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# Understanding ideation

Unleashing Game-Changing Ideas.





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# General Sructure



# There are a few typical challenges around ideation

Learn

Fostering great ideas isn't easy. First, you need to give yourself and your team space to actually generate good ideas.

Then, you need to follow up on them properly and be methodical enough to separate good ideas from less suitable ones.

There are a few things a lot of teams struggle with when it comes to ideating. We list them here – and also how we want to help you tackle them.

**Forgetting the big picture and thinking in terms of process instead of outcome**

We'll draw your attention to typical mindset challenges along the way

**Insufficient psychological safety for people to voice creative ideas – they risk to be ignored or mocked**

We'll draw your attention to a few typical pitfalls to avoid on page 6

**Not enough time and space for creativity due to a high pressure environment**

We'll show you some best practices and techniques to foster creativity

**Starting out already with the solution, without really having understood the problem**

In our method, there are a few steps where you'll have issues proceeding if you haven't properly identified the problem

**No conscious decision-making which ideas to prioritise and pursue further**

We'll give you methodological guidance for how to split ideation into different steps and workout when to take the next one



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# Ideation is about solving a problem by going through the divergent-convergent idea model in a structured way

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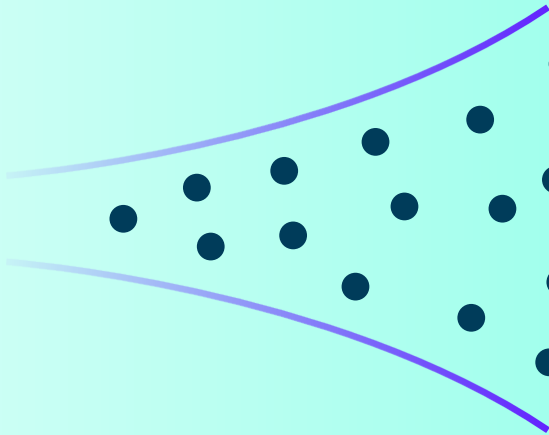
Steps

We have a problem that needs solving

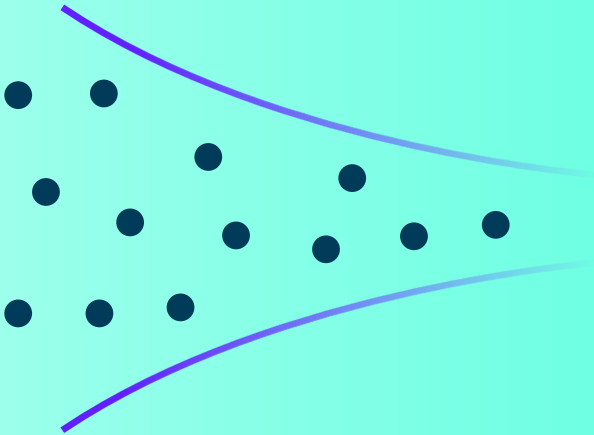


For example: "Our sales are stagnating" or "Our customers keep calling our hotline despite all the info on our website"

We generate ideas  
Divergent phase



We filter our ideas  
Convergent phase



Objectives

Properly identify the problem and state it explicitly (ideally back it up with facts/ data)

Fly high, create room to generate ideas and increase chances of a true "eureka!" moment

Descend from the clouds, pick the best idea(s) and generate true value-add for your business

# Where do great ideas come from?

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Importance of chance



## What you as a manager can do to foster idea generation

(generally, not just as a one-off)

### We have a problem that needs solving

"Syncing our two databases manually typically creates ~20% erroneous data fields"

- Gather qualitative and quantitative data on everything you do and foster a facts-driven culture
- Make data accessible and have everyone look out for anomalies, recurring patterns etc.



### Conscious creativity methods

"We brainstorm together how we could improve database quality"

- Continuously apply and test new creativity and problem-solving techniques
- See how and when they perform for you



### Under-the-shower type "eureka!" moments

"I just thought of a way for us to do everything with one database instead of two"

- Talk openly about issues and challenges in the team, so that everyone knows what is worth thinking about
- Don't feel the urge to come up with a solution immediately – leave time and space
- Foster a culture of speaking up and listening



# I'm looking for a business idea – where do I start?

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We mentioned that this course is for any type of ideation, also for ongoing business challenges. But finding the initial business idea is a challenge for many. We think there are two big opposing origins for ideas.



## Creativity methods for support

You start with an observation of a market gap or a true pain point

Starting out with a concrete, substantial problem in mind is a great place to start, but ensure you're not thinking too incremental – create something truly differentiated



## Creativity methods for support

You start with an idea that you feel the world is ready for (think of Tesla)

This might be the start of something truly world-changing, but you better be very methodical in testing and quantifying your idea so as not to pursue a castle in the clouds



## Creativity methods for support

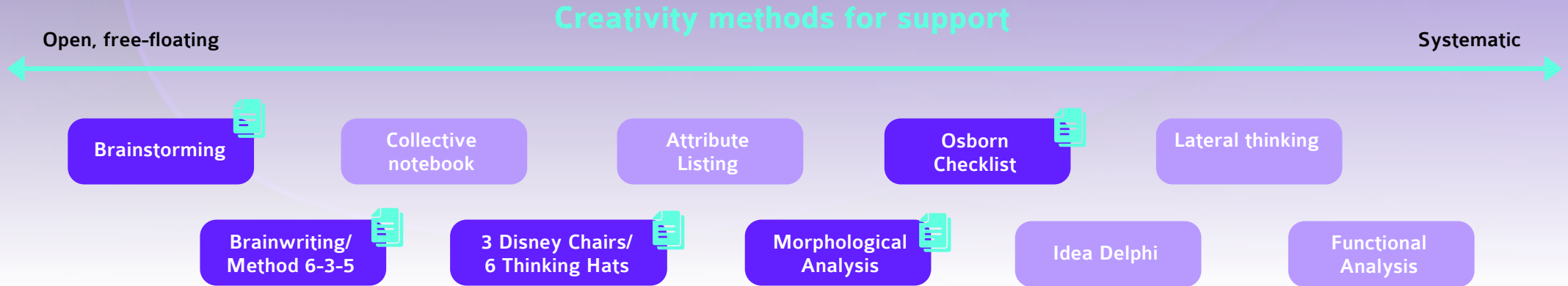
You can use creativity methods to get to either starting point. Brainstorm together with potential customers. Assemble creative minds and re-think existing solutions. Develop ideas with other players in your industry.



# Ideation Methods

# Here are a few methods to consider for generating ideas

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See next pages


We've prepared instructions for some methods listed here, you'll find them on the next pages. We encourage you to also do an internet search for yourself. You'll find info on the methods we're not explaining here, and maybe even more inspiration.

## Mindset note

- There is no such thing as "the" method – find out which one works best for your team and your specific challenge (in the examples on the next pages we point out which method might work when)
- Be aware that you and your team must "become good at" any method, so keep trying and adapting it to your needs

# Creativity method: Brainstorming

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 Probably the oldest and simplest creativity technique that exists – and for a reason: it generates plenty of ideas

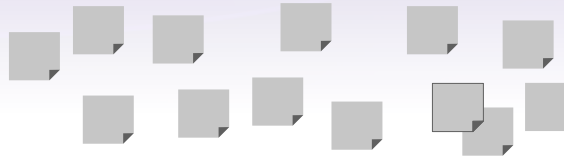
## 1. State the question(s) or challenge for the brainstorm explicitly

How can we  
boost B2B  
sales?

Ensure everyone in the room knows what is in scope (and what not) – unfocused discussions quickly lead to frustration

## 2. Generate loads of ideas

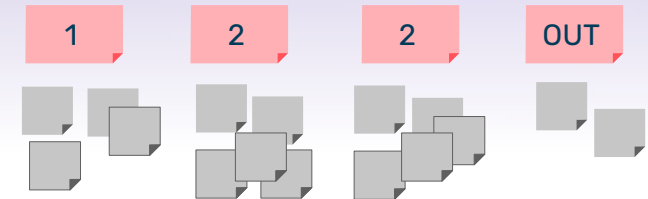
How can we  
boost B2B  
sales?



- Quantity over quality – encourage wild ideas
- Defer judgement, but have people build on
- You can even do multiple rounds, with everyone presenting their ideas in-between
- There are also good online whiteboards in case you can't all be in the same room

## 3. Group and prioritise ideas

How can we  
boost B2B  
sales?

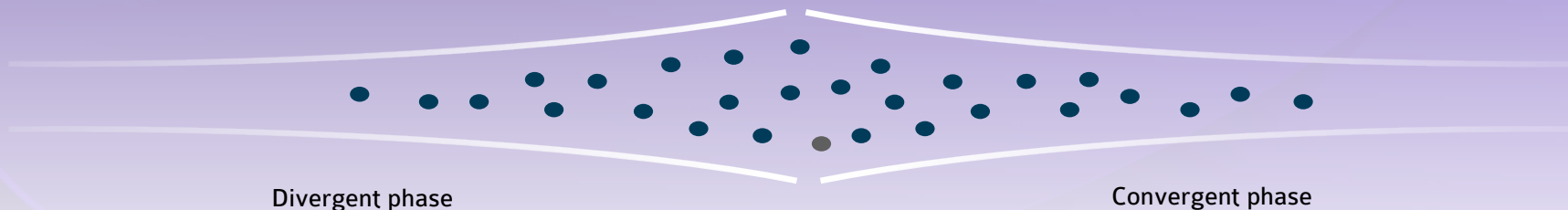


- Group ideas that are roughly the same
- Prioritise ideas together as a group
- Document so you can keep working with your ideas, e.g. by taking a photo of your board



**This is a great place to start any discussion – just ensure you involve a diverse set of people (across functions, seniority levels and characters) and that everyone is active**

# When ideating, be aware of some idea boosters and killers – regardless of your method



## Boosters



- ✓ Focus on how well the idea solves your problem
- ✓ Give time and space, create a break from daily routines
- ✓ Talk to the ones who say “I’m just not a creative person” individually and show appreciation for their input
- ✓ Allow for crazy thoughts, laughter – this can be not only about ideas, but also bringing your team together more closely
- ✓ Select ideas based on method, facts and hard data (anecdotal evidence does the trick too, if nothing else is available)
- ✓ Keep in mind your capacity to actually pursue these ideas – you might just not have enough people, time or money
- ✓ Manage the process actively, writing down objectives, people to be involved, tools/ methods and time plan transparently for all

## Killers



- ✗ Focus on risks, dangers or feasibility
- ✗ Cram everything into a 1-hour team session in your everyday meeting room in the middle of a hectic work day
- ✗ Shut down ideas (especially from junior or rather timid colleagues) – or even worse, mock people

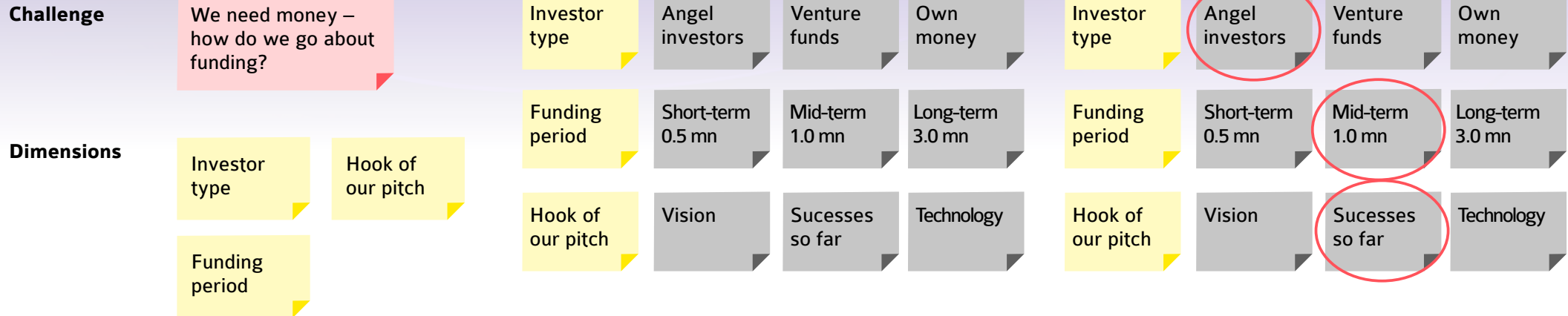
# Creativity method: **Morphological analysis**

 The morphological analysis helps you think through your options in a structured way.

**1. Specify your challenge and write down the dimensions along which to think about it**

**2. Brainstorm on options for each dimension\***

**3. Choose per dimension your best option(s)\***



\*Ensure that you define your options carefully so that they're mutually exclusive – otherwise you can't compare them and decide properly. You're however free to decide if you can pick multiple options or just one per dimension.



**This is a great way to reach joint decisions on how to resolve your challenge – obviously, you might need to brainstorm beforehand to define your options.**

# Identify the problem before you come up with a solution

We often observe that people push for ideas they find great – but if you look behind them, there's no proper case for action:

- There's no problem or pain point to be resolved
- There is a problem, but the idea's not the answer to it
- There is a problem and the idea might even help, but it's not big enough to justify the effort

And so on. So the imperative is, never start with the solution. Always start with the problem. If you can't name it, there's a good chance there isn't any. For extra benefit, try to assess the problem's impact based on numbers.

**This is not a problem**  
It's a (potential) solution



We should buy a new sales software

We need to keep up with tech, let's invest in AR technology

It's time to partner up with a larger company

**Start here**

These are actual, measurable problems



We're missing out on opportunities because of our messy Excel leads list

Our product quality is suffering from too many human production errors

Our potential clients don't consider us trustworthy enough



Our potential clients don't consider us trustworthy enough



Sometimes it's not easy to put your finger on what the actual problem is – consider using creativity methods!

# Our 3-Step Ideation Process