

EXERCISE Bad Product Ideas

Purpose Help students realize that all ideas have potential when we look for it—even the seemingly terrible ones.

Recommended with: Trail 10 Idea Phase Path

Time Required 20-30 minutes

Key Concepts

We boost our creativity when we look at what is good about ideas, rather than what is bad.

Picking ideas apart requires very little talent or insight.

Yes, there are bad ideas, but it helps to always evaluate ideas affirmatively.

Instructions

- 1) Have participants divide into small groups (3-6 people), perhaps by table or who is seated close to them.
- 2) Tell them that you want each group to come up with the worst new product ideas they can imagine. The objective is to make them really awful, something that no one could possibly want, much less be willing to pay for. Give the groups five minutes or so to brainstorm possibilities and have them keep a list of these ideas.
- 3) Have each group choose one or two favorites (worst ideas) from their list.
- 4) Have each group take a turn announcing an idea. Then have another group, or the group as a whole figure out what is good about that idea, how it may actually have some potential value or usefulness. This is usually not very difficult and will create a lot of energy and humor. As everyone comes to understand the real objective of this game, they may get more competitive and determined to come with ideas that no one can possibly find redeeming. But someone still will.
- 5) Repeat until all groups have shared at least one idea. You can sometimes have everyone share a second idea if you like.

DISCUSSION

What does this tell you about the nature of our ideas?

All ideas have potential, even when we are trying to find ones that don't.

Is it hard to see the potential in bad ideas?

Apparently not, but it takes more effort than just shooting them down.

What happens when we immediately shoot down ideas we don't like?

We tend to shut down the conversation and everyone becomes less creative.

What are the benefits of looking for the potential in ideas?

Playing off of other ideas often generates powerful insights and potential opportunities.

Does this mean there are no bad ideas?