

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 103

Creative idea generation sessions will work better if people follow guidelines on behaviour

Facilitate Innovative Thinking ...

"People will accept your ideas much more readily if you tell them Benjamin Franklin said it first.."

David H. Comins



"Shaking the Idea Tree"

Do you want your idea generation sessions to work better?

The other night, I helped out at my son's Scout meeting. We gathered the children and got them to play a game. However, three of them thought that this game was not cool, so they did all they could to mess up the game for everybody else. Despite much enthusiasm from others, the game fizzled out. This reminded me of many meetings I attended in corporate life, in particular idea generation meetings, where it is quite simple for people to dampen enthusiasm.

Recently, a client asked me to give a short talk to build some energy in a group before an idea generation session. I built the talk around four guidelines for making an idea generation session work more effectively.

SO

Here are the four guidelines, which you might find useful when diverging, that is, when

generating ideas. By the way, can you find an acronym for these guidelines?

BUILD ON IDEAS

A great way to obtain more creative ideas is to build on the ideas of others so:

- Say, "Yes! And..." not "Yes! But..."
- Accept "silly" or "ridiculous" ideas and use them as springboards to develop practical ideas
- Ask, "How might we look at this idea differently?"

APPRECIATE DIFFERENT STYLES

People have different styles and this might cause issues in your idea generation session. Be aware that:

- There are differences in the speed of idea generation; some people tend to generate and state many ideas quickly whilst some deliberate on each idea they have before stating it.
- There are differences in the time people like to devote to idea generation. Some like to generate ideas endlessly, whilst others like to generate a few and then move on to planning and implementing.

Design the session to complement the different styles, using structured and unstructured techniques.

LISTEN CAREFULLY TO YOUR COLLEAGUES

The germ of many a good idea is lost because people fail to listen carefully, so, stop peeking at

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your Blackberry under the table (tell your colleague too) and:

- Focus on what people are saying
- Avoid mentally generating your response as they speak
- Give them time to explain their idea before you respond (with a Yes! And...!)

DEFER JUDGEMENT - WHEN GENERATING IDEAS

Ideas are killed by premature judgement. This may be your own judgement, preventing you from stating an idea “because it’s stupid.” It may be killed by the judgement of others, “There’s no budget.” So, open your mind and:

- State all of your own ideas and do not judge the ideas of others whilst generating – save judgement for when the group is converging (evaluating the ideas)
- To avoid judging others’ ideas when diverging, have people write down all their ideas before stating them
- Mind your body language. Raised eyebrows, a sneer, a derisory smile between colleagues, a yawn; all of these can kill ideas as swiftly as a barbed comment

ACTION

Cut and paste the guidelines in to a Word document, adapt them for your organisation and provide them at an idea generation session.

TO CLOSE

Perhaps another guideline we might add is: “Don’t Talk in Jargon or Acronyms”, which can really inhibit ideas. Did you find the acronym? Lying awake last night at 4.00 a.m. , musing on this article I noticed that the first letters of the guidelines make BALD and no, I didn’t fit the headings to the letters.

I received a note this week ending in VMT and had to ask what it meant; “Very Many Thanks”, apparently. And a final one I came up with last night is for the factors that lead to a lack of sleep for me, namely Caffeine, Alcohol, Sugar and a lack of Exercise. A sad CASE indeed.

Have a simple week.

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