 'needs' post cards/post-its in two different colours, with space to fill out description and contact details
- White board to draw on or large pinboard
- Online platform (eg Twitter, LinkedIn, your organisation's website)

A skill swap can help to surface any skills, materials or resources that people either need or can offer, and enable fruitful conversations and exchanges to take place.

How it works

1. To start the skill swap make a board for highlighting the various exchanges. This can be done both virtually (eg an intranet or using social media) or physically (eg creating a bulletin with 'needs' and 'offers'). You can also arrange these into different categories or types of skills to further refine them.
2. This exercise will help highlight any gaps that may need to be addressed at a higher level, as well as any skills that others were not aware of and are being underutilised.
3. When running a skill swap physically, get participants to write their needs and offers on different coloured paper or post-it notes, and stick these onto a board with different categories. People can start useful conversations either in a structured or unstructured format. You can also use Twitter and other social media platforms to promote and connect people.



Creative approaches to problem solving

Gaining insights and input



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Actions for retrospectives

Insight and input



FLIP CHART

Enables teams to learn from past events, projects or incidents in a way that results in actions for the team to commit to.

How it works

1. Prepare a chart with four quadrants labelled 'Appreciations', 'Puzzles', 'Risks' and 'Wishes' and a central square with 'Actions'. **(2 mins)**
2. Ask your participants to individually write down their 'Appreciations: What you liked during the previous event'. **(2 mins)**
3. Plot these onto the quadrant and discuss as a group. **(5+ mins)**
4. Next, participants individually write down their 'Puzzles: Questions for which you have no answer'. **(2 mins)**
5. Plot onto the quadrant. Discuss as a group any

MARKERS

- actions that could help you get some answers. **(5 mins)**
6. Participants then individually write down their 'Risks: Future pitfalls that can endanger the event'. **(2 mins)**
 7. Plot onto the quadrant. Discussing these is optional
 8. Ask the group to individually write down their 'Wishes: Not improvements, but their ideal situation'. **(2 mins)**
 9. Plot these onto the chart. As a group discuss what actions take you closer to the wishes, retain the appreciations, avoid the risks and do not rely on the unanswerable questions. **(5+ mins)**
 10. As a group, prioritise a set of actions – committing these to the central square. Agree when you will review the next batch of actions. **(5+ mins)**



Creative approaches to problem solving

Prioritising solutions



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Circles and soup

Prioritising solutions



FLIP CHART

This is a great way to wade through the ‘soup’ of an organisation when prioritising solutions or getting perspective on a problem.

How it works

1. Begin with a purpose in mind (ie a situation that you are looking to improve – and whether you are diagnosing or seeking a solution).
2. Everyone writes down their ideas on post-its. **(5 mins)**
3. Draw a circle in the middle of a large blank sheet – this is the control circle. In here you can place all of the ideas within your control. This could be your organisation, team or you personally – whichever feels appropriate.
4. Draw an outer circle around this – this is the influence circle. In here you can place all of the ideas that you may not control, but you can influence.
5. Around this draw a larger circle – the soup. This represents organisational/ cultural spheres. Areas where you have neither control nor influence.
6. Ask participants to plot their post-its onto the circles and soup. **(5 mins)**
7. Discuss the outcome as a group; spending time on the areas where you have control and influence. **(10+ mins)**
8. If you are tackling problems and solutions, it is better to do this over two rounds on two charts.

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Creative approaches to problem solving

Gaining insights and input



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Speed consulting

Insight and input



FLIP CHART

Enables groups to quickly give (and receive) input on a number of issues through quick group consultancy.

How it works

1. Arrange the room into a number of discrete working areas or tables within one room.
2. Before the session begins, ask the group for issues or challenges which some of them are facing. You need one issue for each table.
3. Group the remainder of the participants into mixed teams, and ask them to join an issue owner at their table. **(3 mins)**
4. Explain to the groups that their role is to act as a team of consultants to the issue owners. They will hear the issue explained, and they will then have just 10

MARKERS

minutes to suggest as many practical ideas, solutions and connections as possible. Emphasise that there is no time to waste! **(2 mins)**

5. The issue owner starts by sharing their issue, clearly and simply. The consultants can ask questions for clarity. Once the consultants begin to offer their suggestions, the issue owner should simply accept them, noting everything down.
6. Start the process, remind them that after 10 minutes you will ask them to visit the next 'client'. **(10 mins)**
7. When the time is up, ask the groups to rotate and repeat 2-3 times. **(30 mins)**
8. Finish the session by asking the issue owners for feedback on the process. Ask the 'consulting team' to do the same. **(5 mins)**



Creative approaches to problem solving

Seeking perspectives



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Persona empathy mapping

Seeking perspectives



FLIP CHART

MARKERS

POST-ITS

Empathy mapping helps teams consider how other people are thinking or feeling.

How it works

1. Before the session prepare 'personas' relevant to your challenge or project. Personas should describe the person you'd like the participants to think about, or represent a larger group (eg Tracy who is a young person with a disability). Write a short description of this person.
2. Ahead of the session, also write down one or more extreme scenarios relevant to your persona.
3. Ask participants, in their groups, to divide a sheet of

flip chart paper into three sections, labelled 'Think', 'Do', 'Feel'. **(3 mins)**

4. Give each group time to read through their persona before introducing the extreme scenario. When sharing the scenarios try to bring them to life. **(5 mins)**
5. Give groups time to fill in their empathy map sheets, fleshing out what they think their persona would 'think', 'do' and 'feel' in that situation. **(10 mins)**
6. Give teams time to reflect. Give them some prompts: eg What did they learn? What will they change as a result? **(10 mins)**
7. Feedback to the wider group. **(5 mins)**

Where to find further info:

www.cooper.com/journal/2014/05/persona-empathy-mapping