

# Dare to Disturb Your Creativity. Relax, Let Go, and Write Without Thinking

Step out of conventional wisdom and leap into left field, counter-intuitive thinking *with 10 exercises*.

Do any or all the exercises when brainstorming how to:

- Evolve your business strategy
- Win new clients, attract more business from current clients or improve client satisfaction
- Take teamwork and collaboration to another level
- Come up with innovative solutions or transform operations

**Whiteboard, use pen and paper, scribble on Post It notes or type onto your computer screen**

## (1) Freewriting

<b>What is it?</b>	Freewriting is when you write whatever thoughts come to you without stopping to think through an idea or correct your spelling and grammar.
<b>How does it work?</b>	Start with a keyword relating to the idea you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set your timer for 5-10 minutes</li> <li>- Write as fast as possible</li> <li>- Don't worry if your mind goes off-topic and you write nonsense (it's how your brain gets rid of unhelpful data)</li> <li>- Stop once the timer goes off</li> <li>- Review for ideas</li> <li>- Repeat the process as many times as needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Useful when you're trying to shake ideas loose.</b>	According to research, every day we're inundated with the equivalent of 34 Gb of information, a lot of it immaterial. And this means brilliant ideas can sink beneath the surface of our minds, which is why you may need to do the Freewriting exercise several times. The first few goes will free your mind of mental dross and the next few goes will surface intriguing ideas. Freewriting also works as a brain relaxant because it gets the ego with its tendency to want to look smart and impress others – to step aside.

## (2) Looping

<b>What is it?</b>	Looping is about homing in on an intriguing idea or insight from one freewriting session and then using that idea to start another freewriting exercise.
<b>How does it work?</b>	Start with the word or phrase that came up in the previous freewriting exercise. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set your timer for 5-10 minutes</li> <li>- Write as fast as possible</li> <li>- Stop once the timer goes off</li> <li>- Review new insights.</li> </ul> Repeat the process always starting with a new word that has unearthed a fresh idea. Do the exercise multiple times.
<b>Useful when you need to more fully flesh out ideas.</b>	Once you've completed several freewriting loops, stop and analyse the ideas and insights that have surfaced across the different pieces of writing. You will notice concepts shaping up or patterns emerging.

### (3) Listing

<b>What is it?</b>	This exercise challenges you to use one word or a simple phrase to communicate a particular idea.
<b>How does it work?</b>	<p>Compare it to writing a shopping list, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set your timer for 5-10 minutes</li> <li>- Start listing as fast as possible. Don't overthink.</li> <li>- Stop once the timer goes off</li> <li>- Review what's on the list and start grouping words that logically fit together</li> <li>- Write a heading for each group</li> <li>- Review the headings.</li> </ul>
<b>Useful when needing to unravel complex ideas and then improve upon complex solutions. Also useful as a way to ground abstract thinking.</b>	Once you've created a few groups on your word list, write a sentence about each group to expand on your ideas. Now see if you can connect the different groups. This exercise is like an engineer viewing individual parts of a machine. The engineer then groups the pieces to rebuild the machine. Doing this allows them to more clearly see how the different components work together as a whole and trigger ideas on how to build an improved version of the machine.

### (4) Nut-shelling

<b>What is it?</b>	Just like the cliché, "So in a nutshell, what I want to say, is..." It's when you limit writing about ideas to one to two sentences. Similar to bullet pointing, however, the aim is to nutshell all your ideas regardless of validity.
<b>How does it work?</b>	<p>This exercise is about coming up with lots of ideas, good, bad or ugly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set your timer for 20 minutes</li> <li>- Start to rapidly nutshell ideas</li> <li>- Use starting phrases like <i>my idea for the solution is, our promise of value to the customer is, we will help the customer by, we will deliver process improvements by, we will put our staff first by, we will delight our customers by, etc.</i></li> <li>- Limit yourself to 1 to 2 sentences even if your idea is big and has many moving parts</li> <li>- After you compose multiple phrases, start deleting weak ideas until you have a list of valuable ideas</li> <li>- Repeat this exercise as many times as you like.</li> </ul>
<b>Useful to get to the underlying value, to figure out the single most important theme, to create elegant and simple solutions or minimal viable products.</b>	Nut-shelling is also a fast way to build complex systems without overloading them with unnecessary or extraneous components. For example, once you choose the most valuable ideas, use them as the building blocks for solutions.

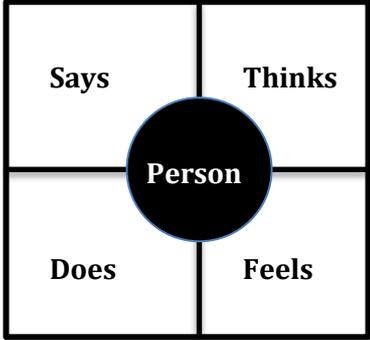
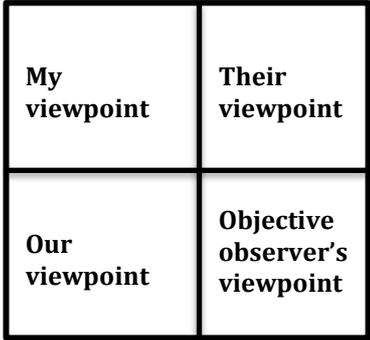
## (5) Idea Mapping

<p><b>What is it?</b></p>	<p>Sometimes called clustering or mind mapping, it's a way to explore relationships or connections between different ideas.</p>	
<p><b>How does it work?</b></p>	<p>There is no time limit for this exercise.</p> <p>Think of a word or phrase that represents the main idea. It might be the name of a client, a product, a service, a benefit, anything that is the central focus. Then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Centrally place the word or phrase that represents your main idea; underline or circle it</li> <li>- Think of ideas that relate to the main idea; place them close by and connect them by drawing a line</li> <li>- Once you run out of words that link to the main idea, come up with ideas that relate to the words linked to the central idea</li> <li>- Keep mapping associations by linking words or phrases to more outward levels</li> <li>- Stop when you run out of ideas.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Useful in helping you better understand complex relationships; distil complex information and reach clarity and insight faster.</b></p>	<p>Idea mapping also helps identify the root cause of business problems and how they are inter-related. It also helps to show how some solutions are inter-related or how seemingly disparate groups or people are inter-related. It can also provoke instant 'aha!' moments due to the eye able to view multiple converging and diverging connections.</p>	

## (6) Visioning

<p><b>What is it?</b></p>	<p>A form of doodling where you use diagrams and images to generate ideas and creativity. Do this on your own or in a group.</p>	
<p><b>How does it work?</b></p>	<p>There is no time limit for this exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use shapes to brainstorm ideas</li> <li>- Be creative with fonts, i.e., turn them into shapes.</li> <li>- Use words sparingly and when you do, circle, box or underline them.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Useful if you're more visual, or you want to create a thought-provoking space.</b></p>	<p>Many companies hire professional illustrators or diagrammatic artists, a worthwhile investment as it encourages lively engagement from all participants.</p>	

## (7) Be Someone Else

<b>What is it?</b>	Using the four-quadrant framework, look at ideas from multiple perspectives and thus see things from different angles to deepen your insight. You can do this on your own or in a group setting.	
<b>How does it work?</b>	There is no time limit for this exercise. Think of a person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using the framework on the right, pretend to be another person. They can be a client, partner, competitor, manager or employee</li> <li>- Fully commit to being that person</li> <li>- Write or talk through what this person <b>says, thinks, does</b> and <b>feels</b>.</li> </ul>	
	There is no time limit for this exercise. Think of a situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Using the framework on the right, write or talk through <b>my viewpoint</b> (yours), <b>our viewpoint</b> (your collective team, company and partners), <b>their viewpoint</b> (e.g., client) and then the perspectives and observations of an <b>objective, disinterested third party</b>.</li> <li>- Fully embrace every role especially top and bottom right.</li> </ul>	
<b>Useful if you want to develop more holistic ideas and solutions; attain a deeper understanding of other parties.</b>	These two simple yet profound exercises will help you understand others and thus develop improved strategies on how to approach relationships. Also, they will help you discover different aspects of your personality and resources previously hidden, thus providing you with newer and more abundant sources of inspiration.	

## (8) Inverted SWOT

<b>What is it?</b>	Just like a regular SWOT, however, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been inverted.					
<b>How does it work?</b>	<p>There is no time limit for this exercise.</p> <p>Step One: Do a regular SWOT</p> <p>Step Two: Do the inverted version as shown on the right-hand side.</p> <p>Step Three: Do the regular SWOT again taking into account the outputs from the Inverted SWOT.</p> <p>Switch between the two SWOTS several times until you're confident that you've honed your analysis.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>What's weak about the strengths?</b></td> <td><b>Where is there strength inside the weaknesses?</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Where is the threat inside the opportunity?</b></td> <td><b>What is the opportunity hidden in the threat?</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>What's weak about the strengths?</b>	<b>Where is there strength inside the weaknesses?</b>	<b>Where is the threat inside the opportunity?</b>	<b>What is the opportunity hidden in the threat?</b>
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<b>Where is the threat inside the opportunity?</b>	<b>What is the opportunity hidden in the threat?</b>					
<b>Useful to test the thinking and logic of your regular SWOT.</b>	While the Inverted SWOT will mess with your mind, it will challenge you to analyse with more rigour the real strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.					

## (9) The 'What If' Game

<b>What is it?</b>	An innovation tool to help your organisation and your clients be more competitive.	
<b>How does it work?</b>	<p>There is no time limit on this exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start a sentence with, "What if..." and write down whatever idea pops in your head relating to your central theme</li> <li>- The more outlandish the idea, the better</li> <li>- Write up to 10 or more 'What if' sentences.</li> </ul> <p>Examples in a B2B IT context might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What if we could help our government clients get rid of 95% of their administration red tape?</li> <li>• What if we could enable our health clients to save the life of every single patient?</li> <li>• What if we could design engine powered skyscrapers so they could 'pack up' and move to a different city?</li> <li>• What if we could build a software program that deciphered the language of pets like cats and dogs?</li> </ul>	
<b>Useful in helping come up with new technology advances or new business models and approaches.</b>	Playing 'What if' is fun as it doesn't ask you to put down ideas that are grounded in reality, which frees you to think about possibilities. Out of possibilities, ingenious yet practical solutions emerge.	

## (10) Apply First Principle Thinking

<b>What is it?</b>	A First Principle is a basic assumption that can't be deduced any further. Aristotle defined a First Principle as "the first basis from which a thing is known." Applying First Principle thinking is about idea-storming from the starting point of an undeniable truth or underlying principle.	
<b>How does it work?</b>	How to apply First Principle thinking in a creative exercise: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. On the left-hand side of a page, write down what is an unquestionable fundamental truth (whether technological, business or human belief)</li> <li>2. Then on the right-hand side of the page, begin to list new ideas that support (and don't violate) your First Principle.</li> </ol>	
	Here's an example using Elon Musk's approach to batteries	
<b>Useful in helping you view a persistent problem in a different light and aiding you to find a new way to solve the problem and develop the solution.</b>	<b>(1)</b> In seeking to build cheaper batteries to run electric cars, Musk applied first principle by asking, "What are the material constituents of the batteries? What is the stock market value of the material constituents? How much would that material cost?"	<b>(2)</b> Musk started by understanding the fundamental components of batteries so he could work on developing a cheaper product rather than seeing what battery manufacturers had been trying to do to develop a cheaper battery.

## How else can I help you?

If you would like someone to facilitate any of these 10 brainstorming exercises, please reach out today or view my services at [relatableit.com](http://relatableit.com)

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