Worst Possible Idea

What

The Worst Possible Idea method is a fun and effective ideation icebreaker technique. However, your team may also very likely be able to extract and come up with amazing ideas from really bad ideas. The Worst Possible Idea is a lateral thinking method which is very much about standing back, looking at the big picture, and understanding concepts. It also requires that you focus on the parts that have perhaps been overlooked, challenging assumptions, and seeking alternatives. This method of the Worst Possible Idea produces novel combinations or completely new ideas. With ideas, one leads to another, bad ideas lead to good ones, sometimes in ways we could never have imagined. At times, the best idea stems from its exact opposite—the worst. This is why the Worst Possible Idea is actually an ideation method, one which you can use to provide disruptive insight within the ideation process.

Why

Instead of going for good ideas and putting the pressure on, call for the worse and, yes, the worst possible ideas your team can come up with. Doing this relieves the anxiety and self-confidence issues and allows people to be more playful and adventurous, as they know their ideas are most certainly not going to be scrutinised for missing the mark. It's way easier to say 'Hey no that's not bad enough.' than the opposite. Better still, it helps ensure that mental constipation is never responsible for keeping a breakthrough idea from getting out into the open.

Best practice: How

1 The facilitator briefs ideation session participants about the problem statement (also called Point Of View), the overall goals, and important user insights.

2 Then the facilitator asks the participants to come up with extremely bad, terrible, stupid, or even illegal ideas. You can do this as a collective brainstorm session, or you can ask all participants to write down their worst ideas individually – this method is called Braindumping. You could also use the Brainwriting method, where each participant fills out idea cards/papers with his/her worst possible ideas for 3-5 minutes and then passes on the idea card to another participant, who elaborates on his/her worst possible ideas, and so forth.

3 As the facilitator, be sure to push your group to generate *extremely* bad ideas! This will help get participants laughing and re-engaged. As a facilitator of ideation sessions, it's your job to help participants open their minds and hearts, and the Worst Idea method can help you do just that – especially if you combine it with the collective Brainstorm method.

4 The technique includes generating as many terrible ideas as *possible*.

5 It includes listing the attributes of the worst ideas.

6 Investigate which attributes of the ideas make them really bad.

7 Once the participants have generated a list of their worst ideas, you as the facilitator should challenge the group to turn those horrible ideas into *good* ones. They can either consider the ideas' opposites, or they can look for aspects within the terrible ideas that might inspire a *good* one. Or, you can consider simply removing the worst attribute and replacing it with something else. Mix and match different bad ideas, and see what comes out.

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