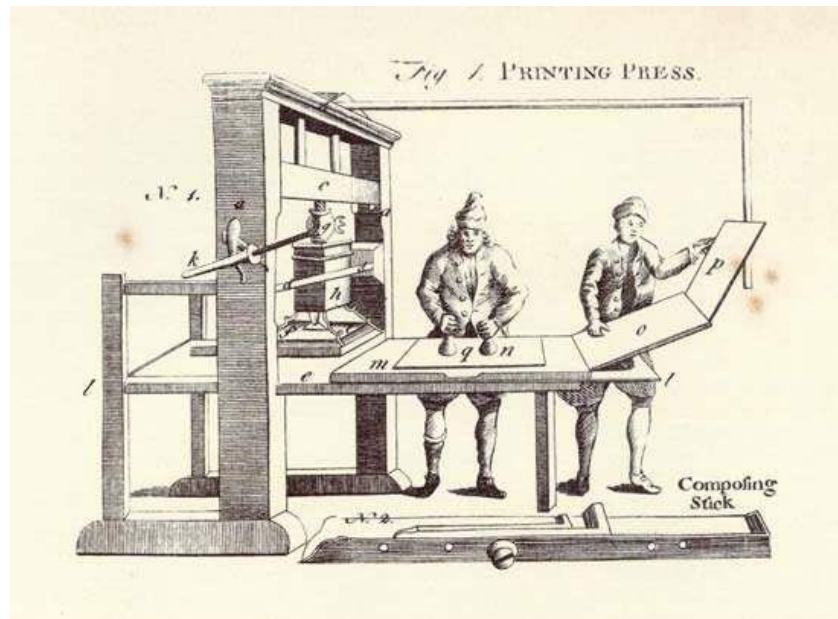
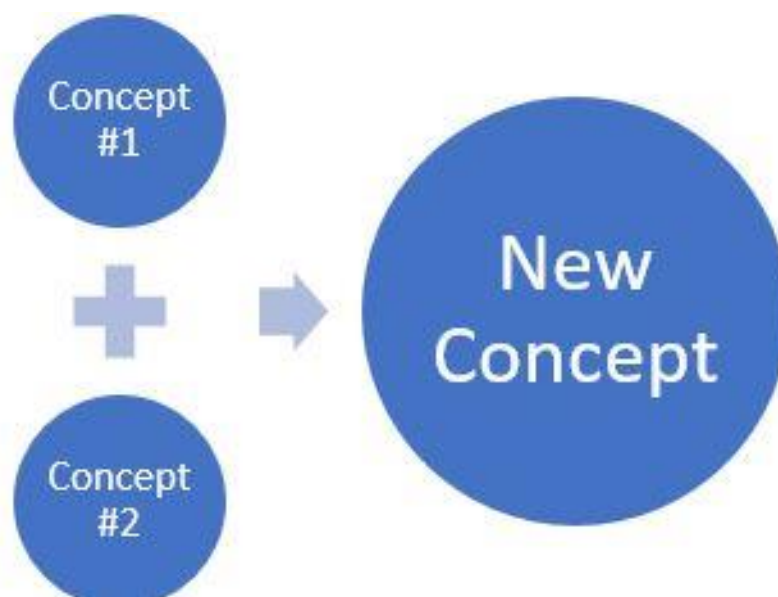


Combining Ideas

All creativity could be said to be the combining or adding on to previous ideas. The modern-day phone is just the combination of a computer, a phone, and about 100 other ideas. Wheels on luggage is a fairly new idea that combined 2 common ideas. It's that simple. Johannes Gutenberg combined the coin punch with the wine press to create the printing press - one of the most influential innovations in history.



"When one drop of water is added to another drop, they make only one drop not two. Anecdotally, when you add one concept to another, they create one product not two." (p. 305)
~ Thinkertoys (2006) by Michael Michalko



Combining Ideas Activity

I was teaching a workshop on creativity this past weekend when I realized a new icebreaker / problem solving activity - and I want to share it with you. You can use it for generating ideas for a new product or service or as an icebreaker activity for a workshop. Here's the deets...

Desired outcome: Teambuilding, learning about creativity, learning the concept of combining ideas, meeting new participants, planning new products or services

Group size: 4 or more people

Time: At least 10 minutes. More depending on desired outcome

Location: Office, meeting room, outside, classroom, hallway, anywhere

Supplies: One note card or sticky note for each participant. Each card should have a concept or product written on it. More about this in a minute.

Instructions: Write a concept or object on each card. This can be anything - a baseball, a nail, a cactus, customer service, employee retention, a dog, a zebra, a glass, a skyscraper, etc. If you include concepts, like increasing 4th quarter profits or strategic planning, be sure to have an equal number of random objects. The objects should be completely random and unrelated to your problem.

This activity also requires a safe environment for people to share wild and crazy ideas. There should be no judgement of ideas for this game. In fact, the more ridiculous the idea the better!

Divide participants into groups of 2. Explain the concept of combining ideas as described above. You will give each participant a card after you explain the following instructions. "The goal of this activity is for you to think of ways to combine ideas. I will give each of you a card in a minute that will have a concept or object on it. You will have 3-5 minutes to come up with ways to combine the concept and object. Think of the similarities and opposites of what's written on your cards. Think of useless and silly ways to combine them. Your ideas don't have to be realistic." Hand out cards and begin activity.

Note: If your goal is for new people to get to know each other, there may not be a follow-up to this other than a reflection piece. If your goal is to generate new ideas for a future project, you can lead into that after the activity by using people's ideas to generate solutions to your problems. .

Reflection questions:

- What were some of your ideas?
- What were some surprising things you heard?
- What was it like to come up with useless and absurd ideas? Where did that lead you?

- How might we apply this to other aspects of our lives?
- Where might we go next with our ideas? How might we use your ideas for [the problem you are working on or the goal of your workshop]?

You can do more iterations and have people switch partners if you'd like. How might you add on to this activity and improve it?