NOW GO CREATE

Problem solving workshop (aka brainstorm cheat sheet)

> 66 *The untrained, leading the unwilling, to do the unnecessary* 99
>
> Now Go Create facilitator, Anahita Milligan on a poorly-run brainstorm

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The issue: You need ideas, and you need them now. But your team is dispersed, or maybe just dismayed at the thought of yet another Zoom-fest. But life's too short to stare at a blank page or watch idea tumbleweed float across the (virtual) room.

Have no fear, here at **Now Go Create** we've planned and facilitated hundreds of creative sessions and we've messed up, mis-timed and dealt with the nay-sayers so you don't have to. To help, we've created a nifty done-the-thinking-for-you template and some of our go-to creativity tools to help you catalyse your colleagues best-thinking.

This is a little taster of the materials that accompany our new e-learning modules - find out more at *nowgocreate.learningcart.com.*

> 66 *Fail to prepare, prepare to fail* 99

| ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFO	
PREPARATION (25 MINUTES) See 1 and 2 in our mini e-learning	Pre-session prep for the host/faciltator By yourself or with key client stakeholder.	Host should prepare a focussed brief for the session, a condensed version of the internal/ client / stakeholder brief and send around any required pre-reads, insights or contexts to participants. This will allow everyone to get their heads 'in the game' before the session. Allowing for a bit of noodling and digestion time. This could be a snappy one-liner as an inviting question e.g: How might we... In what ways might we... Dave Trott's Twitter brief can be helpful here - can you get your brief into a life or death question in under 280 characters? Avoid jargon, cliches and using the same old language or question you usually use. Have some ambition in there. You could paint a vision of the future by asking..wouldn't it be amazing if?....	Host to share this question at least half a day before the workshop. Get buy-in on the question from any key stakeholders or decision-makers. You could even host a 10 minute briefing the day before your session to give people a bit more time to digest and ask any Q&A's. Get yourself in a 'great state to create' – if you're not feeling like getting your creative groove on then how can you expect anyone else to? Check in with what **you** need physically, mentally, emotionally. If you need to rest, rest, if you need to get on the rebounder channelling Tony Robbins do that. My never-fail energiser before a session is to switch off the cameras on Zoom, put on your favourite track, and dance like no-one is watching. Check out our before a session **Great State To Create module** if you need more like this! You'll find our never-fail state changers are your new game-changers!

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INTRODUCTION	Welcome your participants into the workshop	Briefly explain the purpose of the workshop is to try and solve a particular challenge. Have the goal written clearly where participants can see it for the whole session. If you've already agreed your 'How to' or 'Wouldn't it be amazing if's' then share those too.	This is also a good opportunity to share any ground rules for the workshop: phones, breaks, deferring judgement, etc.
GREAT STATE TO CREATE See #3 in our mini e-learning	Get everyone in a great frame of mind & engaging with the topic	You may also wish to start with a quick, fun/informative activity (aka an icebreaker, energizer or warm-up) to break the ice with a group or team. E.g. "Stand up if…. or sit down if… you then make a series of statements….if you've had breakfast, if you're a dog lover, if you believe in the tooth fairy, etc	Google one of those 'on a scale of'…images. We love using 'on a scale of Prince', 'on a scale of Thor, hedgehog cake, Marvel – you get the gist. This is a super-fast ice breaker that can be used with any team and works on or offine! Or ask the group to do something associated with the topic beforehand - visit a retailer, try the product, speak to a customer. See e-learning for more insights, ideas & guidance and check out the **Great State To Create module** for more.
FACT-FINDING	Review insights	Naïve expert - invite someone in to speak to the group about the subject, or something related to it. You could invite a consumer to talk about their experiences – perhaps a super-fan or detractor for an alternative point of view.	Invite participants to use the product or undertake the activity you're talking about The host can ask them questions. Take notes whilst the interviewees speak. Capture all the observations on a shared whiteboard or similar. You could use **Candor** for this.
ENCOURAGE DIVERGENT THINKING	Explore many options and keep an open mind	Facilitate without judging the ideas - go for quantity.	Check out Nancy Kline's Time To Think principles and join one of our **Facilitation Ninja Workshops**
IDEA GENERATION See #4 in our mini e-learning for more guidance	Related worlds	This is one of our favourites to seek inspiration from any and everywhere in different 'worlds' to give you a fresh perspective on your challenge. Someone , somewhere has had your problem if you can just get it to a great question where another world becomes obvious.	So 'how to build a high-performing team' means we might go to a trophy winning team in rugby or football and see what we can learn. Or how about 'how to sell more x' becomes about to make something desirable - off to Tinder or Chanel or Apple for inspiration. Our **How To Build An Idea module** has all this covered for more facilitation tips & tricks.
GATHER INFO & REFLECT	Use Candor **www.usecandor.com** A brilliant online brainstorming tool designed to combat bias and hierarchy	Candor is a tool that sets out to "decouple" the generation of ideas from the evaluation of those ideas. It's a clever way to ensure that you don't kill an idea before it's at least had its chance to progress and is also excellent for making sure that everyone's ideas are heard, as participants are asked to do some thinking in advance.	Use it here to gather your thoughts and spend 10-15 minutes quietly and individually reflecting and inputting your favourite ideas. Brainstorm individually then share and build in pairs before sharing back with all.

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ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFO	
REVIEW	Paired discussion	Breakout into pairs and discuss the ideas you've selected and why. Build on each other's ideas. Riff in pairs inspired by what you've seen and heard. Bring your key observations back to the meeting having started to apply your criteria.	Introverts will love you for including this 'silent' ideation and as facilitator you can regroup. If you do this in person you can create a wall of post-its and begin to theme or group them as makes sense.
ACTION PLAN	Make it real - be clear on the next steps and who is responsible.	Online whiteboards and templates often have a section where you can allocate actions and update ideas.	Find a simple template **here on our blog**
DECIDE/VOTE See #5 in our mini e-learning for more how-tos	Use Candor **www.usecandor.com** A remote friendly variation on dot voting.	Invite your team to review the shared document containing all of your initial ideas and comment on those they believe you should move forward with/develop. Enable the group to come to a consensus on possible solutions in an online environment.	Candor will even send you the ideas in an email. This exercise allows people to have an opinion anonymously if you/they want so voting is less biased and not to please the HIPPO (highest paid person in the organisation). Try MURAL templates and whiteboards to help you facilitate remotely.
CLOSE OUT	One breath/one word feedback	Each participant has just one breath to share their final thoughts. That's around 20-25 seconds. Online you can ask people to summarise their feelings/take-outs in just one word in the chat.	As the facilitator you acknowledge everyone's contribution and verbalise feelings and actions.
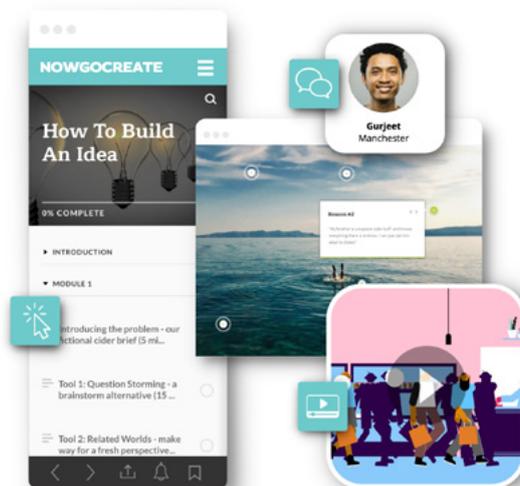
*If you like the approach and tools in this template you'll love our **new e-learning** which will help you and your teams develop the mindset and toolkit for great workshops!*

*Try using the cheat sheet alongside our mini e-learning course **Collaborate and brainstorm like a pro** for more tips and ideas on how to facilitate any workshop better! Your empty and editable planner follows...*

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Over to you!

ACTIVITY	YOUR ACTIVITY PLAN HERE
INTRODUCTION	
GREAT STATE TO CREATE	
FACT-FINDING	
ENCOURAGE DIVERGENT THINKING	
IDEA GENERATION	
GATHER INFO & REFLECT	
REVIEW	
ACTION PLAN	
DECIDE/VOTE	
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