**18 KILLER IDEA GENERATION TECHNIQUES**

**1. SCAMPER**

[SCAMPER](https://www.cleverism.com/what-is-creative-problem-solving/) is an idea generation technique that utilizes action verbs as stimuli. It is a well-known kind of checklist developed by Bob Eberie that assists the person in coming up with ideas either for modifications that can be made on an existing product or for making a new product. SCAMPER is an acronym with each letter standing for an action verb which in turn stands for a prompt for creative ideas.

* **S** – Substitute
* **C** – Combine
* **A** – Adapt
* **M** – Modify
* **P** – Put to another use
* **E** – Eliminate
* **R** – Reverse

**2. Brainstorming**

This process involves engendering a huge number of solutions for a specific problem (idea) with emphasis being on the number of ideas. In the course of brainstorming, there is no assessment of ideas. So, people can speak out their ideas freely without fear of criticism. Even bizarre/strange ideas are accepted with open hands. In fact, the crazier the idea, the better. Taming down is easier than thinking up.

Frequently, ideas are blended to create one good idea as indicated by the slogan “1+1=3.” Brainstorming can be done both individually and in groups. The typical brainstorming group comprises six to ten people.

**3. Mindmapping**

Mindmapping is a graphical technique for imagining connections between various pieces of information or ideas. Each fact or idea is written down and then connected by curves or lines to its minor or major (previous or following) fact or idea, thus building a web of relationships. It was Tony Buzan, a UK researcher, who developed the technique “mind mapping” discussed in his book ‘Use your Head’ (1972). Mind mapping is utilized in brainstorming, project planning, problem solving and note taking. As is the case with other mapping methods, the intention behind brain mapping too is to capture attention and to gain and frame information to enable sharing of concepts and ideas.

To get started with mindmapping, the participant just has to write a key phrase or word in the middle of the page. Then, he must write anything else that comes to his mind on the very same page. After that, he must try to make connections as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

**4. Synectics**

[Synectics](https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CC0QFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FSynectics&ei=ItZJVZGEG82AaYvNgfgL&usg=AFQjCNF-QLH9fn6_382bokm3xqIgFtyd_w&sig2=1T2RSNOx5YovwB9GryKw5A) is a creative idea generation and problem solving technique that arouses thought processes that the subject may not be aware of. It is a manner of approaching problem-solving and creativity in a rational manner. The credit for coming up with the technique which had its beginning in the Arthur D. Little Invention Design Unit, goes to William J.J. Gordon and George M. Prince.

The Synectics study endeavored to investigate the creative process while it is in progress. According to J.J Gordon, three key assumptions are associated with Synectics research.

* It is possible to describe and teach the creative process
* Invention processes in sciences and the arts are analogous and triggered by the very same “psychic” processes
* Group and individual creativity are analogous

**5. Storyboarding**

Storyboarding has to do with developing a visual story to explain or explore. Storyboards can help creative people represent information they gained during research. Pictures, quotes from the user, and other pertinent information are fixed on cork board, or any comparable surface, to stand for a scenario and to assist with comprehending the relationships between various ideas.

**6. Role playing**

In the role playing technique, each participant can take on a personality or role different from his own. As the technique is fun, it can help people reduce their inhibitions and come out with unexpected ideas.

**7. Attribute listing**

Attribute listing is an analytical approach to recognize new forms of a system or product by identifying/recognizing areas of improvement. To figure out how to enhance a particular product, it is broken into parts, physical features of each component are noted, and all functions of each component are explained and studied to see whether any change or recombination would damage or improve the product.

**8. Visualization and visual prompts**

Visualization is about thinking of challenges visually so as to better comprehend the issue. It is a process of incubation and illumination where the participant takes a break from the problem at hand and concentrates on something wholly different while his mind subconsciously continues to work on the idea. This grows into a phase of illumination where the participant suddenly gets a diversity of solutions and he rapidly writes them down, thereby creating fresh parallel lines of thought.

Picture prompts help a lot when it comes to enabling one’s brain to establish connections. These prompts can help to surface emotions, feelings and intuitions. This makes them particularly useful for brainstorming solutions to innovative challenges involving people, and issues with a deep psychological or emotional root cause.

To get started with using picture prompts, the facilitator distributes a set of pre-selected images – each participant gets one. He also asks the participants to write down whatever ideas come to their mind when they look at the image in their possession. According to Bryan Mattimore (presently co-founder of The Growth Engine Company), the images should be visually interesting, portraying a multiplicity of subject matter and must depict people in lots of varied kinds of relationships and interactions with other people.

After this, participants pair off and use additional time, sharing and talking about the ideas they have come up with and brainstorming more solutions to the existing problem/challenge. Lastly, the various pairs present their ideas to the rest of the group.

Mattimore suggests tailoring the visuals to the character of the challenge the participants have to solve. So, if the challenge pertains to the manufacturing industry, you could consider having images of an industrial nature. However, you should definitely include some irrelevant or random images as well because it may be these kinds of images that trigger the most innovative solutions.

**9. Morphological analysis**

[Morphological analysis](https://www.google.de/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=12&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CF0QFjAL&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.springer.com%2Fcda%2Fcontent%2Fdocument%2Fcda_downloaddocument%2F9783642196522-c1.pdf%3FSGWID%3D0-0-45-1173250-p174106575&ei=ydVJVbrvGsjKaN-7gNgB&usg=AFQjCNEiFrUpmz6xERetCP_mLDfFK5Y_Mg&sig2=F-tOuumzr663puKy1T1WTQ) has to do with recognizing the structural aspects of a problem and studying the relationships among them. For example: Imagine the problem is transporting an object from one place to another by way of a powered vehicle. The significant dimensions are: the kind of vehicle (cart, sling, bed, chair); the power source (internal-combustion engine, pressed air, electric motor); and the medium (air, hard surface, rails, rollers, oil, water). Thus, a cart-kind of vehicle moving over rough services with an internal-combustion engine to power it is the automobile. The expectation is that it would be possible to determine some novel combinations.

**10. Forced relationships**

It is an easy technique involving the joining of totally different ideas to come up with a fresh idea. Though the solution may not be strictly unique, it frequently results in an assortment of combinations that are often useful. A lot of products we see today are the output of forced relationships (such as a digital watch that also has a calculator, musical birthday cards and Swiss army knife). Most of these ideas may not be revolutionary discoveries but they are still advantageous products and usually have a prospective market in society. Robert Olson provided an example for forced analogy in his book ‘The Art of Creative Thinking.’ He compares different aspects of a corporate organization structure to the structure of a matchbox.

**11. Daydreaming**

Though mostly not met with approval, daydreaming is truly one of the most fundamental ways to trigger great ideas. The word “daydream” itself involuntarily triggers an uninhibited and playful thought process, incorporating the participant’s creativity and resourcefulness to play around with the present problem. It enables a person to establish an emotional connection with the problem, which is beneficial in terms of coming up with a wonderful idea. The focus of productive daydreaming is a particular goal irrespective of whether it seems to be an impractical task. Plenty of famous inventors have engaged in daydreaming in the past, thereby setting off ideas that contributed to life altering inventions. The airplane is the most notable example for this. If the Wright brothers had not let their imagination run wild thinking about flight, we would probably still be traveling by ferry.

**12. Reverse thinking**

As the term ‘reverse thinking’ itself suggests, instead of adopting the logical, normal manner of looking at a challenge, you reverse it and think about opposite ideas. For example: ‘how can I double my fan base?’ can change into ‘how do I make sure I have no fans at all?’ You may notice that the majority of participants would find it easier to produce ideas for the ‘negative challenge’ simply because it is much more fun. However, don’t spend too much time on the reverse idea-generation – about 10 to 15 wrong ideas is fine. After one session is over, you can either continue in the reverse idea atmosphere with a new challenge or else do the reversal once more to make it stronger. An example for the latter is “I am never going to update any of my social networks” changing into “I am going to always update all of my social networks.”

**13. Questioning assumptions**

The majority of industries have an orthodoxy – unspoken but deeply-held beliefs that everyone stands by for getting things done. Sadly, they fail to realize that by questioning assumptions at every step of service or product development, they can actually enable the birth of fresh possibilities and ideas.

Here’s how Mattimore suggests one go about questioning assumptions: The participants should start by settling on the framework for the creative challenge. After this, they should produce 20 to 30 assumptions (irrespective of whether they are true or false). The next step is to select several assumptions from the many generated, and utilize them as idea triggers and thought starters to engender fresh ideas.

**14. Accidental genius**

Accidental genius is a relatively new technique that utilizes writing to trigger the best ideas, content and insight.

**15. Brainwriting**

[Brainwriting](http://creatingminds.org/tools/brainwriting.htm) is easy. Instead of asking the participants to shout out ideas, they are told to pen down their ideas pertaining to a specific problem or question on sheets of paper, for a small number of minutes. After that, each participant can pass their ideas over to someone else. This someone else reads the ideas on the paper and adds some new ones. Following another few minutes, the individual participants are again made to pass their papers to someone else and so the process continues. After about 15 minutes, you or someone else can collect the sheets from them and post them for instant discussion.

**16. Wishing**

This technique can be begun by asking for the unattainable and then brainstorming ideas to make it or at least an approximation of it, a reality. Start by making the wishes tangible. There should be collaboration among the members of the team to produce 20 to 30 wishes pertaining to your business. Everyone’s imagination should be encouraged to run wild – the more bizarre the idea, the better. There should be no restrictions on thinking.

The next step is concentrating on a number of these unattainable wishes and utilizing them as creative stimuli to trigger ideas that are new but more practical. Mattimore suggests getting the team to challenge the problem from diverse perspectives (imagine how a person from another planet or from another industry or profession would view it) or reflect on it. This type of role playing assists with moving away from conventional thinking patterns to see fresh possibilities.

**17. Socializing**

If employees only hang around with colleagues and friends, they could find themselves in a thinking rut. Let them utilize all those LinkedIn connections to begin some fantastic conversations. Refreshing perspectives will assist with bringing out new thinking and probably, one or two lightning bolts. Socializing in the context of ideation can also be about talking to others on topics that have nothing whatsoever to do with the present problem.

**18. Collaboration**

As the term indicates, collaboration is about two or more people joining hands in working for a common goal. Designers frequently work in groups and engage in collaborative creation in the course of the whole creative process.