
LAUNCHPAD 65 RESOURCE



WHY THEY NEED YOU!

USING CREATIVITY TOOLS TO DISCOVER
AND CLARIFY THE PROBLEM YOUR
STARTUP IS SOLVING

Why They Need YOU!

How to use Creative Thinking Skills to clarify the problem your startup is solving.

A resource pack created for LaunchPad 65

by

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What will make your clients need you?

You started your business to solve a problem. It's likely you have competitors, and you're looking for ways to differentiate yourself from your competitors. What will give you the edge? How will you be different?

What will make your clients need *you*, and not your competitor?

This is a resource to help you use creative thinking tools to answer those questions. Learn to look at the problem your business solves in different ways, and use those new perspectives to refine your product offerings.

Help ensure your clients need *you*.

A Vision and a Challenge

With your business partners, you will work to create a vision of what is possible, exploring different goals and challenges. Following that, you may even wish to form a specific challenge statement that guides new product development.

The vision is the big picture: What problem is your business going to solve? What do you want to do? The challenge asks you to imagine what are the problems to getting there, and how do you want to overcome them?

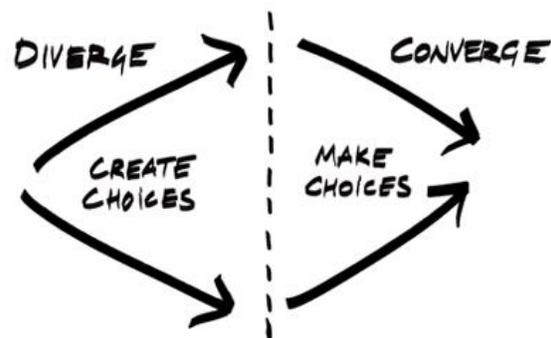
The Big Picture

Cycles of Divergent and Convergent Thinking

If there is only one thing you should remember about creative thinking, it is that creative thinking flows from cycles of *divergent* and *convergent* thinking, and that the two types of thinking should be done *separately*.

Divergent Thinking has several different definitions. Earlier, we defined it as “the ability to generate many possible ideas.” Divergent thinking also involves going in different directions or finding many types of ideas, seeking wild and unusual ideas, building on ideas, and – most importantly – deferring judgement.

Deferring Judgement means not deciding whether an idea is a good idea or a bad idea... *yet*. Any idea that is had is worth writing down, if for no other reason than it helps to create choices to build off of later.

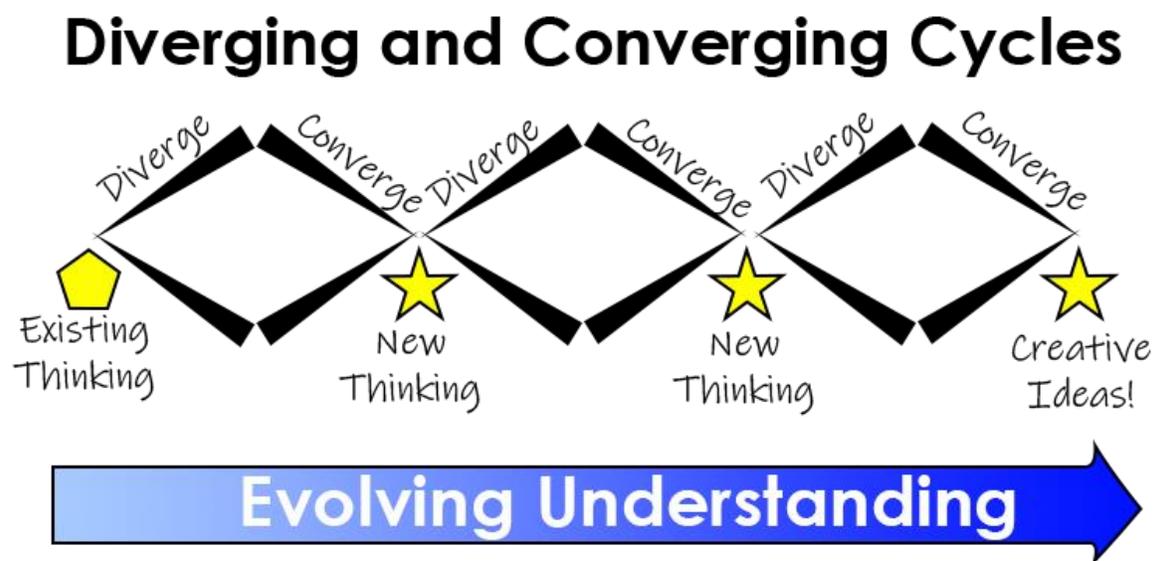


*Creative thinking flows from cycles of **divergent** and **convergent** thinking, and the two should be done **separately**. Inexperienced creatives often do them together.*

Inexperienced creatives often struggle to defer judgement. As soon as they have an idea, they decide whether it's a good idea or not. Experienced creatives write down every idea, and use them as fuel for creating more ideas.

Inexperienced creatives stop when they get their first "good" idea. Experienced creatives generate many more ideas than they could ever use, in order to venture into unfamiliar, and thus unique, territory.

Convergent Thinking is the ability to evaluate choices and determine which direction you want to go.



To find your unique way of looking at the problem and making your clients need *you*, you will go through cycles of divergent and convergent thinking. Your understanding of the market evolves as you work, leading to creative ideas at the end.

Exploring the Vision

The Outcome

A single goal/wish/challenge statement that begins with “I wish...” or “It would be great if...”

Goals for Diverging

List your goals, wishes, and challenges. Use different words, phrases, and images. Look at the wishes and challenges in as many different ways as possible.

Focus on the big picture – what do you want to do? What’s the overall goal for your business?

Diverge until you have a wide range of viewpoints – at least 10 “I wish...” or “It would be great if...” statements, but don’t limit yourself to 10.

Tools for Diverging

- Data Gathering
- Excursions
- Random Image Associations
- Random Image Stories
- Word Web
- 40-20-10-5

Goals for Converging

Looking at all the different statements, narrow them down to the best ideas. Combine and modify similar ideas, strengthening weak ideas if needed. End with one (or just a few) statements that begin with “I wish...” or “It would be great if...”

Tools for Converging

- Dot Sorting
- Clustering
- Card Sorting
- POPIT

Key phrases:

“I wish...”

“It would be great if...”

Key questions:

What things have you done lately that you would like to do better?

What sorts of challenges might be on your mind?

What do you wish worked better?

Who has been on your mind lately? Why?

What are some objectives that you would like to meet?

Scan your life. What opportunities would you like to take advantage of?

Imagine yourself (or your business) one year from today. What goals, dreams, visions would you like to accomplish or begin?

If you had a magic wand and you can make anything come true, what would your goals or wishes be?

Finding the Challenge

The Outcome

What stands in the way of achieving your vision? Clarifying this question helps you develop products and lines of business. Figure out the problems, but reframe them as challenge statements: “How to...” “How might...” etc. End with one (or just a few) challenge statements.

Goals for Diverging

Now that you have your broad vision, restate the issue from as many different perspectives as possible. If necessary, gather new data related to your broad vision. Use the sentence starters and try to generate 25-30 different problem statements based on the data. If you get stuck, look at the key data again and use the diverging tools.

Tools for Diverging

- Data Gathering
- Stick ‘em Up!
- Random Image Associations
- Random Image Stories
- Brainwriting
- Word Dance
- Word Web
- Reverse Brainstorming
- 40-20-10-5

Goals for Converging

Choose a single (or just a few) challenge to work on.

Tools for Converging

- Dot Sorting
- Clustering
- Card Sorting
- POPIT

Sentence Starters:

“How to...”

“How might...”

“In what ways might...”

“What might be all the...”

Key questions:

Why?

What’s stopping you?

What’s the difference between the challenge and the vision?

The vision is your big, broad goal for your business. The challenge is closer to a specific product, line of business, or way of doing business.

The vision is the theory – “what is the big picture of our business?”

Ex: I wish graphic design were accessible to everyone.

And then, when finding the challenge, you’ll discover the problems you face in achieving this vision.

Ex: Most people don’t know good graphic design theory.

The challenge statement reframes the problem as a possibility.

Ex: How might we design easy tools that suggest good designs to the user?

Your Next Steps

Now that you have clarified your vision and formulated your challenge, your next steps are to ideate and evaluate solutions. Stick with your cycles of Divergent and Convergent thinking – create ideas, and then evaluate ideas.

This resource was created by David Dubczak, of Creative Dave Consulting. You can inquire with him for more assistance and resources at www.CreativeDave.net.

Creative Dave leads sessions in Creative Problem Solving – exploring your problem, exploring creative solutions, and developing plans for implementation. He also leads seminars and workshops on creative thinking techniques, and tools to increase the overall creativity of your workforce. He helps “Activate Your Genius Mode” to ensure your workforce is ready to innovate whenever you have a need!

The resources in this manual are for the exclusive use of LaunchPad 65 subscribers, and the resources and methods therein remain the property of Creative Dave.



Key Data

Before doing any brainstorming, allow everyone to share 1) Facts and Figures, 2) Intuitions and Feelings, and 3) Stories. Key sources of data and good questions to ask include:

- What is a brief history of the situation?
- What are some of the obstacles we encounter?
- When do we need to see action taken?
- How might this be an opportunity for us?
- What have you already thought of or tried?
- What is key data relevant to the situation?
- What are your gut feelings?
- How are your feelings affecting your behavior?
- What is your ideal outcome?

Facts and Figures	Intuitions and Feelings	Stories

Stick 'em up!

While ideating, stick all ideas on Post-it notes and put it up on a board of some kind. It creates a visual, something to look at for ideas to build off. Seeing one idea can trigger a different idea in another person.

40-20-10-5

Explain your problem in up to 40 words. Then cut it down to 20 words. Then 10, and then to 5. Those 5 words are the root of your problem, and will likely be the root of your solution as well.

Random image associations

This is similar to the random input associations exercise, but takes it a step further. Using a set of many random images, pick an image and study the attributes – is it black and white? What are the colors? Shapes? Patterns?

Then, it's time to stretch your thinking:

- How do they relate to the problem you're trying to solve?
- What is a symbol or metaphor that comes to mind when thinking of the image and your problem?
- How does the image represent your view (or oppose your view) on the subject?
- How does it relate to what is important to the problem?

The purpose of this exercise is to generate discussion, which helps generate more ideas.

You can download a digital file of up to 30 random images at a time from the website <http://unsample.net/> I like to use collect images from this site in groups of 100 – just curate them first to ensure there are no inappropriate, sexual, or provocative images.

You can also use collections of images cut out from magazines, books, or newspapers.

Random image story generation

Using your random images, choose five. Create a story that links the five images together and relates to your problem.

The story may create new insights. Use those insights to generate new ideas.

The story may create new perspectives of looking at the problem. Use that new perspective to generate new ideas.

Brainwriting

Use the brainwriting worksheet (reproducible at end) to deliberately reflect and build on other thoughts. This is another technique for allowing quiet, shy members to give voice instead of being drowned out by more vocal ones. Even though this seems like a slower method, it can produce a higher number of ideas, because everyone is working simultaneously.

- 1) Give everyone in the group a worksheet. Each person silently thinks of three ideas, and writes one in each box of row one.
- 2) Pass the worksheets back to the center, and swap it with one someone else filled out.
- 3) Read the ideas on the new worksheet, build on them, or come up with three new ideas.
- 4) Keep swapping until each box is filled, and add more worksheets if necessary.

Word Dance

Finding ways to restate the problem can help us find more ways to solve the problem. By finding synonyms for any “object” or “outcome” words, we can create alternate meanings for the problem statement. Mix and match and be playful.

Problem Statement

“How can we get more members?”

Can become...

“How might we entice supporters?”

“How might we attract candidates?”

“How might we solicit more contributions?”

Get	Members
Attract	Participants
Induce	Supporters
Solicit	Leaders
Entice	Joiners
Lure	Candidates
Gather	Applicants
Retain	Registrations
Collect	Contributions
	Groupies
	Helpers

Word Web

Take a word that is central to your problem. Make a word web based on it by brainstorming all of the words you can think of that relate to the original word. You can also make connections to all of the related words.

Once you have created many connections between many different words, use the words generated to help you think of more ideas.



Reverse Brainstorming

Take the problem statement and reverse it, allowing for a different perspective from which to generate ideas.

For example:

“How can we send a crew of people to Mars and ensure their safe return?”

Becomes:

“What are all the ways we can ensure a crew of astronauts dies on their Mars mission?”

Does it seem morbid? Yes. But, if you’re trying to ensure a group of people stay alive, brainstorming ways they might die still help you achieve that goal. Use the ideas you come up with to help you generate ideas to solve your problem.

Another example:

“How can we amend the Constitution to ensure the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all?”

Becomes:

“How can we amend the Constitution to ensure the country completely falls apart?”

The list you create can give you insights into how to solve your problem.

Excursions

This technique gives participants a virtual field trip, in their mind, that helps them see the problem from other perspectives. Some types of excursions that can be performed are:

Visualization

Paint a verbal picture for students of a location, and an activity that takes place in that location, relevant to your problem (or not...). Describe the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings. Ask students for ideas generated by their excursion.

Actual field trips work too!

Role-Playing

To find a way to teach the three branches of government to a new immigrant, have students act out people from each of the three branches. Someone can be the president, someone can be Congress, someone can be the Supreme Court. Act out how a bill is passed. Get ideas by asking observers and participants what they noticed.

Character Analogies

Ask students to think about the problem from the perspective of different famous people. How might Abraham Lincoln think about the problem? What would Kanye West say about the problem? Take a minute to think about his or her traits, personality, and world view. Then generate ideas from that person's perspective.

Personal Analogies

Think about the challenge from the challenge's point of view. To build a better couch, imagine yourself to be a cushion. Generate ideas on the challenge from that perspective. Now change the perspective and become a leg. What ideas does this generate? Einstein was known to have solved many of his theoretical questions after imagining himself to be a beam of light!

Dot Sorting

During the ideation phase, it's common to generate a wall of Post-it Notes. The goal is to generate many more ideas than you could ever use. Dot sorting is a method of determining which ones to discuss.

The specific method requires judgement of which way is best. One way is to have each group member put a dot (using a marker or sticker) on any idea they believe is worth talking about, without limiting the number of dots the group member gets.

Another way is to have group members dot their favorite or two favorites. Or you could give each group member five dots, which can be placed on five notes, or all on one, etc.

The method you choose would depend on group preference, time, number of ideas, and the current group consensus over what they're thinking.

Discussing each note that has been dotted is a way to ensure that all ideas anyone in the group wants to talk about get talked about, but this may take more time. Limiting the votes and talking about only the top few take less time, at the expense of not considering some more novel ideas. It depends on the time available and the group's dedication to truly finding novel solutions.

Clustering

The facilitator may notice that ideas share common themes. It might simplify things to group all notes of a similar theme together, and then to post a "summary" or "headline" of that theme.

For example, if ideating ways to explore the inside of a volcano, you might cluster all notes that deal with robots, all notes that deal with human exploration vehicles, and notes that deal with other types of instruments.

Card Sort

When a group has a few good ideas (5-ish) and is finding it difficult to pick just one, write each idea down on an index card.

Display all the cards in a random order, and ask the group, "Which of these is your least favorite?" Remove that one, shuffle the cards, and repeat.

This can either help you land on one idea, or give you a ranking of your favorite ideas.

POPIT

You may be down to deciding between just a few ideas, but they both seem like good ideas. Using POPIT at this stage is helpful in thoroughly exploring all sides of the idea, giving you more info to help you make your decision. A printable POPIT worksheet is on page **Error! Bookmark not defined..**

Plusses – What’s good?

Opportunities – What opportunities might result?

Problems – What are your concerns?

Inquiries – Turn problems into possibility questions:

- “What might be all the ways...”
- “How might we...”

Thoughts – What are the new ideas to overcome the issues?

Brainwriting Worksheet

Row 1			
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Row 2			
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Row 3			
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Rules for Diverging

“More ideas breed more good ideas.”

Defer Judgement

Every idea you have is worth writing down. Can you say whether an idea is good or not? Absolutely, just not right now. Write down everything that comes to mind. No telling anyone else their idea isn't good enough (no saying that to yourself, either).

Strive for Quantity

More ideas breed more good ideas! Your first ideas will be all of the “typical” ideas, and then you have a chance to go beyond the usual and come up with surprising ideas. The more, the better.

Seek Wild and Unusual Ideas

It's easier to tame a wild idea than invigorate a weak one. If you already knew what to do, you wouldn't be doing this. Go to the far corners of your mind to create wild ideas, and have fun!

Build on Other Ideas

Let one idea spur other ideas. Build, combine, and improve ideas. Let yourself make connections between ideas and your life. Mix and match combinations of ideas.

Rules for Converging

How to be a wise judge

Be Affirmative

Be sure to consider “What’s good about this idea?” before jumping to “No way!” Look for what you want, not for what you don’t want.

Be Deliberate

Think through ideas carefully, don’t make any snap decisions. Keep your own biases and assumptions in check.

Check your Goals

Every once in a while, make sure your decisions align with your goals. There may be some great ideas that don’t fulfill the original purpose of the goal. If you have too many ideas, let your goals drive you.

Improve Ideas

Not all ideas will be good ideas, but some can be turned into good ideas. Even the best ideas will likely need tweaking. Discuss with a bias toward improvement, not negativity.

Consider Novelty

Be brave. Don’t dismiss original thinking because it’s unusual. Consider ways to work them to make them fit.