This article on **Creativity Methods** is a **stub**. You can help the Foresight Wiki by expanding it with new sections on the usage of these method in foresight exercises.

The FOR-LEARN guide lists the following **Creativity Methods**: Brainstorming, Mindmapping, Conversational analysis, Utopian writing, Science fiction.

Contents

The FOR-LEARN Guide to Creativity Methods

This is a summary of the article on the Creativity Methods from the FOR-LEARN guide. To read the full article go here.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a method of eliciting ideas without judgment or filtering. It is often used in the early stages of futures workshops and in many other contexts. It involves encouraging wild and unconstrained suggestions and listing ideas as they emerge.

Main characteristics

Brainstorming is actually more of a technique or tool rather than a method per se. It is widely used in any method involving group thinking. The main objective of brainstorming is to elicit ideas from a group of people. Used in a structured way, this technique can be highly effective way of moving participants out of conflict and towards consensus. Brainstorming is founded on the principle that the quantity of ideas increases their quality. This technique has the following basic components:

- Generating as many creative solutions as possible to tackle a problem
- Setting time limits
- Listing every idea presented without comment or evaluation - deferring the judgment of ideas improves the volume of participant input and consequently the value and encourage creativity
- All opinions are equal

- Subsequently, grouping ideas to reduce redundancy, allow for related ideas to be brought together
- Evaluating or assigning priorities to the ideas

When is this method appropriate?

This is a useful and very widely used technique to extract the most creative thinking out of expert committees and consultation management groups. It can be used every time when large quantity of information is generated before problem solving, decision making, or planning - and in scenario analysis. Brainstorming helps participants to move into a working group mode, by "breaking the ice" and allowing unusual ideas to be expressed.

Approach (Step-by-step Guide)

1. The first and core phase is a period of freethinking, which is used to articulate ideas. The facilitator introduces the topic and the purpose of this session (briefing information might be sent in advance to participants). He begins the discussion by asking specific open-ended questions. The answers, reactions, comments, contributions should be collated and written down without any comments or further analysis (that's the main concept). This reduces participants' inhibitions about throwing out "wild" ideas. Demands for clarification are allowed and ideas may be spun off from earlier ideas. This phase is also termed the diverging phase because individual thinking goes in many directions. The first phase ends after a set time, when a sufficient number of ideas has been generated, or when the group feels comfortable that there are no more ideas to add.

2. Then the converging phase takes place. The ideas collected previously are revisited, clustered, prioritized, etc. Participants are encouraged to ask clarification or more information on what was meant by each item. The material is then taken as the basis for more analytic discussion.

Resources needed

Brainstorming is a low-tech, always feasible technique. A skilled facilitator and a way to record and display the ideas/information (e.g. a whiteboard and/or flip chart, etc.) are basically the only requirements (besides the room with a sufficient number of chairs and tables).

There are now also computer-based group decision aid software tools that support brainstorming and other related activities by offering alternatives to the traditional use of whiteboards and flip charts. They add value but do not compensate for a lack of skills in facilitating the session.

Pros and cons

The main advantages are:

- Brainstorming brings new ideas on how to tackle a particular problem ? the freethinking atmosphere encourages creativity, even imperfectly developed thoughts may push the thinking of other participants.
- Problems are defined better as questions arise ? alternatives appear in a new or different perspective and novel approaches to an issue can arise during the process.
- Brainstorming helps to reduce conflicts ? it helps participants to see other points of view and possibly change their perspective on problems. All participants have equal status and an equal opportunity to participate.

The drawbacks:

- The importance of the moderator is often under-estimated. Often the two phases are confused, ideas start to be discussed just after they are thrown out and the specific value of this technique is wasted.
- Sometimes the ideas produced are unworkable. The outcomes depend on the ability of the facilitator of maintaining the discussion alive. Opponents may refuse to consider each other's ideas. It is important to explain to participants how the results will be used to underline that they are not wasting their time.

Mindmapping

Mindmapping is a technique applied to brainstorming and other group discussion methods (for example where people are discussing the relationships between a large number of factors). It allows a group's ideas to be charted in logical groupings fairly quickly, even when ideas are given in a non-sequential manner. This technique enables efficient brainstorming for ideas, and at the same time creates a skeletal framework for later categorisation of the information generated. Mindmapping can be used in planning, identifying customer groups. Mindmapping works well when issues have many components and sub-components. This technique is a non-linear way of outlining information. It is possible to implement it with 'pen and paper', but dedicated software tools are also available for the visualisation in real time of developments of the brainstorming process.

Creative Foresight Space

Method definition and examples / cases to be added by Sirkka Heinonen. For a virtual tour in a libarary pilot case of Creative Foresight Space see http://www.lib.hel.fi/fi-FI/kohtaamispaikka/luovatulevaisuustila/

See also

Environmental Scanning & Monitoring
System Dynamics
Structural Analysis
Agent Modelling
SWOT Analysis
Trend Intra & Extrapolation
Modelling & Simulation
Gaming
Expert Panels
Delphi survey
Backcasting
S&T Roadmapping
Critical & Key Technology Study
Scenario Building
Morphological Analysis & Relevance Trees
Cross-Impact Analysis
Multi-Criteria Analysis