

THE
WORKSHOP

MANIFESTO

WHY LEARNING NEEDS TO CHANGE

AND HOW WE CAN DO IT



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The Workshop Manifesto

***Why Learning Needs to Change and
How We Can Do It***

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My Go-To Workshop

It's becoming more evident every day that education isn't preparing us for the future. This manifesto applies to K-12, higher education and professional education. We aren't teaching material in a way that students can remember and connect with. We're talking at them instead of working with them.

There are two big problems with lectures and speeches.

1. There's always someone better to give the talk.
2. They don't allow people to collaborate and work with the material.

Why should we listen to a mediocre speaker talk live about marketing when we could listen to an expert on YouTube for free? Every day thousands of teachers give the same speech about grammar. Why not watch the best person in the world give that speech online?

Teachers' roles will be shifting to coaches and great lectures can be consumed on students' own time.

Second, we KNOW that talking at an audience for an hour isn't the best way to learn. We hope that they're taking good notes, staying engaged and going to revisit the material to reinforce learning, but that is a perfect world scenario that is rarely true. This may work in school when grades are on the line, but learning should not happen for the purpose of getting a grade. Learning should be done because it makes us better.

If your only way to engage an audience is to threaten them with a bad grade, what does that say about the quality of the lesson?

When we're confined to a lecture hall for a long talk, we miss the opportunity to interact with our peers and work through new material. The better way to learn is to apply the lessons and struggle through problems with teammates.

As a byproduct of this teamwork, you'll find that people naturally become friendly towards each other. Most people are looking for a reason to meet people in their classes and at live events, but "it's awkward." When you give them a problem to discuss, it's a great way to give everyone the permission to make a connection.

What Makes a Live Event Valuable?

If I can watch a better speaker give a better talk online, why drive somewhere to attend a live event?

There are a few reasons: first, **commitment**. This is related to the sunk cost fallacy. You've spent money and time getting to this live event, you better pay attention because it feels like you're committed. If you pay nothing for a speaker, you won't place much value on their words. If you pay \$100 for a speaker, you will probably listen. If you pay \$1000 for a speaker, you will definitely listen and work hard to implement changes in your life.

At the end of the day, the speech that compelled you to make life changes will be remembered as the best. In reality, that's just the one you committed to more.

Second, **some speakers are better live** and they can cater their talks to your needs. The best example of this is Tony Robbins using case studies from the audience to help solve their problems.

Part of the reason live events are special is the speaker can interact with the audience and change the talk accordingly. This is true in some cases, but certainly not all. Many speakers will have a prepackaged keynote they will give for 45 minutes and leave 15 minutes for Q&A.

Last and most important is **connection**. This is hands down the MOST valuable aspect of going to a live event, but it's an afterthought on most occasions. Why do you pay to attend a conference? It's great to watch speakers and to see the booths, but you really want to make connections with other people in the industry.

Live events can charge insane amounts of money and they can be worth every penny if you walk away with valuable connections.

I saw Tim Ferriss record a live podcast in New York back in December. The cost of the

ticket also bought you two signed books, so it was easy to see that the ticket was worth it. It was incredible to sit in the crowd and watch Tim, but I was starving and squished in the middle of a crowded theatre. I learned a lot, at the event, but nothing more than I could have gotten from listening to the podcast version.

The most valuable part of the event was talking to the people next to me and seeing people on the subway carrying their Barnes and Noble bags with the new books. That was all the conversation starter I needed and I quickly made a great connection.

The Magic of Workshops

My thesis is that most people go to events to meet people. So why not give them what they want AND provide a better learning experience. Welcome to the magic of workshops.

Workshops provide way more bang for an attendee's buck. They get to actively engage with the material on the spot, walking away with a much better understanding. They also get to work through difficult problems with peers in a similar situation.

This is how meaningful connections are formed. The vulnerability of working on something new with people you don't know

opens doors for connection. Instructors and facilitators can walk around, meeting attendees and helping them through the process. Instead of waiting around after a talk to shake hands and exchange business cards.

Attendees learn more and make better connections. It's a win-win.

There's one more aspect that makes workshops so incredible: the magic happens by working together. It's very tough for a speaker to WOW me at this point. It's possible, but only the top 1%—5% of speakers are good enough to present something so engaging. Guess how much those people cost? Tens of thousands of dollars.

In a workshop, the magic happens by giving people the space to work with each other. You don't need to pay for a \$50,000 keynote that you could hear on YouTube. As long as the facilitator has some training and is able to introduce, explain and summarize the material, magic will happen.

The Structure of a Good Workshop

This section comes from Dr. Tony Middlebrooks' research in educational theory and creative education. I've seen this in action and can attest to the value. A good workshop has six major parts:

- **Activator**

This has to get the audience thinking, moving or engaged. You could do a big game, or simply pose a fascinating question and solicit answers. You could also use a discussion question on tables.

- **Brief Debrief**

Relate the intro activity to the rest of the content. Give an overview of the significance of that activity and foreshadow what will be learned during the rest of the session.

- **Content**

This is the information that people need to learn. This could be a powerpoint, a video, or a short lecture.

- **Activity**

This should be the meat of your workshop. How can the attendees apply the content that you just introduced? If your content was about the importance of goal-setting, your activity should require people to write out their goals and share them in small groups. It has to be experiential and ideally, have a collaborative component.

- **Debrief**

Reflect on the activity. Talk about how it made people feel, what they learned and why it matters. Highlight different moments

during the activity to make sure everyone understood the important parts.

- **Summary**

Discuss the session as a whole and implications going forward. Give people something to think about for the upcoming days to apply what they've learned to their daily life.

The Structure of a Typical Speech or Lecture

- **Content**
- **Summary**

The difference between the two structures is significant. In a speech, all of the parts that reinforce learning and build connections are lost. So if workshops help people learn better and create better connections, why don't more of them happen?

Why Aren't There More Workshops?

Norms

We were taught by listening to speeches, thus when we see a special guest, we expect a keynote. When we think of a professor, we picture a lecture. These people are hired to teach us, and we've been conditioned to

believe that teaching must follow the sage on the stage model.

Control

A keynote can be derailed by an audience question. So we make people sit quietly for 45 minutes and wait until the end to ask. That way the speaker is in control for the entire time. It feels safe because you can plan that ahead of time and know exactly how it will go.

On the other hand, there's something about a workshop that cedes control. The participants might not get it. They may be too distracted and not do your activity.

While it's possible that no one is listening to your speech, it's harder to tell when you're up on the podium. When you're giving a workshop and walking around to see people at work, it's obvious when some people don't understand the material.

Space

There is a very practical concern that workshops require a different kind of space than a typical lecture. Speakers typically come to auditoriums. This type of seating is not conducive to running a workshop. The space is an important aspect to creating the proper environment, but the more you understand these principles, the easier it will

get to be flexible on what type of room you need.

The Art of a Workshop

Lastly, I believe very few people understand the art of running an engaging workshop. How often have you been in a session that followed the structure that I outlined above? Even for me, it's very rare and I spend a lot of time in this creative education space.

I have a passion for spreading this way of learning because it's better for everyone involved. Better connections, more learning and less money spent on keynotes that you could watch at home.

Here are some ideas for different topics for which you could run a workshop.

Workshop Topic Ideas

Divergent Thinking/Convergent Thinking

Problem Identification: Asking the Right Questions

User-Centered Design

Pretotyping and Prototyping: Why You Need Both

Minimum Viable Products

Sketching: The Most Underrated
Communication Tool

Humor, Stand-up and Role play in Problem
Solving

Considering the Senses in Design

Integrative thinking

The Power of Storytelling

Designing the Whole Experience

Lenses and Frames in Problem Solving

Moonshot thinking

Team building and strengths

Process and Why You Need It

Discounting Future Happiness

Guerilla Marketing

Finding your path

The Transformative Power of Gratitude

Designing your entrepreneurial life

These are all broad topics on which to base a
workshop. Given any of these ideas, you
could fill in the six different aspects of an

engaging meeting and create something powerful.

Emotional Goals

Once you've picked a topic for your workshop, it's important to consider the emotional goal of the meeting.

What do you want people to feel?

Think back to the most powerful educational experiences you've ever had. I'm willing to bet you're thinking of a time when you felt an emotion.

Say your experience was a speaker that came in to talk to your high school. Her story spoke to you in a way that you had never experienced before. You felt understood by her narrative and inspired by her success. You left the event uplifted and optimistic. Those are the powerful emotions that we're talking about.

At the end of day, we don't remember what was said, we remember how we felt. When we're thinking about what people should learn, let's also consider what they should feel.

Here are some possibilities:

Empowered

Understood

Connected

Curious

Joyful

Creative

Present

Appreciative

Confident

There are dozens more emotional goals that you could set for your workshop, but those are a few that might inspire more ideas. Once you've selected a topic and for your meeting and an emotional goal for the participants, it's time to start planning the activities.

Activators + Brief Debriefs

These are activities that you can use to open up a workshop. Most people are sitting all day and have very little energy. It's crucial that you lead with something that will get people in a better mind-space. If people have been sitting all day, make sure you do something to get them up and standing.

Here are some activities that I've used to engage a group of people as the opening to a workshop.

- **Rock paper scissors biggest fan**

This is my go-to whenever I'm working with a new group. It's super simple and always energizes a crowd. The rules are as follows: everyone finds a partner. You play one game of rock paper scissors with your partner. The loser of this game becomes the biggest fan of the winner. The fan must cheer loudly in support of the winner. Winners go find another winner to play.

Whenever you win, the loser becomes your fan and their fans become your fans. This means that by the end of the game there will be two players left standing, and everyone else in the room will be cheering for one person or the other. Insist that they cheer loudly. There will be one winner. Congratulate them as you see fit. Feel how the energy in the room has increased significantly.

- **Create a motto one word at a time**

Ask people to find someone they've never met. Introduce themselves and create a motto by exchanging single words. Example:

Person A: "Always"

Person B: “Make”

Person A: “Magic”

Person B: “Moments”

Ask the crowd to share any funny ones that were created.

- **Share passion, create a handshake**

This is similar, but more abstract. Ask people to again meet someone new and introduce themselves. Tell them to create a passion based on their two handshakes. This will take some creativity for pairs to figure out how to showcase a passion with the physical nature of a handshake. Again, ask people to share any funny ones.

- **Share a sound from your childhood**

Again, find a new partner from somewhere else in the room. Do introductions and have each partner share a sound from their childhood. You have to make the sound. You can't just describe it. You have to at least try making the noise before describing why that sound has stuck with you and what it means.

- **Party planner: “yes but,” “yes and”**

This one has a great message and is quite easy to do. Organize the room into groups of 3–7 people. Tell them that it is their job to plan a party, but whenever someone says a new idea, another group member has to say “yes, but” and explain why it’s a bad idea.

Person A: “Let’s have a party on a boat.”

Person B: “Yes, but that’s dangerous and expensive.”

Let this go on for 1–2 minutes. Then, get everyone’s attention and say that now whenever someone says a new idea, another person has to say, “Yes, and” and build off the last idea.

Person C: “Let’s have a party on the beach.”

Person D: “Yes, and let’s have free tropical drinks!”

After 1–2 minutes, bring everyone back and ask how the first session felt. Compare those emotions to how the second prompt felt.

There are many different takeaways from this activity. Saying “yes, but” kills ideas, it makes people not want to share, it’s negative etc... Saying “yes, and” generates lots of ideas, it’s positive, everyone is more willing to contribute, everyone feels accepted etc... It’s your job as the facilitator to discuss the takeaways relevant to your audience.

- **Mirror your partner**

Everyone partners up and stands facing each other. Pick one person to be person A and the other to be person B. When you say “go,” person A will start moving and person B will have to mirror their motions. After 30 seconds or so, tell them to switch jobs. Now person B will be leading and person A will be mirroring.

Keep shouting “switch” every 15 seconds or so. Then call it every 10 seconds. Then every 5 seconds. Then keep shouting switch continuously. The participants should be lost, but they should still be moving and mirroring. The goal is for them to be in sync while it’s unclear who is leading. That is the takeaway message from this activity.

- **Mindfulness**

Here’s an amazing video to kick this off:

Once people have an understanding of mindfulness. Show this video:

Explain to the group that it might be a little awkward to sit here and breath, but that it’s necessary. Mindfulness is so important. This exercise is especially relevant if the crowd has been very busy all day. It’s a great way to calm everyone down and re-focus them.

- **Gratitude**

Make sure everyone has paper and something to write with. Ask them “What are you most grateful for recently?” Have them write for a few minutes about this. Gratitude puts people in better moods.

Depending on your feel for the room, ask them to share with their small groups to build connections and get them talking about unexpected topics.

- **Sentence completion activity**

This was my favorite activity that we did at Google HQ when I learned how to give workshops. It requires the right pretext. The people should have met recently, and worked together for part of the day on which you’re doing the activity. When done correctly, this gets people to go deep with each other and form connections that are very powerful in just a short period of time.

This is best done in groups of 4–6. Emphasize that every person should answer every question! Deliver these in order, and move along when most groups in the room have answered a given prompt.

What you probably don’t know about me...

If I could only eat one food for a year...

Most memorable Halloween costume...

I'm happiest when...

Best compliment I've ever received...

When I'm new to a group I tend to...

Something I don't realize about myself...

Most valuable insight...

Right now I'm feeling...

What my inner critic says the most is...

What I'm appreciating most about you all is...

What I most want to say before we end this activity...

- **Feeling alive**

This is a weird, but fun activity that I learned at the Stanford d.school. Ask everyone to stand up and tap their own feet. Tell them to slowly move up their shins, making sure they're tapping every inch of their body on the way. Move up the body until they're tapping their arms, shoulders, neck and head. The whole thing should take about a minute.

At the end, ask how everyone feels. The most common response is, "alive." All the tapping makes your skin tingle. It's funny, but it also invigorating. This is a great activity to do

when people have been sitting for a long time and they need a quick break.

- **Count to three with partner as fast as possible (ta-da!)**

This is another one of my favorites. Have people stand up and find a partner from the other part of the room. Their job is to count to three as fast as possible while alternating who says each number. Example:

Person A: 1

Person B: 2

Person A: 3

Person B: 1

This goes on infinitely. Encourage them to go faster and faster and pay attention to what happens when people fail. There are two possibilities: they laugh or they cringe.

Now, replace the 1 with a clap and tell people that whenever their team messes up, they have look each other in the eyes, put their hands over their head and yell “Ta-da!”

People aren’t going to want to do this because it’s awkward, but you have to make them. They might go slower so they don’t mess up. Encourage them to go faster. The whole point of this game is to mess up. Replace the 2 with

a snap to make the game harder. Finally, replace the 3 with a stomp.

At the end, ask people how it feels to celebrate failure. Discuss the importance of moving on quickly rather than dwelling.

- **Pictures not words—writing alphabet and creating images**

Think of colorful flowers. What are you picturing in your mind? Tulips, orchids, sunflowers? Whatever you're thinking of, you probably aren't imagining the letters C-O-L-O-R-F-U-L F-L-O-W-E-R-S. That's because humans think in visuals! So why not communicate with images more often?

Most people don't think of themselves as artists, but maybe they've never had the right instruction. For this workshop, choose some simple icons, and break them down into simple shapes and have the audience draw along with you.



This is a great activity to do leading into a visual brainstorm to get people thinking more creatively.

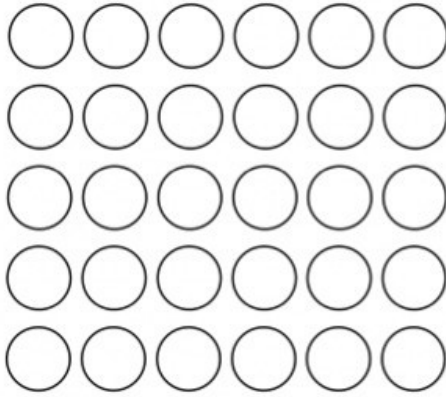
- **Draw person across from you in 30 seconds, share with them**

This comes from [Tim Brown's Ted Talk](#). It's embarrassing, but it helps us get over our fear of sharing our work. No wonder it's bad, you only had 30 seconds to do it!

It's a great way to put people out of their comfort zone, get a few laughs and make people start interacting with each other.

- **30 Circles Challenge**

30 Circles Challenge



To do this exercise, everyone needs one of these sheets, or just a piece of paper and you will tell them to draw thirty circles. Everyone has 90 seconds to fill in all thirty circles. It doesn't have to look good or be anything meaningful. You just have to transform them from blank circles.

This exercise forces people to get over a wall of self-judgment. It's a divergent thinking challenge. The better we are at divergent thinking, the more creative we will be.

- **Playing Pictionary**

This game is so underrated. People laugh, compete and enjoy playing. It gets the energy up and starts things off on a good note.

You don't need much to play this at a workshop. You don't even need the cards, all you need is this [word generator website](#). As long as participants have paper and a writing utensil, you can play. I suggest groups of 3–6 people.

There are a few great lessons in this game: Forcing everyone to draw encourages psychological safety and shows that everyone can be an artist. There's a tendency for people to circle their drawing repeatedly when people are guessing wrong. This doesn't work! People need more information because their brains don't know what you know. This lesson is crucial for anyone who is trying to communicate new ideas.

- **Conversation starters**

Ask each person to write down their best conversation starting question. After a few minutes, ask them to share each question and discuss in their small group of 3–6 people.

Depending on how much time you have, you can ask them to pass the group's favorite question along to an adjacent table.

This an easy way to get people talking about meaningful topics without it feeling forced by the facilitator.

- **Unanswered questions**

This is similar to the previous activator, but the prompt is slightly different. Ask people to answer the question: What is your favorite unanswered questions out there? Maybe it's "What is the meaning of life?" "Is there life in outer space?"

Give people time to think of a question and then discuss it with their groups.

- **60 second story**

Simple: Tell a 60 second story about why you're in the field that you're in. Make sure that participants tell a story and don't just give an overview of generic events. A story includes a specific moment in which the character changed.

This is a great way to ease people into being more comfortable sharing about themselves and public speaking.

- **Group Mindmap**

This requires whiteboards, blackboards, sticky notes or pieces of paper on the walls. Start with a prompt. For example, "How might we reduce food waste in America?"

Call on a few people to start categories of the mindmap. Consumer, legal, technological, societal, etc... Once you have a few categories up, let people walk around and contribute as they see fit.

You should end up with each category looking something like this.

This is a great way to figure out what is important to your audience. You can then cater your workshop more toward their needs.

- **How space influences our mindsets**

If you're in a new space that is new to people and inspires creativity, ask them to spend 5 minutes exploring it. They should get out of their seats and walk around. They must come back with a few observations about how the physical space influences how we think and feel.

Share these observations with the small group and end with a brief discussion on the importance of physical space.

For more activators, check out the [Stanford d.school's Stoke Deck](#).

These activators are adaptable. Your work might not be in a room set up for groups of 4–6 people. That's okay. There are variations that you could do in auditoriums, standing crowds and everything in between.

The activator is meant to get people engaged, energized and ready for the next steps. In most of the activities outlined above, I've

included some information about what your debrief should sound like after the activity. Remember to debrief the activator in order to reinforce understanding and prepare people for the rest workshop.

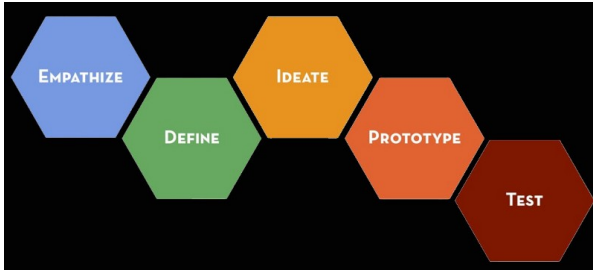
Content + Activities

If you've performed an activator and debriefed it, it's time to introduce your content and activity.

The content you use depends on your audience and your workshop. Your content might be a two minute speech about a new idea, a 20 minute TED talk, or a power point that you've prepared.

The content is what you advertise as the meat of the workshop. It's the promise to the attendee: If you come to this workshop, you will learn, practice, experience _____.

Example: You're running a workshop on design thinking for architecture students. The activator might ask people to explore the space and start thinking about how space encourages creativity. Your debrief explains the importance of physical space when planning a creative space. The content has to actually explain design thinking. You should probably show this image outlining the steps of the process:



The steps in the design thinking process

Once you've explained what design thinking means and how it can be applied to the specific subject of architecture, it's time to do an activity. The activity should reinforce understanding of this five-step process through some kind of design challenge. The scope of your challenge is dependent on how much time you have. If you have thirty minutes for an activity, the design challenge might involve sketching out concepts for a more creative room. If you're running a weeklong camp, the prompt could be: how might we design government buildings that are more conducive to creativity? Over the course of the week, students would have time to visit buildings, interview the users and start working on prototypes.

Above is just one way to do content and an activity. I can't be as prescriptive in this section because these items rely on what you've chosen as your topic and emotional goal.

In general, the activity should take longer than the content. Perhaps a good rule of thumb would be at least twice as long. If you have 10 minutes of content, you should let people work uninterrupted for at least 20 minutes. Of course you can walk around during this time to make sure everyone is on track and answer any questions. Just don't stop people working to make some announcement about more content you think would be useful.

Remember the the goal of the activity is for the attendee to learn by doing. Be careful stepping in an correcting people at every step of the process. You know how to do the activity well, but they do not. Too much guidance takes away from the experiential learning.

Save the corrections for the debrief. People will recognize where they went wrong and will be less likely to make the same mistakes again.

During my time at the Stanford d.school, I did an design challenge in a group of eight other people. We spent WAY too much defining the problem and ideating. By the end of the hour we had to work, we barely had a working prototype. I learned a lot from that experience. Despite all the knowledge I had of design thinking, we failed to utilize it in that hour. It's hard to make decisions to

move forward when you have many different opinions. I recognize the mistakes we made and know not to make them again.

If someone had told me in the moment that we needed to move on, I wouldn't have felt the same at the end of the project. I wouldn't have experienced the emotion of failure and the lesson would have been much less memorable.

It's okay to let people fail at your activity. Perfect execution probably means they didn't learn much. Failure in your workshop will help them learn so they don't fail when they're on their own. It's by no means a reflection of your facilitation (as long as you have a good debrief).

Debrief + Summary

A professor at the Stanford d.school once said to me, "An activity is only as good as its debrief."

Your debrief needs to explain what your participants have learned. It should highlight the main lesson throughout the entirety of the workshop. Again, I can't be prescriptive here because your debrief will depend on your topic and emotional goal.

It's generally good to ask the participants questions about the workshop to hear firsthand what they felt from the session. Ask

them how it felt to do the activity. Ask them about what they learned today. Ask them how they'll take what they've learned and apply it to their lives or work.

Your debrief closes the loop of the day. Your summary highlights a thread that runs through more than just today's workshop.

Your summary should give participants a take-away. A way to use what they've learned when they go home. It could be a habit to practice every day. It could be a different way to look at creative problems. Maybe it's a handout to keep whenever they're unsure what to do next. Your takeaway will help make the workshop memorable and meaningful in eyes of your attendees.

This structure described above is perfect for a session that is 30–90 ish minutes. When the time period is longer, you will have to nest these different components within each other. If you're doing a day long workshop about design thinking, you will have to time to do separate activities on each step in the process. That's totally fine. The structure is not the only way to run a great session. This outline provides way for you to conceptualize this vague thing we call a workshop.

Key Principles to Keep in Mind

- **Making people feel safe**

People won't learn if you don't feel psychological safety. Fear of judgment is debilitating. You need make sure attendees respect the ideas shared during your session. There will be no criticizing creative work. All ideas are respected.

We NEED this psychological safety in order for people to take risks. When people take creative risks and walk away unscathed, they start to believe in themselves again.

- **Make people uncomfortable**

We've all been at a lecture that is too slow. The content isn't new, we're bored, so we don't pay attention. People don't learn when they're in their comfort zone. We need to take a risk and escape our daily routine in order to learn something new. Pushing people outside their comfort zone also protects against boredom as people stay engaged in an effort to return to comfort.

Luckily, it's easy to make people uncomfortable in your workshops. Most of us avoid public speaking, meeting new people, taking creative risks and working on problems that don't have defined answers. Do some of these things.

- **Everyone is involved**

Boredom and lack of engagement is one of the biggest problems in the lecture model of education. We need several principles in place to make sure our workshops are engaging as many audience members as possible.

Ideally, you want groups of 3–5 people to form a small group. The smaller the group, the harder it is for people to hide. Group size doesn't solve all of our problems, though. Your activities need to be designed in such a way that everyone is involved. Rock paper scissors biggest fan is a great game because when you lose, you still cheer. So at every moment during the game, every person is engaged in the fun.

- **Working as a group**

Group work is important because people want to meet others at live events. It's not sufficient to allow 30 minutes for "networking" at the beginning and then lecture for the rest of the time. That's a lazy way to check off the "connections" box on your list.

Working with a group allows people to meet each other in a more natural situation. It's easier to talk to one another. There's no pressure to go interrupt someone or make a

first impression because you know you'll be sitting in this group for the next half hour. You naturally get to know each other through the course of your work. The result is a seamless, and more meaningful way to "network."

- **Random mechanisms**

You don't want people working with their friends. Sorry. It doesn't work that well. People are less willing to share new information, they're embarrassed and they are much more likely to refuse to do work and talk about their crazy night last weekend. But this isn't elementary school when you can separate Johnny and Jimmy because they talk too much together. This is a workshop full of people that you don't know.

The best thing you can do is to use some random way to create groups. You can number people off, or use playing cards. You can get creative and put special color dots on name tags, or give everyone a certain color rubber band. You could put name tags on certain seats and require people sit there.

Whatever you do, present the appearance of randomness and fairness in your selection mechanism. This should be a seamless aspect of the workshop design, but it's crucial in ensuring that people make valuable connections.

People will talk to their friends unless they're forced not to. Some people at your session might not have friends and that sucks. Suddenly your workshop is a popularity contest. Use a random mechanism to put everyone on a level playing field. Give everyone an equal opportunity to make connections and meet new people.

- **Reflection**

Ask people to think about the different things they've learned and experienced during your session. Reflection is so simple. It only takes a couple minutes, but no one makes the time to do it.

When you're in charge of the schedule, you have the power to create a reflective environment. Have people write, share or discuss their thoughts to reinforce learning.

- **You need to be adaptable**

As a facilitator, none of your workshops will go as planned. I think one of the alluring things about a lecture is that you can speak for 45 minutes uninterrupted and replicate that same experience no matter where you are. Workshops are the opposite. They're entirely dependent on how the audience interacts with the material.

If there's a discussion question on each table and people are making great conversation,

don't cut them off because you wrote "2 mins discussion" for your activator. On the flip-side, if something is a dud, be quick to move on. Don't worry about not having enough content for your time allotment. It always takes longer to clean up than expected. You can always give them more time for the activity. People never get to leave early, so if your workshop ends before your time, they will be excited to have the extra few minutes in their day.

- **Fun!**

In most cases, people will automatically have fun because they're doing instead of listening. Let them talk to each other. They came to this event to meet people and learn together.

If your workshop isn't fun, throw in a good energizer. The activators can be used at any time during the workshop if you feel like the mood is down. I wouldn't repeat the same exercise, but keep another in your back pocket just in case your crowd needs one.

- **Looping back**

You want your workshop to feel well-designed to the audience. It instills a notion of trust in them that everything you do, is done for a reason. The more people trust you and do your activities, the better results you will end up getting.

At the end of the workshop, find a lesson from your activator that you can relate back to the theme of the day. Say you played Pictionary as an activator and your workshop was about design thinking in architecture. At the end of the session, make sure you mention that the idea behind Pictionary is to sketch and communicate ideas. This is crucial in the design thinking process because a sketch can serve as a prototype that you can use to receive feedback.

Making the explicit connection between a (seemingly) silly activity and a serious learning objective is impressive. It helps people realize the depth of your thought in designing every minute of the workshop. This helps participants learn more and encourages them to value your work.

My Go-To Workshop

If this is all sounding too abstract and difficult, never fear. I will give you this workshop that can steal. I typically give it in about 45 minutes, but there are countless ways to modify it to fit shorter or longer sessions.

Workshop topic: Ideation

Emotional goals: Empowered and creative

Activator: Party planner

I mentioned this above, but I'll put it again here for the sake of convenience.

Organize the room into groups of 3–7 people. It's best to do this by some random mechanism like numbering them off, or handing out playing cards. They can be standing or sitting. Explain that it is their job to plan a party, but whenever someone says a new idea, another group member has to say “yes, but” and explain why it's a bad idea. Give an example:

Person A: “Let's have a party on a boat.”

Person B: “Yes, but that's dangerous and expensive.”

Say go! Let this go on for 1–2 minutes. Then, get everyone's attention and say that now whenever someone says a new idea, another person has to say, “Yes, and” and build off the last idea. Give an example:

Person C: “Let's have a party on the beach.”

Person D: “Yes, and let's have free tropical drinks!”

After 1–2 minutes, end the session and call everyone back to standing or sitting.

Brief Debrief: Creative Culture

Ask how the first section felt. Compare those emotions to how the second prompt felt. Solicit some responses and then add your own take on what the takeaway from the activity is.

There are countless possibilities. I like to emphasize this concept of creative culture. This means how we're encouraging creativity in our groups, in our classes and in ourselves. Saying "yes, but" kills ideas, it makes people not want to share, it's negative. Saying "yes, and" generates lots of ideas, it's positive, everyone is more willing to contribute, everyone feels accepted.

We say "yes, but" in our heads without even knowing it. We kill our own ideas because we're overly judgmental of them. The first step of creative culture is believing in your own creative ability.

With that debrief done, it's time to move on to the content of the presentation.

Content: Divergent, the rules of brainstorming, the line of judgment and convergent thinking

How do you generate new ideas? This is a question that puzzles us, but it's much simpler than we think.

All you need to do is think divergently.

Divergent thinking is coming up with many possible solutions to a given problem.

It goes against much of what we've learned throughout our education. In school we're asked what the answer to 3×2 is. That is a convergent problem. We are selecting the one correct answer. Instead, imagine you were asked what two numbers could be multiplied to get 24. You have numerous possibilities: 12 and 2, 3 and 8, 6 and 4, 1 and 24, 48 and .5, etc...

We're all plenty good at convergent thinking. We took years of math and learned the hard way that there is one right answer on exams. We struggle with divergent thinking because there are no right answers.

In a few minutes, you will initiate a divergent thinking brainstorm.

Since this concept is foreign, we have to agree upon some ground rules to make sure the brainstorm goes well and we generate new ideas. The four rules of brainstorming are:

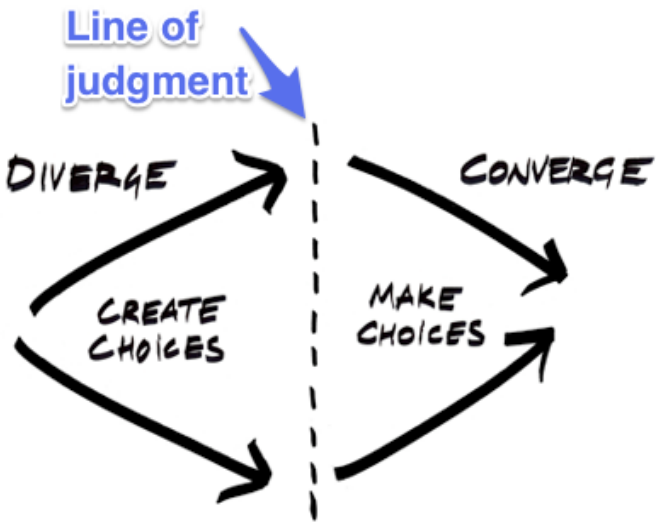
- No judgement is allowed
- Think of the wildest ideas possible
- Quantity is more important than quality
- Build off of other ideas

None of these things come naturally. There are objections galore. Here are a few: If we always deferred judgment we would never get anything done! Crazy ideas aren't realistic! Good ideas are worth more than bad ones! My ideas are great, but no one else supports me!

None of these are important. They're all true, but they're missing the point. The point is that in the early stages all ideas are equal. They're undeveloped and fragile. If we impose these limitations on them, we're not going to end up with better outcomes, we're going to end up with discouraged people who are struggling to be creative. If you hear these objections to the divergent thinking process, say "you're right, just wait a little bit and then we'll worry about being realistic and getting things done."

The Line of Judgment

The line of judgment is what makes this whole process work. When we enforce judgment immediately after an idea is said, we get the party planner situation when everyone is saying "yes, but." No good ideas came out of that session. Divergent thinking creates lots of ideas as long as we honor the line of judgment. During the divergent thinking process, we say "yes, and."



Show this image to the group

At some point, divergent thinking needs to end, and we need to start making decisions. That's where we draw the line of judgment. Before that line, no judgment is allowed. After that line, you may now use logic and reason to pick the best ideas.

This last step is called convergent thinking. It involves selecting the best option from all of the ideas you have generated. It's important to emphasize that you don't have to choose one single idea in this phase. The best ideas are often a combination of several different ones.

That content should take about five minutes to cover and concludes that section of the workshop.

Activity: Perfect world storming

This is an activity that I got from my friend Jordan Gonzalez. We ran Entrepreneurship Club meetings together every Wednesday night at the University of Delaware for two years.

Each group needs something to write on and a writing utensil. You can use sticky notes, giant pieces of paper, whiteboards, chalkboards or anything else, preferably not a laptop or cell phone, though.

Encourage attendees to envision all of the aspects of their perfect world. What does it look like in the morning? What does it look like at school? What does the perfect city, town, supermarket look like? Following the rules of brainstorming, give the groups 5 minutes to come up with as many different pieces to their perfect world as possible.

During the time, walk around and help teams. Give them random ideas. Remind them to build off the ideas of others and that quantity is more important than quality right now. Remember that no judgment of any kind should be happening. If you hear people

saying “no,” or “well,” or “but,” remind them that no idea is a bad idea right now.

At the end of this time, ask the teams to count up how many ideas they came up with. Inevitably there will be groups that only come up with 10 ideas because they “only came up with good ones.” Kindly remind them that quantity is the goal by acknowledging the team that came up with the most ideas.

Next, you will bring judgment back into the picture. Give teams five minutes to discuss the ideas, combine where necessary and start to narrow down their options. Explain to them that no ideas are owned by a person. There isn't John's idea for an air purifier, or Kelsey's idea for a safe water straw. All ideas are the team's.

When the options are narrowed down, give the teams one minute to do a silent vote. Each group member gets to cast two votes on the idea that they think is the best. This way we can converge on an idea while ensuring that everyone's vote is heard. When you do an oral vote, it's easy for the loud people to overpower the quiet ones. This is not good. We need to create an environment where the best ideas win, not where the best debaters win.

Depending on how much time you have, you can let teams diverge again on ways to start

making the idea happen. Say they've converged on the fact that in a perfect world, there would be no disease. Now we need to think divergently about what small steps we could take to make this happen. You can diverge and converge again, or you can simply explain what this process would look like.

The important part is that we came up with lots of different ideas, everyone contributed to the process, and any of the ideas are the basis for a world-changing innovation.

Debrief: Everyone is creative + We need creative culture

There are a few ways you can take this debrief. I like to highlight the fact that everyone is creative. Coming up with new ideas isn't some magical process. New ideas come from the hard work of having bad ideas. When we think divergently and work together, we have more bad ideas and thus we arrive at the good ideas.

Sometimes ideas are like dirty laundry. You're looking for that one good pair of shorts you own, but it's at the bottom of the whole pile. You end up having to throw off all these bad pieces of laundry just to get to the one you were looking for. Same goes for ideas. You have to go through a lot of bad ideas in order to land on a few good ones.

Creative culture is important. If you're in a group, a company or a classroom that says "yes, but" all of the time, no one is will have new ideas. It's too negative an environment and people won't risk being creative.

Remember how bad that felt during the party planner game? As students and leaders, it's our job to create cultures that say "yes, and."

We can also encourage creative culture by deferring judgment. Next time your team needs to come up with a new idea, set a timer a divergent think. Go over the rules of brainstorming so everyone is on the same page. Set aside five minutes to go crazy! If you follow this process, you will come up with more and better ideas. It's also fun and empowers everyone to believe in their own creativity.

Summary: you have the power to make this happen!

Today we learned how to come up with lots of ideas. In just 45 minutes you all started down the path of solving important world problems. It may not feel like you've made progress yet, but identifying an issue and starting to think of solutions is a huge first step that we all took today.

The job of the entrepreneur is to see these problems and create a sustainable solution to solve them.

The amazing thing is, you all have the power to be that entrepreneur. Anyone can start blogging on medium.com. Anyone can start an Instagram page raising awareness about your cause. Anyone can create a Facebook group to connect local change-makers like you.

None of these problems are going to solve themselves. The world changes slowly but surely when people are willing to stand up and take action. It all starts with a simple idea, and you all have one now.

There is a better way to convey new information and help people learn. Let's use it.