Bringing New Ideas and Approaches to the Table

We know you often need to generate new approaches to handling client issues, challenges with the case or deal, finding creative arguments to research and formulate, and so much more. In fact, it is a good sign if you are looking for new approaches—your clients will appreciate that. But how do you begin? You may think that pulling the team together and brainstorming might be a good solution. Well, we are here to tell you not to take this path. Try another—it is a more effective way to generate new ideas and we will take you through that in this tool.

Checklist:

- ❏ Articulate the problem to be solved for which you need new creative ideas.
- ❏ Tell the team that you will be driving toward actionable ideas and using a form of idea-generation that will be new to them.
- ❏ Determine whether you want to start with one idea and one small group or set up two or three groups. Each group can work on more than one idea, but only one at a time for each group.
- ❏ Choose a facilitator for each group, plus three members per idea discussion.
- ❏ Make sure participants know the challenge and prepare with research or reading prior to the session.
- ❏ Make sure the facilitator is prepared to help the team 'land the idea'.
- ❏ Make sure the facilitator chosen is someone who can stimulate creativity by asking questions.
- ❏ Make sure the team works on one idea at a time.
- ❏ Have the facilitator lead through a visual—whether a flipchart or a whiteboard.
- ❏ Have each member build on the idea via the visual.
- ❏ Collect all the ideas and review them with the team.
- ❏ Bring the best ideas to the client.

Lean Routine:

1. Have you determined the problem that you need to solve? Are you able to articulate it clearly so that everyone on the team can look at the problem statement and understand it? Is the problem you think needs to be solved the right problem?

2. Once you have established that you need new ideas to address a stated problem, consider the approach you will take to identifying those ideas.

   - We advocate a form of new idea-generation called "greenhousing." It is anti-brainstorming, which is known to kill creativity. We learned 'greenhousing' from a company called ?What If!, which provides innovation training to companies seeking to innovate to build new revenue-generating products.

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- ?What If! tells us that standard brainstorming does not work because:
  - Brainstorming focuses on quantity and not quality.
  - Brainstorming can result in the loudest voices getting their ideas on the list even if those are not the best ideas.
  - Team members tend not to prepare for brainstorming so it is less informed.
  - Team members tend not to build on ideas (especially the best ideas).
  - And perhaps most important of all, the ideas are often not actionable. Read here for more on why brainstorming doesn't work.

3. To execute on 'greenhousing,' you need to first select a facilitator and three people to generate the actionable ideas. It is important that the group be small in order to pull off what ?What If! calls 'productive creativity.'

   - The three members should represent different areas of expertise—perhaps different practice areas or different levels of experience, or both.
   - The role of the facilitator is to help 'land an idea.'

4. Work on one idea at a time and build on it. The facilitator might draw or write on the board and then invite each of the three participants to add to the idea, whether it is a visual, like a timeline or a scene recreation, or an argument with various components, like a decision tree.

5. If required, you can set up two or three different groups with different idea starters so that in the end you have a few actionable ideas. But, each one should be run the same—small, focused on one idea that is built upon, that people come prepared to address, and that the facilitator keeps everyone focused on.

6. By the end, whether the facilitator takes a photo or you are there to capture, you should have very detailed ideas to review and potentially talk through with the rest of the team and even the client.