

Tool 33: Combining ideas that might work together

Aim of the tool

Encourage people to think creatively and make linkages between different ideas.

When to use it?

The divergence stage.

Why combining ideas?

Too often in group work, people go with one particular idea that someone mentions. This might be because it is easy, or because the speed of discussion is so high that other ideas arrive too late to be mentioned to everyone. And sometimes, people are reluctant to brainstorm many new ideas because it can be difficult to know which ones are good, and it takes time to sort and decide all these ideas.

This tool helps to generate many ideas, and compare and sort them in an efficient way.

Materials and setting

- Prepare flip charts for 1) listing the ideas, and 2) listing the combination of ideas.
- If you type fast and the group is big you can consider showing it on the screen with a projector.

How to facilitate

First phase:

- First ask for silence and request people to think individually for five minutes on possible ideas that could help the MSP to innovate in new ways, and welcome any new ideas. There should be no judgement on the ideas, the point of this phase is to foster a creative brainstorming
- Make a listing of the ideas suggested by the group members.
- Consider a second (and third) round if the group is small or if people are inspired with new ideas after the first round of brainstorming.
- Check that all ideas are clear and understood by everybody.

Second phase:

- Ask again for 5 minutes of silence and request people to reflect on whether the ideas from the brainstorming can be combined.
- Make a round and list the combinations that the participants make. Check each time if they are clear to everyone in the group.
- Finally, allow the plenary to reflect on what would be helpful for supporting the combination of the different ideas.

Timing: each phase can be about 30-45 minutes; total 1 hour – 1,5 hours.

Learn more

We emphasize writing ideas down individually before exchanging them in a group. This is more effective than verbal brainstorming in groups. See

<http://www.fastcompany.com/3033567/agendas/brainstorming-doesnt-work-try-this-technique-instead>