CHAPTER

Brainstorming

Where do all those crazy ideas come from?

You’ve got the creative brief that outlines the parameters of the job. You’ve done some preliminary research to help wrap your head around your assignment, and you’ve checked out what other people have done on the subject. Now after all of this information gathering, you’ve got lots of random thoughts and ideas rolling around in your head. Slowly, your brain begins to make connections. You’re out getting your 3:00 p.m. wake-me-up coffee and the shape of the foam on your skinny vanilla latte inspires a visual treatment. You’re eating lunch with coworkers at a local bistro and hear a song that makes you think of headlines. The initial information has been processed in your mind and is being transformed into different forms. Images begin to form. Words and messaging come together. It’s time to brainstorm.

Brainstorming: A ubiquitous word that is used by so many different people, that it feels as if it has been part of the process of creative thinking since the beginning of time—and from the standpoint of advertising, maybe it has. In reality, it hasn’t been around that long. In 1942, Alex Faickney Osborn, one of the founders of BBDO published a book titled How to “Think Up” in which he presented the technique of brainstorming—something that was being uniquely used at BBDO as part of their ideation process. The term “brainstorm” was popularized by Osborn in 1953 book Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem Solving. ¹ Maybe other agencies were “brainstorming” but using


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a different term to describe their ideation process, maybe they weren’t. Since Osborn was the first to publicize the technique, he gets the credit for its creation. Now brainstorming is done in virtually all industries when individuals or groups are trying to come up with creative solutions to problems.

Brainstorming is a creativity exercise in which individuals or groups of people gather together to generate a list of ideas spontaneously and in rapid succession with the goal of trying to find solutions to a specific problem. Many believe—as do I—that brainstorming is a skill that can be developed. To be successful, you must be prepared to throw out ideas that may or may not be fully formed and be willing to risk criticism and rejection. You can work alone or in a group. Brainstorming can be done in a day or it could take several days. The bottom line is you need to be able to generate ideas and allow them to bloom into something viable.

Now the fun begins.

Capturing Ideas

Whether you decide to go the old-fashioned route with a notepad or sketchbook or go digital with a program like Evernote, it is very important that you keep a record of your ideas, whether it’s in the form of scribbles or written notes. There are a number of reasons to keep your brainstorm notes.

First, keeping a record is a great way to see how you evolve as a creative thinker. When you go back to older books, you can see how your thought process has changed over time. Second, it provides a place that you can refer to when you need a creative boost. I have found that sometimes going back through my old books can help spark a new idea. Third, you can use your notes and sketches as a way to get everything out of your head. Sometimes writing things down and getting them out of your head is a way to clear the path for newer, better ideas. There are any number of reasons that you should keep a book of your brainstorming. I have a stack of hardbound sketchbooks from years of scribbles and brainstorming. Once you determine you want to keep track of your sketches and brainstorm, there are several ways to keep your notes safe and orderly: sketchbooks, project folders, and project binders.

Sketchbook

The sketchbook is the perfect place to put all of your ideas and inspiration. This is my absolute “go-to” method of recording. I recommend you carry a sketchbook at all times. It should be attached to you like a tattoo on your skin.

Sketchbooks come in various sizes—from small books that fit in your pocket to large 11×17-inch books. When considering sketchbooks, there are various brands, sizes, styles, covers, and paper stocks for you to choose. As a matter
of fact, there are even several subscription-based sketchbook programs available that will deliver a new sketchbook right to your doorstep every month. You simply need to select the one that works best for you.

Once you’ve selected a book, it may take you some time to get used to carrying and using it. Until it becomes a habit, it’s very easy to forget. It may feel like it’s just one more thing that you’ll have to carry around with you to work, home, the grocery store, the movies, on dates (Ok, maybe not on dates. I’ll give you a break on that one.), pretty much everywhere you go. You should strive to carry your sketchbook with you as much as possible because—like it or not—you can’t plan when you will be hit by inspiration. Sometimes ideas won’t come to you during a scheduled time or there will be times that you start ideating with a blank piece of paper and end with a blank piece of paper.

Your sketchbook is your safe place. Write down everything. Draw in it, develop thumbnail sketches, take notes, make a shopping list, doodle during your meetings (Figure 5-1). Tape reference material from magazines or other printed materials on the pages. Don’t worry about what it looks like. You aren’t creating a sketchbook for anyone’s approval. You don’t ever have to show the pages to anyone. It’s yours and yours alone.

![Figure 5-1](image.png)

Figure 5-1. No matter which writing utensil you use, get your ideas down in a sketchbook.

Project Folder

If you don’t want to always carry around a sketchbook (shame on you), that’s fine. The next best thing you can do is create a project folder for all of your projects or clients. This can be a dump folder where you place all your meeting notes, scribbles, or random ephemera that you collect for inspiration.
If this is the route you choose, get in the habit of collecting things that inspire you and saving them so you can add them to the folder and have access to them when you are ready to begin brainstorming.

**Project Binder**

Something that works for larger projects is a project binder. The binder helps you keep large amounts of information organized. Honestly, I have never tried this technique (I’m more of a Moleskine or sketchbook guy), but workmates of mine swear by it. They use a three-ring binder to hold any materials that are considered relevant to the project. From scribbles and notes to e-mails and vendor invoices, the project binder becomes the ultimate holder of project or client information. For items too small or large to punch holes in, try dropping them into acetate sleeves that drop into the binder for safe keeping. Because the binder will get very large, you will need to organize it in a coherent manner so you can refer to it in the future.

Utilizing tabs and breaking the binder up into sections is a great way to organize it. You can start with a section that contains the creative brief and any notes that you jotted down during the meetings that initiated the project. The next section could be filled with images for your reference. From images grabbed from websites to copies or scans of books and magazines, this section can be filled with all of the items that will spark your imagination. A third section could be filled with all of the scribbles (thumbnail sketches) that you create to work through your process. The fourth section can hold all of the mock-ups that you create. Initial logos, brochure comps, billboard mock-ups, or TV storyboards can fill this section. There could be a fifth and final section that holds the final, approved creative. This last section is the icing on the cake: something you can use when you are working with junior staffers to show them how to work through the creative process.

**Ground Rules**

Before I go into detail about brainstorming, let’s go over a few ground rules for both the leader of the brainstorm session and the participants. If these are followed, the brainstorm will be both easier to get started and more enjoyable for everyone. Remember, nobody likes to brainstorm in a room full of crickets.

**Rule 1—Inspired Location**

If at all possible, avoid holding brainstorming sessions in locations that lack personality and comfort. You and your team will only be inspired when you feel comfortable and nourished. Several characteristics of a creative location are as follows:
Leading Creative Teams 61

- It’s fun, comfortable, physically enjoyable, and stimulating.
- It’s a safe environment for the team to throw out ideas.
- It’s well lit.
- It’s not overly distracting.

If you happen to work in an environment that has all of these characteristics, fantastic! If not, try to find locations where you and your creative team can hold frequent brainstorm sessions. Find a place that inspires creativity. I have held brainstorm in local coffee shops, on the lawn at a museum, in the gallery of a museum, or even while walking around downtown San Antonio. It doesn’t matter where. The only thing that matters is that you are in a safe place that gets your people talking and sharing ideas.

Why is it important to have a safe place to brainstorm? Anyone who has achieved success as a creative leader will say that their success hinged on self-confidence and no fear of failure. Because they felt they could work confidently, they were comfortable taking risks. Their risk taking is the fundamental reason their work stands out. How can you help your creative team feel as if they have a safe place for creativity in which they are free to take risks without fear of failure? One good way is to refer to ground rule number 2.

Rule 2—No No’s

The first and most important rule is NEVER SAY NO. The word “no” has power: the power to stop all creative thinking and make someone retreat and stop participating. The word “no” can lead to concept mediocrity. There is nothing more frustrating to a creative than to be working through an idea and have someone chime in with a, “No, I’ve seen that before” or “No, that won’t work.” Rather than say “no” you should strive to be positive and add to an idea, not take away from it.

Instead of saying “no” try “Yes, and.” “Yes, and” is a way for you to add to an idea that was tossed out during the brainstorm. This not only supports the person who put the idea on the table, but it allows you to expand it. A simple “yes, and” will keep the energy going and will lead to other ideas.

Rule 3—Be Prepared

It is both annoying and very disrespectful to show up for a brainstorm session unprepared. Your lack of preparation signals to the team that you do not feel the client or team is important enough to spend your time understanding the

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marketing challenges. In addition, your lack of preparation will set the stage for your creative team to follow. If you habitually show up for brainstorm sessions unprepared, it’s only a matter of time before they soon follow suit.

**Rule 4—Time Limit**

Believe it or not, brainstorming takes energy. If you try to brainstorm for too long, you will lose focus and just waste time. You can feel out your team and gain a pretty good understanding of how long they can last in a brainstorm session and adjust your sessions accordingly. I have found that one hour seems to be a good length of time before breaking up. You can do multiple brainstorm sessions throughout the day if need be. Just break them up to give people time to compose their thoughts. You can also continue to brainstorm the next day. A great creative team will continue to think through the assignment even if it’s not at the forefront of their minds.

**Brainstorming Solo**

There will be times you will need to come up with ideas on your own. When you brainstorm alone, no matter which directions your mind heads, you will only go in a direction that is determined by your experience, knowledge, likes, dislikes, and so on. Don’t stress too much. Brainstorming alone is not impossible. It’s done all the time. However, because you have to select only the best ideas from your own mind, you will have to be disciplined. Don’t fall in love with any particular ideas because you may be the only one that understands them. Know that once you open yourself up and present your ideas to internal staff and clients, some of the ideas may rise to the surface and shine brightly while others will die in a big ball of flames on the conference room table.

**Brainstorming In a Group**

If two heads are better than one and four heads are better than two, then brainstorming in a group is obviously the ideal situation for coming up with a greater number of ideas. There can never be too many participating minds in a brainstorm. The key word here is participating. The best brainstorm sessions will occur when several people get together with their minds open and ready to go. Verbalizing ideas in a group is the best way to take ideas beyond what is possible alone. Simply having bodies in chairs does not make for a good brainstorming session. Each individual should actively participate and contribute to the process. Everyone brings something different to the session. Capitalize on that and you will soon be developing great ideas.
If you’re going to brainstorm in a group, as the creative lead, you must be sure to keep the ball rolling, pick up steam when the talking slows down, and keep the energy going to facilitate great ideas. Brainstorming is an art. Mark Oldach outlines several tips to keep in mind when brainstorming in a group:

- Everyone is equal.
- Be respectful.
- During a brainstorm there are no bad ideas.
- No judgment or evaluation of ideas.
- Record everything. All thoughts, statements, and ideas.
- Start with a review of the problem.
- Restate the problem in your own words.
- List words that relate to the challenge as a means to discover and explore possible pathways.
- Silence during the brainstorm is bad, energetic chatter is good.
- Everyone must participate. Don’t allow anyone to dominate the session. If someone doesn’t participate, call on them. Ask their opinions.
- Assign a facilitator and time keeper. They are not the leader or evaluator or the one with the ideas.
- Brainstorm when everyone is fresh. Avoid first thing in the morning and late in the afternoon.
- Avoid interruptions. Put your phones on silent or better yet, leave them at your desk. Unless there is a genuine emergency that requires immediate attention, do not interrupt the session for any reason.
- Keep the brainstorm light and playful. If the room lacks fun and laughter, chances are the ideas will be dull, uninspired, and predictable.

Brainstorming in groups is one of the most difficult ways to come up with ideas. Invariably there are people who will shine and dominate the session, but there will also be those who shrink back and don’t really say much. Throwing out ideas is difficult because our ideas are those little nuggets of ourselves that we are tossing out to everyone to get judged. They can rise and save the world.

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or they can die a horrible little death right before our eyes. As the creative lead, you must strive to get everyone engaged and keep them participating. You want to make sure that brainstorms are a positive experience for everyone. When they are fun, when people are laughing and having a good time, when your team is throwing out good ideas that are informed by the initial research they conducted, you’ll be amazed at the kind of concepts that appear.

Parameters

Although it may seem like something great, having a project without parameters can be difficult to deal with. Imagine if you were given an assignment to paint the sky. What part would you paint? Would you paint sunrise or sunset? Would it be sunny or cloudy? Are there any jets in the sky? How about birds? Are we looking up to the sky or are we flying in the sky? The questions can be endless. As creatives, we complain about restrictions, and want more room to be creative. We love the idea of pushing beyond restraints and rules. However, that is not realistic. We need parameters to help guide our creativity.

When you’re presented with a client challenge, strive to truly understand the project parameters. When the client has objectives, figure out how to attain them. Understand who the client’s intended audience is and what they like. Examine their needs and prepare to answer them.

No Idea Is Bad

In the beginning stages of your brainstorming, it’s important to keep the ideas flowing—good, bad, boring, hot, or cold. Remember, during a brainstorming session your goal is to produce as many ideas as you can.

Be free with your thoughts. Let them come. Don’t get stuck developing one thought or direction, or you risk generating a limited supply of ideas. If you and your team mix, refine, and evolve as many ideas as possible, you can generate a virtually endless supply of solutions that can be reviewed against the client’s criteria during the editing phase.

Once you feel you have an adequate amount, have reached the time limit, or feel everyone is too drained to continue, gather the ideas and take a break.

Warning  During the brainstorm, don’t stop at the first idea just because it seems to be perfect for the client. For that matter don’t stop at the second, third, or even the thirtieth. You never know what’s going to emerge from the ashes. Your next idea might be the most creative one. You should continue thinking about the project even after the brainstorm session has ended, even if it’s in the back of your mind while you are working on other projects.
Empty Your Brain of the Obvious

When you sit down to brainstorm, the first ideas you come up with are usually the obvious ones. Those solutions are usually the culmination of information you’ve collected and influences you’ve unknowingly absorbed from television, magazines, websites, and so on. Although the ideas you come up with may be good, they will probably not be unique. As a matter of fact, the first thoughts you have are most likely also the first thought many other creatives may have. Empty your brain of the ideas that come first and move on to better ones that are uniquely you.

The Path of Most Resistance

As you brainstorm, your ideas will begin to take you down different paths that may be difficult to follow. It’s easy to travel down the easiest path—the one that is full of ideas that you’ve seen before. Ideas other creatives have already put out into the world. To create something truly different and impactful, you must strive to go where others haven’t gone.

You are unique. You have experiences and ways of thinking that no other creative has. To stand out from the crowd, utilize what is unique about yourself. Make the connections only you can with the information you have gathered.

Understand Yourself

The more you brainstorm, the more you will begin to understand the way your mind works through problems. Different people process information differently. Learn what gets your imagination going and what works best for you. Some people do their best work in the morning, some are night owls. Some need complete silence, while others do better with loud music playing. Everyone is different.

It’s frustrating when you’re trying to brainstorm and your mind just isn’t in it. No matter what you do the ideas just don’t come. Once you figure out what works best for you, you can be better prepared to capture ideas when they most often come to you.

Combine Different Parts into a New Whole

Some of the best ideas will come from your mind making unexpected connections. The only way to do this is to have lots of information from which to pull. Try getting into the habit of approaching assignments from different perspectives. Sometimes we get so caught up in the work that we forget that there are many perspectives that we can use to examine problems.
When you begin developing concepts, try ideating from the opposite perspective. If something is white, make it black. If something is usually done with lots of photos, try white space. If something is small, make it huge. Even if you don’t decide to pursue a different perspective, exploring can at least spark more ideas.

### Know When to Walk Away

You’ve obtained the client brief. You’ve researched the target audience. You explored the advertising landscape. Now you sit, ready to begin brainstorming. Words, images, colors: all swirl in your head. You’re ready for the ideas to start flowing. Here they come… and… nothing. What the hell?!

You know you have a grip on what needs to be done, but all your thoughts mean nothing. You keep trying to develop concepts and nothing seems to stick. Soon you get distracted. You begin to do other things. You check e-mail. You jump onto Facebook or Instagram. You start to organize your desk or walk around the office and chat with friends or coworkers. You’ve hit the wall. The harder you try to come up with an idea, the more frustrated you become.

This situation isn’t unique. It happens to everyone on occasion, and everyone deals with it in their own way. Recognize when you’ve hit a creative roadblock and walk away. It doesn’t matter if the deadline is tomorrow. If you continue to try and force creativity, one of two things will happen:

1. You won’t come up with an idea; or
2. You will come up with a lame idea that is neither creative nor original.

Problems such as number 2 above happen more frequently than we’d like them to. What really sucks about this is when you present the idea to the client and they like it. They give you the green light to proceed, and you’re stuck working on a project that pretty much sucked from the beginning. As you suffer through it, you will lack pride and passion. As much as I hate to admit it, I have experienced this one personally. It really REALLY sucks!

Part of working through creative blocks is understanding when you do your best work. I find that I usually have my best ideas first thing in the morning after a good workout. I have tried all-nighters. They don’t work for me. I usually go through what I call the “Stages of Uninspired Creative Emotions.”

- **Stage One (7:00 p.m.):** Resignation I—Now I’ve got everything. Time to get to work.
- **Stage Two (11:00 p.m.):** Euphoria—I’ve got this. I’ll be done in no time! I love designing!
• Stage Three (2:00 a.m.): Anger—What the hell is this client thinking about when they asked us for this? Why am I the only one up working?! I bet everyone else is asleep! I hate design! I’m gonna go back to college and get a degree in a job that ends at 5:00 p.m.!

• Stage Four (3:00 a.m.): Bargaining—I swear, if I can just get through this, I promise I will never over-research again. I know I said this last time, but this time I mean it! Really mean it!

• Stage Five (5:00 a.m.): Resignation II—Ok, I’ve finally have an idea. This is gonna have to work because I’m running out of time.

• Stage Six (8:00 a.m.): Clean-up—Time to shower. What is that smell?! This is as good as the project is gonna get. Move along. Nothing to see here. Today is really gonna suck.

• Stage Seven (10:00 a.m.): What?!—The client has rescheduled the meeting?! I have another day to work on this?! What the F@#$!

First, you really want to avoid trying to push through creative blocks at night. Contrary to popular belief, all-nighters are not fun. Especially when you’re working alone. In my experience, I have found that getting some sleep and starting fresh is the best way for me to cure any creative blocks I need to get past. ‘nuff said.

Editing and Evaluating Ideas

First, don’t edit brainstorm sessions until they are over. Having good judgment and being able to evaluate and pick out good ideas from bad ones are the hallmarks of a great creative leader. However, editing has no place during the actual brainstorm session. Remember, you are there to encourage your team to shoot out lots of ideas. Judgment stifles creative thinking.

Second, using realism and creativity will help you evaluate which ideas will float to the top and which are runners-up. Being realistic keeps the seriously crazy ideas from being produced. It reminds us of the objectives of the project and forces us to accept its constraints. Being creative means pushing boundaries, taking risks, presenting ideas that are fresh and stand apart from the rest.

During your evaluation of the ideas from a brainstorm session, you must maintain balance. If you are too realistic you will be blind you to risky yet innovative solutions. However, being too creative could blind you to the communications challenges and objectives.
Voice of Judgment

Now that you’ve evaluated the ideas developed during the brainstorm session, before moving forward with concept development, you have to determine which of the ideas should be further developed. At this point, you can provide the client with everything you know they are expecting to see. The alternative is to present them with ideas that you know will work, even if those ideas are not the ones the client wants. Your choices: be safe or be bold. Whether you know it or not, you are fighting what Mark Oldach calls the Voice of Judgment (VOJ).^5

The VOJ is an inner voice driven by fear. It prevents you from pursuing innovative and unusual ideas with the confidence that you have something really good. This is the same voice that prevents us from presenting a risky concept to a client. When we do present risky ideas, we also present the “safe” idea because we are worried the client will accuse us of not listening. Sadly, many times the client will choose the safe idea, and you’ll go back to the office angry because you didn’t defend the more creative approach or because you never should have presented the safe idea in the first place.

If you know that the VOJ exists, you will be better prepared to deal with it. Oldach outlines the different forms the VOJ takes:

- The voice inside you that makes you afraid of pursuing creativity and that depresses you when you don’t. This is the hardest one to overcome because we are our own worst critics. Ironically, reason and logic work best to overcome a personal fear. The often-asked question, “What is the worst that can happen if I present this idea?” usually produces an answer that is easy to deal with.

- The voices of others who have judged you unfairly; those voices in turn fuel the internal voice. These are the kind of people who get in the way of a good brainstorming session. Learning to ignore these voices is as important as squelching the internal voice.

- The voice of society that dictates etiquette, style, and in our case, “acceptable design approach.” Creatives are exceptionally victim to this voice. We often wait until a design trend emerges before we consider it to be valid. We let others set the standards, and we track the standard by reading our design journals and annuals.

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Creatives who succeed at by pursuing their ideas and dreams have the ability and confidence to control their own VOJ.

“A lifetime of mediocrity is a high price to pay for safety. Paranoia undoes greatness.”

—Todd Henry, author

Diamond in the Rough

Not all projects will provide you with obvious opportunities for creativity. It’s easy to be creative for clients who appreciate your expertise and who provide you with exciting projects. The challenge for every great creative leader is to try and be creative for clients who have closed minds and are pains-in-the-ass to deal with. A truly great creative leader can treat all projects—all clients—as opportunities for creativity.

In a Nutshell

As the creative lead, you should strive to create an environment that inspires creativity and values ideas. You can create an “idea culture” that values the process of perpetual idea generation and development, rather than one that’s driven solely by the end product. This type of environment breeds creative thinking and the continual improvement of an idea. Everyone contributes and feels like an important part of the process. No single individual has ownership of an idea because the idea was developed through the input of all members of the team. They will not fear providing input or worry about saying something stupid if collaboration is welcomed.

Now you’ve come to a fork in the road. Follow one direction, and you’ll be taking the easy route. This route takes you to mediocrity. You will remain safely within the boundaries that have been set out for you. You don’t push boundaries. No one will get frustrated with you. On most projects you’ve been there—done that, because you repeat everything and make every challenge fit within your little model of creativity. Your creative team will sail along with you until they find a place with a better creative leader who inspires and challenges them.

If you follow the second route, you will be challenged. You will strive to keep the generation of ideas fun and fresh and be a great creative lead. You will come up with concepts that make people think while also representing your

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client’s brands appropriately. You will create an environment where your team feels safe to continually experiment and fail without fear. You will be sought out for your creativity and leadership skills. Songs will be sung of your exploits. Families will name their first-born children after you! A statue will be erected to commemorate your exploits… too much? Ok, just remove that last little bit, but you can be great.

Take your pick. Which way will you go? Go forth. Be fruitful and multiply… your ideas.

**BRAINSTORMING EXERCISES**

The following are several exercises to help get your creative juices flowing.

**EXERCISE 1: RANDOM WORD**

Making connections to random words can help open your mind to connections that you can make with your client’s product, service, or organization. It opens your mind to new possibilities that might not be obvious if you were just trying to hammer out ideas on your own. It’s important that the words be completely random and unrelated to your problem or challenge. This will force you to make a connection that isn’t obvious.

There are several ways to ensure this. First, close your eyes and point your finger at the list of words provided on the next page. Write down the word you have selected. Second, close your eyes once more and point your finger at the list of words provided to select another word. Write it down. These are your random words.

Write down as many associations between these two words as you can. Break your words down into their characteristics. What is their function? What are their aesthetics? How are they used? What metaphors can be associated with them? What are the opposites of your words? Write down as many associated ideas and concepts as possible. If you get stuck, a thesaurus can help you find synonyms, antonyms, and other related words.

Now force connections between your random words and your problem or challenge, using the characteristics you identified in the previous step.

You can do this. Just remember:

- Don’t reject a word just because you don’t like it.
- Don’t create too many steps between random words and the idea.
- Don’t link the word to an idea you already have.
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<td>Baby</td>
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<td>Gel</td>
<td>Corkscrew</td>
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<td>Swamp</td>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td>Soup</td>
<td>Hand towel</td>
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<td>Rainforest</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Wheel</td>
<td>Umpire</td>
<td>Transformer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apartment</td>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>Fins</td>
<td>Pickle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alligator</td>
<td>Drawer</td>
<td>Teapot</td>
<td>Worm</td>
<td>TNT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Needle</td>
<td>Cave</td>
<td>Coffee grinder</td>
<td>Policeman</td>
<td>Fuel tank</td>
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<td>Pasta</td>
<td>Motor oil</td>
<td>Chapstick</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>Aqualung</td>
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<td>Calendar</td>
<td>Wig</td>
<td>Sweet potato</td>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>Woman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Lozenge</td>
<td>Floppy disk</td>
<td>Cashew nut</td>
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<td>Brick</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Wedding ring</td>
<td>Button</td>
<td>Balloon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>Tiger</td>
<td>Gear stick</td>
<td>Paper cup</td>
<td>Tie rack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting card</td>
<td>Scarf</td>
<td>Camel</td>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Boxing ring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>Pimple</td>
<td>Seaweed</td>
<td>Ice cream</td>
<td>Glue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacket</td>
<td>Ticket</td>
<td>Handbag</td>
<td>Doorknob</td>
<td>Rug</td>
</tr>
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</table>
EXERCISE 2: WHAT THE FLEEK?

“What the Fleek?” works by attaching your product or service to something that is already in the target audience’s mind. Something that they feel is very hip and popular right now.

STEPS:

1. Who is your target? Describe them in at least three sentences. Provide details such as likes, dislikes, age, nationality, career field, and so on. Be as detailed as possible.

2. What interests your target? List at least 20 things.

3. Cross off everything related to your product or service.

4. Now, WHAT THE FLEEK? What grabs their attention or motivates your target? What is their current obsession?

5. Force a connection between your creative brief and the FLEEKING AWESOME item you’ve discovered. Answer this: How can I use the target market’s interest/obsession with (WHAT THE FLEEK) to solve the challenge outlined in the creative brief?

EXERCISE 3: EYES OF EXPERTS

This technique looks at the challenge presented to you from the point of view of another person—an expert from another field. You can use this to brainstorm alone or in groups.

Begin with selecting a number of prominent people from different fields. You can make your own list or you can use the list provided on the next page. Approach the problem imagining how you or your team believes each of the experts would handle it.

The key is to select people who

- Are experts of some sort.
- You know a lot about.
- You consider normal.
- Have a modus operandi or a particular way of working through their problems.
### Table 5-2: Experts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hollywood</th>
<th>Superheroes</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Historical</th>
<th>Characters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Lawrence</td>
<td>Batman</td>
<td>Ronda Rousey</td>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>Homer Simpson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Downey, Jr.</td>
<td>Superman</td>
<td>LeBron James</td>
<td>George Washington</td>
<td>Glenn Quagmire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leonardo DiCaprio</td>
<td>Spiderman</td>
<td>Serena Williams</td>
<td>Anne Frank</td>
<td>Don Draper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bradley Cooper</td>
<td>Nightwing</td>
<td>Cristiano Ronaldo</td>
<td>Martin Luther King, Jr.</td>
<td>Tony Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwayne Johnson</td>
<td>Wonder Woman</td>
<td>Clayton Kershaw</td>
<td>Adolf Hitler</td>
<td>Fox Mulder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hugh Jackman</td>
<td>Flash</td>
<td>J.J. Watt</td>
<td>Charles Darwin</td>
<td>Eric Cartman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra Bullock</td>
<td>Robin</td>
<td>Stephen Curry</td>
<td>Julius Caesar</td>
<td>Joe Friday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia Vergara</td>
<td>Supergirl</td>
<td>Aaron Rodgers</td>
<td>Michelangelo</td>
<td>Captain James T. Kirk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scarlett Johansson</td>
<td>Black Canary</td>
<td>Pauline Ferrand-Prévot</td>
<td>Ronald Reagan</td>
<td>Spock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chris Pratt</td>
<td>Black Panther</td>
<td>Miguel Cabrera</td>
<td>Sigmund Freud</td>
<td>Elaine Benes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hanks</td>
<td>Raven</td>
<td>Roger Federer</td>
<td>Joan of Arc</td>
<td>Stewie Griffin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Damon</td>
<td>Batgirl</td>
<td>Tim Duncan</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth</td>
<td>Frasier Crane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Clooney</td>
<td>Hawkgirl</td>
<td>Eli Manning</td>
<td>Frida Kahlo</td>
<td>Kermit the Frog</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brad Pitt</td>
<td>Beast Boy</td>
<td>James Hardin</td>
<td>Florence Nightingale</td>
<td>Frank Underwood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angelina Jolie</td>
<td>Cyborg</td>
<td>Manny Pacquiao</td>
<td>Mother Teresa</td>
<td>Jack Bauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Hart</td>
<td>Starfire</td>
<td>Kevin Durant</td>
<td>Rosa Parks</td>
<td>Sherlock Holmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Portman</td>
<td>The Hulk</td>
<td>Payton Manning</td>
<td>Sacagawea</td>
<td>Tyrion Lannister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXERCISE 4: EXQUISITE CORPSE

This exercise is based on a collaborative word game called *Cadavre Exquis* (Exquisite Corpse). The game’s roots can be linked to the Surrealist movement in Paris. There is some debate regarding whether it started in 1925 or 1928. Either way, it works as a great way to get your minds thinking.

To play, the participants would start with a single piece of paper folded into halves or thirds. In turn, each participant would draw an image (or, on some occasions, paste an image down) on their section of the sheet of paper. When they finished, they would fold the paper to conceal their contribution, and pass it on to the next player for his contribution.

Taking the basis of Exquisite Corpse and translating that into a brainstorming activity is easy. In this case, the idea is for a group of people to put together a sentence from words that may have little if any obvious relationship to each other.

For example, a sentence can be combined as follows:

- **FIRST** person chooses a definite or indefinite article and an adjective
- **SECOND** person chooses a noun
- **THIRD** person chooses a verb
- **FOURTH** person chooses another definite or indefinite article and an adjective
- **FIFTH** person chooses a noun

For example, “The gigantic buffalo sleeps steadfastly with stones.”

The benefit of working with Exquisite Corpse is that the team has more words than those presented in Random Word to play with. The only limit is their ability to come up with words and their imaginations.

EXERCISE 5: EXTREMES

This exercise is a useful technique to use when advertising a low-interest product or when the product benefits are minimal. It is also useful when promoting things that people take for granted.

Use this sentence to help ideate with this technique:

- (product) is so (benefit) that (exaggeration)

For example, “D’Antonio’s new jeans are so sexy that Victoria’s Secret sells them in the same section as lingerie.”

or “George’s Five Alarm Chili is so hot it’s served by the fire department to ensure safety.”