

## **Twelve Ideas to Enhance the Creative Process**

### **By Joel Zeff**

We all have brainstormed the same way for years. Everyone spends an hour in the conference room, bored and uninspired. Somebody throws out a recycled idea. Everyone rallies behind the idea because they really just want to leave the conference room.

We can find a better way. Brainstorming should be fun, energetic and productive. Creativity needs positive energy for fuel. If we make a few slight changes, improve our creativity habits, and just have more fun, our creative energies will increase. Here are a few tips that hopefully will inspire the next great idea.

1. Choose a leader during the creative process. Someone has to keep everyone on track, or you will spend the entire session talking about television shows about attractive detectives solving crimes; attractive doctors saving lives; or attractive detectives and doctors solving crimes, saving lives and romancing each other.
2. Notate everything. Yes, it is a pain to write every idea down. If you don't, you will forget. We always forget. Take notes, audiotape or videotape the session.
3. Change your location. You don't always have to meet in the conference room for a brainstorming session. Creativity wants variety. Take a walk to another floor in the building, go outside and sit on a bench or stand around



- the parking lot. Go to a nearby museum, store, mall, coffee shop or park to brainstorm. Use your surroundings to inspire and motivate you to create.
4. Create fast brainstorming sessions. Do not linger. Nobody looks forward to spending an hour in the conference room to brainstorm. The longer sessions create bad creative habits. Instead, use quick energy bursts. Everyone run into the room for 15 minutes and create as many ideas as possible. And then everyone must run out. Do this a couple times a day as a surprise. The shorter time will force the group to focus on the task and create more energy. Also, the shorter session will force the group to make better choices in the creative process. There is no time for ego, politics, analyzing, or grandstanding. There is only enough time to create ideas and build on each other's ideas. Use that positive energy to focus and produce ideas. Shorter idea sessions will create more ideas.
  5. Relax, and create ideas each day. Take five minutes each day by yourself and think. Don't think about anything in particular. Just think. Take a walk around your building. Go sit on a bench. Leave your cell phone and Blackberry on your desk. Now, just think. Each time you do this you will have an idea. Sometimes it will be a little idea. Sometimes it will be a big idea.
  6. Stop creating rules where rules do not exist. If someone says, "This is the way we have always done it," run away in horror. You are not safe. He or she is a creative zombie and may infect you.



7. Eliminate some of your fears (the fear of failure, the fear of making a mistake, the fear of looking foolish) and your creative energy will increase. Nobody is keeping score. Every great idea in the history of the world was foolish or stupid. How many people walked by Orville and Wilbur Wright's workshop to tell them they were fools?
8. Expand your possibility box. If the box is bigger, there will be more possibilities. When people want to create ideas, the first instinct is to shrink the possibility box. If you shrink the box, there will be nothing there. Try to expand the possibilities. Remember: try not to create rules where rules do not exist.
9. Find new ways of doing something. There is always more than one path and way. Don't be so quick to judge.
10. Stop trying to analyze and create at the same time. It is impossible. Someone will offer an idea and our first instinct is to attack like a pack of hyenas. We are analyzing, and we have stopped creating. Instead of attacking, build on the thought and create more ideas. When you have finished creating, then you can start analyzing. Creativity wants momentum and energy.
11. Don't worry about who gets the credit. One of the biggest obstacles to the creative process is ego. Successful teams understand it takes many people, groups, and organizations for an idea to become a reality. Spend more time figuring out how to make the idea work rather than who gets the credit.

12. Build on each other's ideas. The most successful creativity sessions are when everyone is participating, contributing thoughts and building on ideas. Be open to each other's ideas. When everyone has ownership and responsibility for an idea, the energy will fuel success.

Hopefully, these tips will inspire a great creativity session. Don't be afraid to try something different in the creative process. Find what works best for you and your group. Most importantly, have fun creating ideas. Even when we are trying to create very serious ideas for very serious business issues, creativity still wants energy. Fun will invigorate the creative process. No matter what, don't let the creative zombies zap your energy.

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