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## **Plug & Play Creativity for Startups**

*Handbook in using creative thinking in a startup process*

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# Plug & Play Creativity for Startups

Søren Hansen, Kreativitetsakademiet

This handout presents a selection of creativity techniques and a creative collaboration model, you can use to empower your team work in a startup.

The techniques in this handout will help you and your team to generally have more ideas, discover blind spots in the market, find more details in your investigations, go deeper in your analyses and to discover new opportunities by blending knowledge and ideas that have never been blended before.

The techniques and methods are taught and trained during a 48h Creativity Mindset Bootcamp designed for ESA-BICs LAUNCHPAD 2020. The guidelines to use creativity in entrepreneurship and startups in this book follow the structure of the MIT method Disciplined Entrepreneurship by Bill Aulet.

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# Content

Page 2	1. Introduction to Creativity in Entrepreneurship and Startups
Page 3	2. Ideation
Page 9	3. Creative Collaboration
Page 14	4. The Mindset in Creative Collaboration
Page 18	5. Plug & Play Creativity for Disciplined Entrepreneurship
Page 19	6. Who is your customer? (step 1,2,3,4,5,9)
Page 20	7. What can you do for your customer? (step 6,7,8,10,11)
Page 21	8. How does your customer acquire your product? (step 12,13,18)
Page 22	9. How do you make money out of your product? (step 15,16,17,19)
Page 24	10. How do you design & build your product? (step 20,21,22,23)
Page 25	11. The Creativity Mindset Bootcamp
Page 25	12. About the author and facilitator
Page 26	13. Inspiration and References

## 1.

# Introduction to Creativity in Entrepreneurship and Startups

Building a startup means dealing with a lot of uncertainty. A Startup is at the edge of a future, which we can have ideas about, but not be sure about. To deal with the uncertainty, you will need a lot of data about the market, customers and of course how your product should be designed, built and produced? To collect and analyse data you may use interviews, observations, search databases and use other academic tools and methods.

Where the academic methods help you to better understand the past and the market as it is at present, creativity is needed to create possible scenarios about how your business might change the future in a successful way. Creativity is needed to sense and imagine a possible future, which is not here yet. A future that will emerge as you work on your startup. To do that, you need all the data of the past and you need to invite your future customer on a (creative) journey where you co-create a better future together. A future where your business is wanted and needed.

As an entrepreneur in a startup you need to master creativity at a high level and to know how to combine it with your academic training. The methods in this handout will help you to do that in a structured process of Disciplined Entrepreneurship where you, step by step, launch your startup.



# Ideation

- challenging the known and producing new possibilities



Beeotopia from Studio Poesis



Beeotopia from Studio Poesis

## 2.

## Ideation



Ideation is the creative process of imagining several possible futures by generating, developing, and communicating new ideas. In this chapter you will use different ideation techniques that are based on methods like Synectics, TRIZ and Lateral Thinking.

They are all designed to help you break dominating patterns in your thinking and to be aware of new opportunities. Compared to academic work processes, Ideation is based on far more (diverse) knowledge. The nature of ideation is to blend knowledge and ideas in new ways that will help you to avoid your blind spots and to understand the foundation for your business better by producing new perspectives on your business idea, the market and the customers.

The ideation techniques helps you to blend knowledge and ideas that have not been blended before. They help you to perceive and create the world in new and better ways.

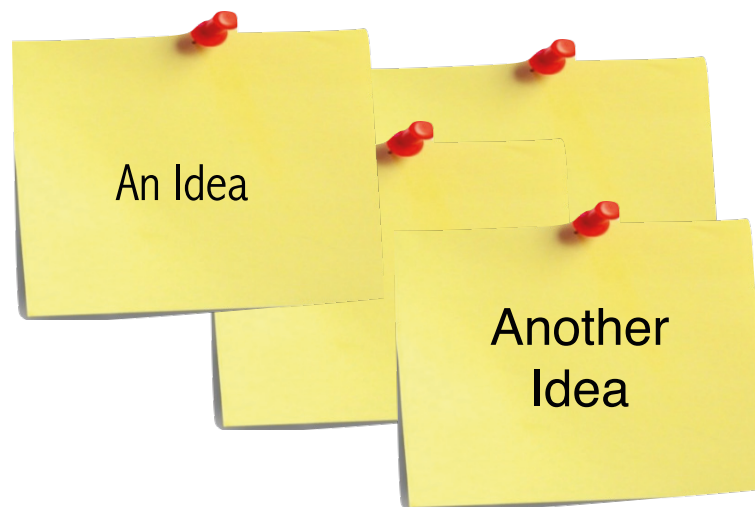




When you look for an answer or an idea always start by clearing your head for immediate answers or ideas. They might be good, but they also tend to block new, maybe, better ideas.

Write down ANY idea that comes to mind! Also the crazy ones and the ideas that make you embarrassed. Write them down without starting to analyse or elaborate them. ANYTHING goes. Do not think you are able to predict the future of, even, your own ideas. They are just stepping stones...to a possible future that will emerge - if you don't stop it.

It is important to clear your head before you move on to using the following more advanced techniques. Clearing your head functions as a first step in any more advanced ideation technique and it makes you feel safe because now you already have an answer or an idea. But don't lean back. You need many more ideas to create a future for your business.



## Empty your head

- Write down all your initiate ideas.
- Without thinking
- One idea on one PostIt

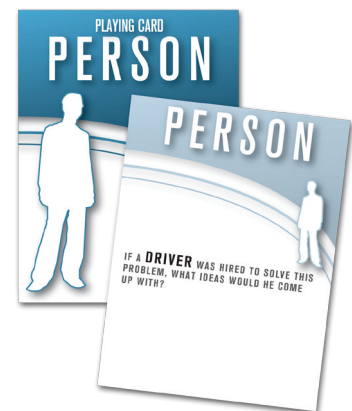
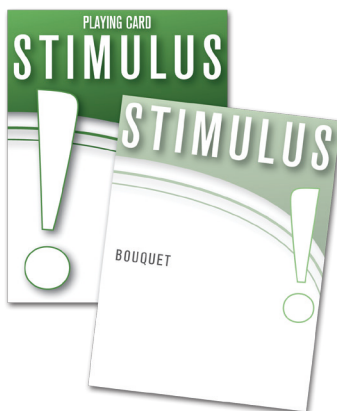
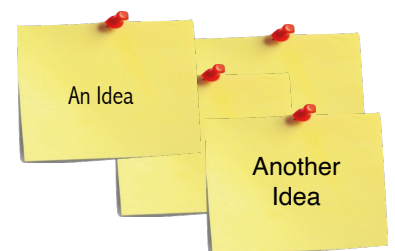




Stimuli cards (or any other random object you look at or think of), offers new gateways to your knowledge, that helps you to associate alternative knowledge and ideas that would not be your first choice when you look for an answer or idea.

When you turn a card - write down all the ideas you get without judging them at this stage.

Trust your ideas and allow them to open your mind...



## Ideation using Stimuli cards

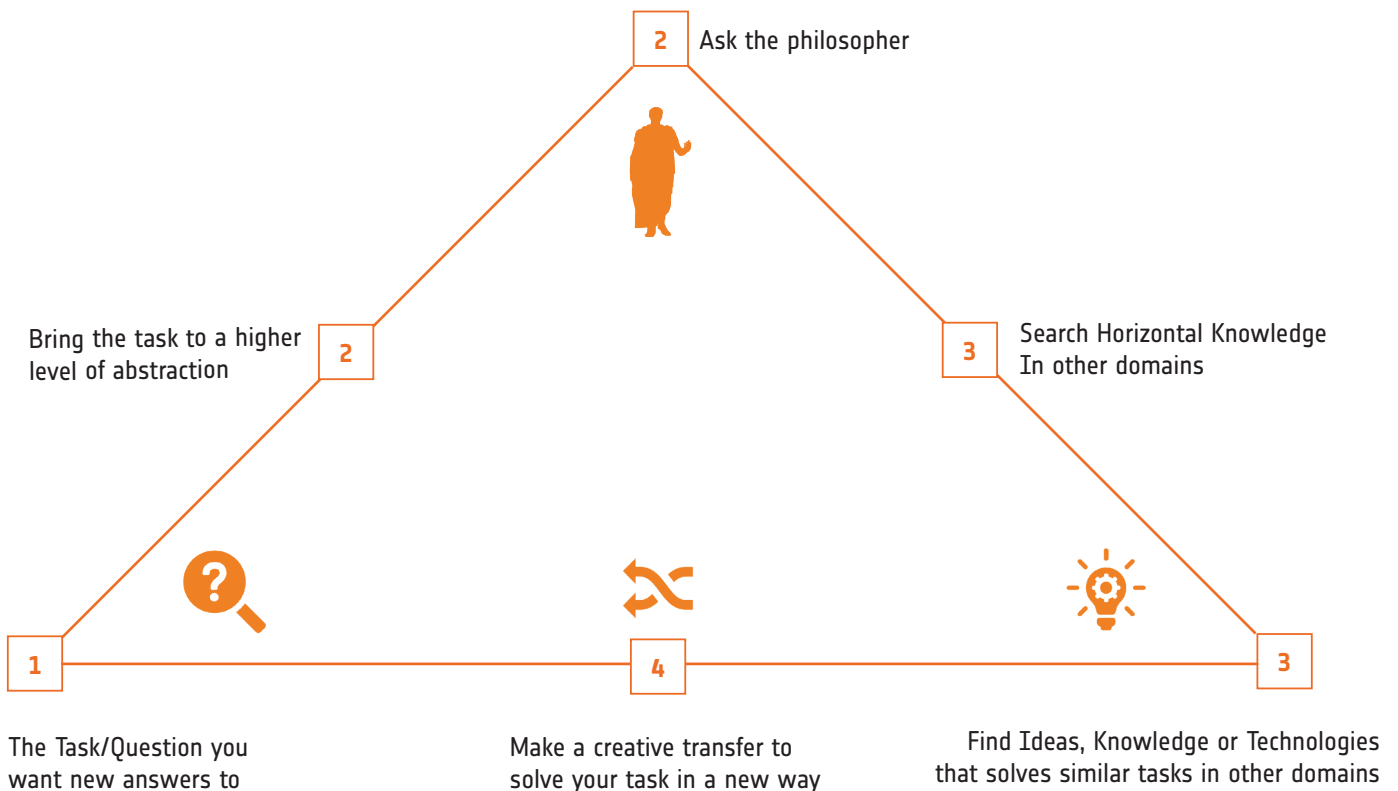
- Use the cards as stimuli
- Get as many ideas as you can
- One idea on one PostIt





Innovation often arises when you mix your own knowledge and experience, with horizontal knowledge and experience from other businesses, disciplines or industries.

- 1 Start by formulating your Task/Problem/Question you want ideas about
- 2 Now reformulate your Task/Problem/Question to be more general. Eg. "Empty a glass of water" becomes "Empty" or "Empty something". The trick is that now it becomes easier to think of new ways to empty, which we don't usually think of when the task is to empty a glass of water.
- 3 Now you come to mind about all the places where you have experience in solving the more general wording of the Task/Problem/Question - to empty something...
- 4 The last step is to come up with ideas on how you can apply the new knowledge to solve your own task (eg. the sun empties the sea by evaporation). This is where the new innovative solutions come into being - by blending knowledge from different domains.



## Ideation using Horizontal Thinking

- Blending Knowledge from different domains in new ways

- Focus on your task
- Do step 1 - 4



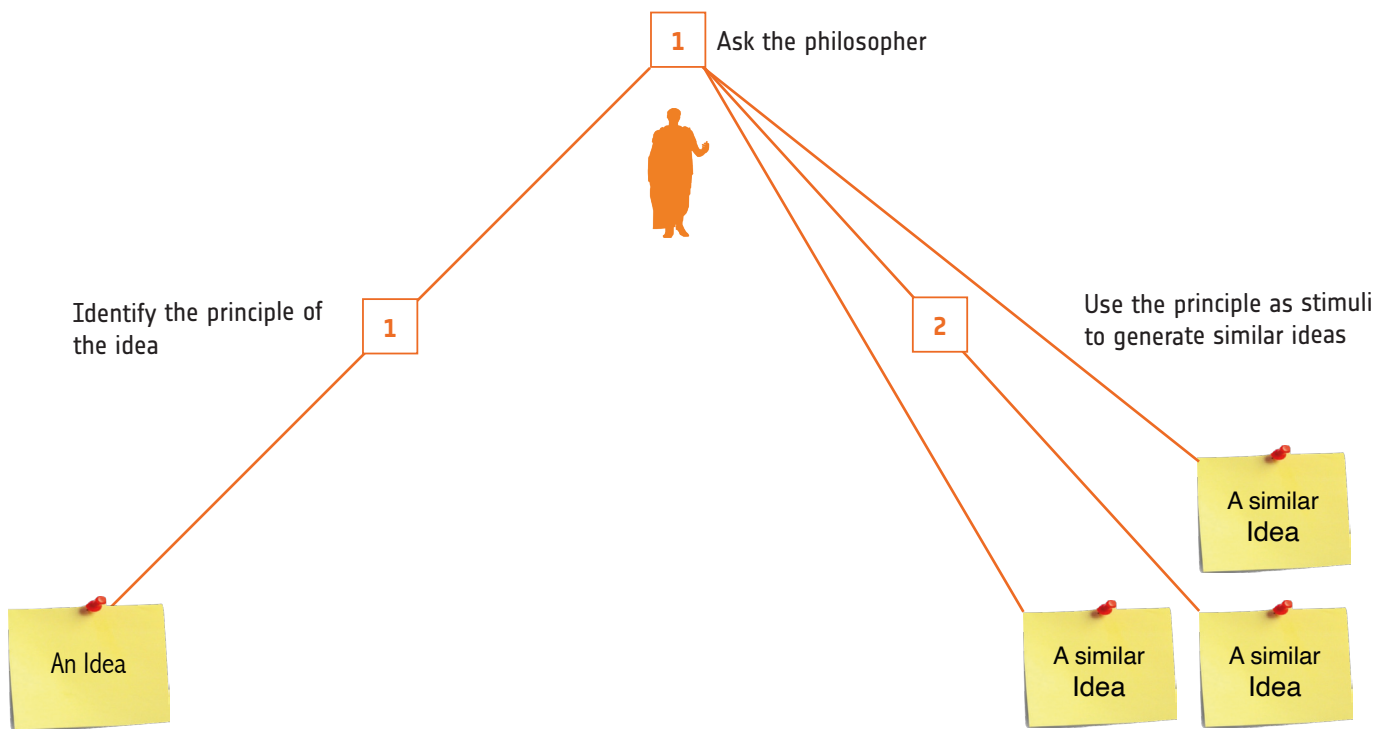




Often we look for flexibility in the ideas we get. You want very different ideas, which represents different ways of thinking and different ways of combining knowledge in new ways.

But sometimes you have an idea, which you like, but it is not "bull eye". When you should look for similar ideas, also called Alternatives.

You begin by identifying the principal thinking behind the idea. Maybe you got the idea to empty a glass of water by filling it with sand. The principle behind that idea is "displacement" Now you use "displacement" as stimuli to have more - similar - ideas like filling the glass with pebbles, glass beads or using a piston.



## Alternatives

- Finding (similar) alternatives to an idea

- Chose an idea
- Do step 1 - 2



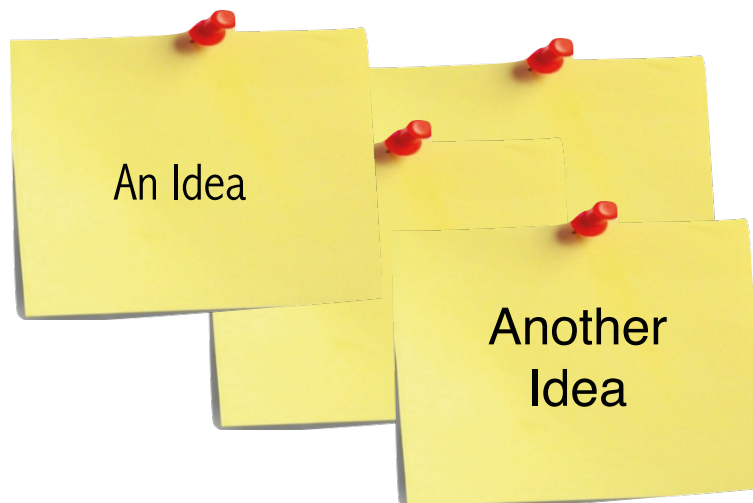


A challenge is a creative obstruction that should be welcomed. A leg that someone puts up for your business - and if they don't, you may have to do it yourself. Challenge is an ideation technique, where you stop and ask *"Could this be done different?"*. Let's stop and look for alternatives, even if everything seems OK and aligned. This can be hard. Normally we don't look for alternatives before we encounter a problem.

Challenge is an important technique, that helps you to be aware of blind spots in our perception of our business. Changing perception is key to any radical innovation. You should make it a habit to Challenge different parts of your business.

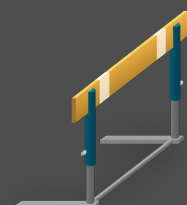
Challenge is used as a starting point for the previous ideation techniques. You start by challenging something like an assumption, a process, a known solution or part of a solution. When you use an ideation technique like *empty your head*, using *Stimuli Cards*, *Horizontal Thinking*, or any other technique that can generate alternative ideas to what you want to challenge.

To kill blind spots, it can be effective to challenge by asking *"What is the oppersite to that we have now?"*, or by reversing something or *to make something extreme by enlarging or minimizing it*.



## To Challenge the existing

- Challenge part of your business or assumptions
- Remove something important
- Reverse something
- Do the oppersite to that you have
- Maximice/Minimize to the extreme



# Creative Collaboration

- Blending diverse knowledge, producing new possibilities



3.

## Creative Collaboration

- working in the team and with stakeholders helping to develop your business

In the team, Creative Collaboration is a catalyst for ideation and idea elaboration. It is an open-minded approach to blend and play with technologies, different knowledge domains and ideas to innovate your business.

Creative Collaboration is a process that takes place inside your team, but also outside in your collaboration with stakeholders like costumers, experts from other fields, partners and investors.

The methods for Creative Collaboration in this handout helps you and your team to work in a creative and agile manner without letting go of your academic training.



# 3.1

## Elaborating ideas - in pairs

- working in the team and with stakeholders helping to develop your business

Elaborating an idea starts with a big YES to the idea, followed by an AND where you add further ideas or knowledge to help the idea grow. It is a process of blending knowledge in new ways to explore new possibilities.

Often new ideas are hard to understand and appreciate. To have an initial idea (or thought) emerging into a new valuable reality in your business, takes a lot more ideas and knowledge. Elaboration is an emergent process, that is very vulnerable to any kind of judgement. Judgement will be needed - but not yet...

Be playful and follow the rules of Creative Collaboration



### Elaborating ideas - in pairs

- Share your ideas one by one and use them as stepping stones to allow them to emerge showing their full potential.
- If you are openminded (YES AND), the stepping stones will help you to discover new useful and innovative opportunities.



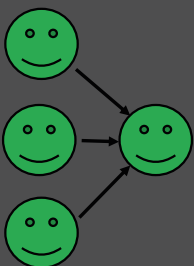
More people with different background = More knowledge to blend = Better ideas

During the startup process, the team together with the stakeholders surrounding it, is mostly engaged in collecting more and more knowledge to build the business on. In Creative Collaboration this is a process of blending all the ideas and knowledge coming from your investigations into an innovative business.

In most team work you strive for agreement, often by compromising ideas. At this stage in Creative Collaboration, you embrace the uniqueness of each idea by taking turn in elaborating them, without arguing or discussion them - to let them shine.

This is essential to creative work. You elaborate an idea until it change your mind. Only then, it is possible to fully understand and appreciate the future the idea is pointing at. Changing the future starts with changing your mind.

- Take turns in presenting an idea
- The team builds on your idea according to your instructions
- Use “What happens next” and “New choice”
- Use “What do you like or think”
- Use “I would like more ideas in this specific direction”
- Use “I would like to start over from here”
- No discussions – No argumentation – No positioning



## Elaborating ideas - in your team

with stakeholders helping  
developing your business

- Share ideas and elaborate them using the knowledge of the whole team



# Elaborating ideas - Prototyping and Role-playing

- working in the team and with stakeholders helping to develop your business

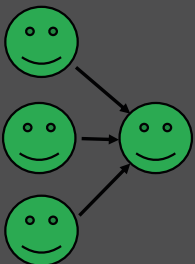
Prototyping and Role-playing are mind-changing techniques that brings all your knowledge, ideas and questions to “the future lab” for further ideation and elaboration. Here you can create and simulate possible future scenarios for your business - and you can invite potential customers to help you. This helps you stepping into the future as it emerge and it is vital to be able to let go of the blind spots, that keep us trapped in our old perceptions of the world.

Role-playing or Prototyping allow you to get immediate feedback about your idea, while using all your senses. This is a powerfull way of sensing how an idea might emerge into future possibilities and it helps you imagining possible scenarios, which are based on your previous research.

A Prototype can be a drawing, brochure, screenshot, a mockup or a semi-functioning device.

Often Role-playing and Prototyping is combined to be able to create and test out scenarios you can't get access to in real life - yet.

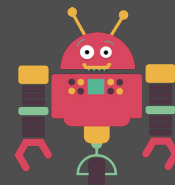
- Prototyping is a **YES AND** “game” where all ideas are tested immediately
- Use *Start Over*, *What Happens Next* and *New Offer*
- **DO NOT DISCUSS** – Try out your ideas immediately
- Continue until you have a prototype you like



## Prototyping ideas - in your team

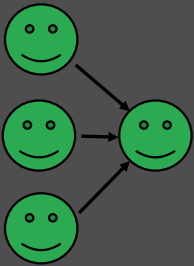
with stakeholders helping  
developing your business

- Prototyping elaborates and tests your ideas





- Role-Playing is like Prototyping a **YES AND** “game” where all ideas are tested immediately
- Assign specific roles to the participants. eg. the Persona, The End User etc.
- Use *Start Over*, *What Happens Next* and *New Offer*
- **DO NOT DISCUSS** – Try out your ideas immediately



## Roleplaying ideas - in your team

with stakeholders helping  
developing your business



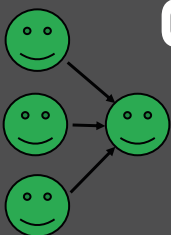
The difference between Creative Collaboration and other kinds of collaboration, eg. in academic environments, is the MINDSET. Because new ideas, especially radical new ideas, are NEW, our pattern-building and pattern-recognizing brain have a very hard time dealing with them.

To succeed, we simply need new rules for thinking and communicating in the team. We need rules that helps us bypass the normal patterns of thinking. When you look at the rules for Creative Collaboration, you will discover that they are close to oppersite to the rules for an academic discussion...

Be indulgent with yourself and the other team members. It takes a little training to get it right, just like the academic discussion did years ago:-)

Dont worry. Creative Collaboration is a method that includes the academic disciplines, like discussions, argumentation and positioning. It will show up later in the process and you will discover that creative work and academic work can be balanced in a fruitful blend which empowers your work.

- Communicate through ideas (no argumentation)
- Talk before thinking - and see what happens
- Grab impressions and try them out
- Take chances
- Make mistakes
- Give the emergent knowledge a chance to show it self
- Start something you have no idea where will end...
- **BE OPENMINDED** - Say YES AND ...



## Creative Collaboration - in your team

with VIP`s helping to develop your business

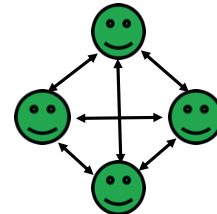
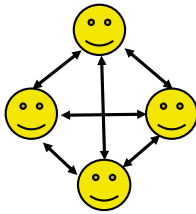
- The MINDSET that enhances creativity in team work



Now it is time to release the power of a more academic approach to the process, where arguments, discussions and legitimate positioning are welcome. If eg. a mechanical part is not working, if you miss important informations, or if you are not passionate about an idea, something in your business must be changed.

Because of the suspension of judgement in the previous steps, you now have MUCH more ideas and knowledge available for your discussion. You have allowed vulnerable ideas to emerge and show their full potential, without killing them. You have found inspiration in different horizontal domains, where somebody already solved similar problems.

An openminded discussion is actually very similar to a normal academic discussion, except that any argument or position taken against an idea will be regarded as a very welcome challenge to further elaborate the idea. Or to find an alternative idea, that meet the challenge in a better way.



### Discussion, Argumentation and Positioning



### Listening, Ideatin and Elaborating

If it is not possible

Look for inspiration in Horizontal Domains

If it is not working

Elaborate or look for Alternatives

If it is not (scientific) true/valid

As above or do/(look for) research

If "you" do not like it

Blend it with your passion

If "they" do not like it

Blend it with their needs/pains/values

If it is against the law

Blend it with the law and make it legal

## Openminded discussion - In your team

- With stakeholders helping developing your business

1. If an Argument or Position is against an idea
2. Embrace it and use it as a challenge to elaborate the idea or look for alternatives

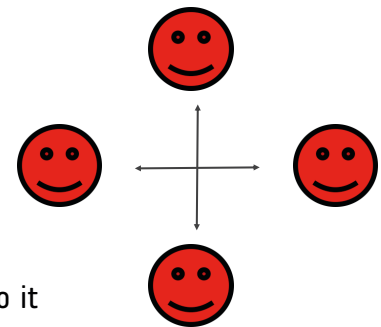


To keep the startup team open-minded is crucial to be an innovative startup. That is why judgement is postponed as long as possible. It is important for team members to be aware that ideas are not decisions. In Creative Collaboration you can put forward any idea/suggestion without being judged, getting hooked or made responsible for it. This is very important. If ideas are considered potential dangerous, then goodbye open-mindedness and goodbye ideas that can be game-changing.

The decisions are necessary and important. That is why they are the last step in the process. To make team members feel safe. There will be room for common decisions so it is OK to let go and play with ideas that, in the moment, makes you feel unsafe. You get a chance to kill them later - after you gave them a fair chance to emerge.

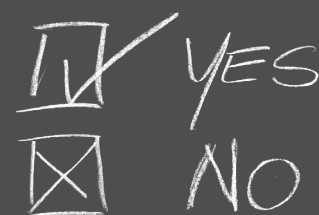
If the team have the resources, an option is to let two or more ideas live in parallel and, for a while, elaborate them further before a final decision have to be made.

- Decisions creates alignment
- Postpone decisions until you *have* to make them
- Decisions *can* be changed when you know more
- It is cheaper to change a decision that proves stupid, than to stick to it



## Decisions in Creative Collaboration

- In your team  
- With VIP's helping to develop your business

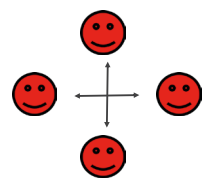
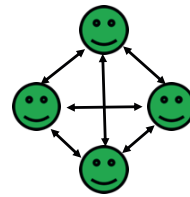
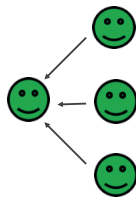


Academic methods deals with the past. Creativity deals with the future - or alternative ways of understanding the past. Blending academic and creative methods makes it possible to travel fast between the past, present and future, while processing a huge amount of different knowledge and ideas in a short time.

The 1 - 2 - Team model for Creative Collaboration and the associated ideation techniques can be used throughout the 24 steps in Disciplined Entrepreneurship. It offers an openminded and creative approach to your work.

The 1 - 2 - Team model is optimized to execute openminded work-processes where academic investigations and fact finding is empowered with creative ideas about what might be, what should we be aware off? and by generating hypotheses, that can be tested using scientific methods. This is the core of what creativity can offer to a startup. An access to bring your knowledge and ideas to the emerging future, which will come into being when you and your ideas starts stepping into it.

Using the model in your startup team, will help you to have more ideas, to blend knowledge in innovative ways and to make decisions on a much better and more diverse knowledge foundation. It will make you more aware of dominating patterns and blind spots in your field, besides enhancing your sensitivity to the market and help you to do better investigations in term of adding more knowledge and details.



**Ideation & Elaboration (NO judgement)**

**Openminded discussion**  
Listen, Ideate and Elaborate

**Decision making**

1. Start individually by emptying your head for immediate ideas
2. In pairs - Develop the ideas by using them as stepping stones
3. The whole team develops the ideas further
4. Now it is OK to have an openminded discussion about the ideas
5. Make decisions when they have to be made



# 5.

## Plug & Play Creativity for Disciplined Entrepreneurship



Disciplined Entrepreneurship, WILEY



In the following, you find guidelines of *how* to use the ideation techniques and Creative Collaboration model, while working through the 24 steps in Disciplined Entrepreneurship.

# 6.

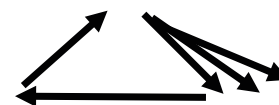
## Who is your customer?

- Using Creativity to do in-depth Market Research

The ideation techniques and Creative Collaboration with potential customers can help you to do in-depth market research by co-creating your idea into a business, and will be a valuable supplement to the more analytic approach you will also be using. It will help to uncover hidden applications of your idea/ technologies, neither you nor your customer will be able to come up with alone. It will help you to get a much better understanding of your potential customers value chains and the market opportunities associated to your idea/technology.

The creativity approach to do market analysis and segmentation, is to locate possible markets through ideation and to visit/invite customers/end-users from those markets to ideate and co-create prototypes where your idea/technology meet your customers need or pain in a new market. A need/pain that both you and your customer will only be aware of as a result of the creative process you do together.

- Ideate potential Markets for your idea
- On a more general level - What do your idea offer? Look for more markets requesting the more general idea behind your business
- Use Roleplay in the team to investigate and elaborate how your idea can fit potential markets
- Invite/visit representative End Users/Personas from the Beachhead Markets you identified to elaborate your idea and/or to co-create a prototype. This will also help you to profile your customers.



## Who is your customer?

- Step 1 - Market Segmentation
- Step 3 - Build an End User Profile
- Step 5 - Profile the Persona for the Beachhead Market





# 7.

## What can you do for your customer?

- Using Creativity to investigate your market and customer

Based on your research on the market and the Persona, the ideation techniques and Creative Collaboration approach will help you to collect more informations and to create different Full Life Cycle Use Case scenarios.

Through Roleplay and Prototyping with the team and identified Personas, you will be able to test and deepen your current understanding of how your Personas value chain can fit your product. Roleplaying and Prototyping makes it possible for you and your Persona to step into different possible futures and sense how your product might be designed and used here.

It will also help you generating and playing with you High-Level Product Specification e.g. in terms of a prototype formed as a Product Brochure.

■ Ideate several Use Cases in the team and use Roleplays to elaborate them.



■ Look for inspiring similar horizontal Use Cases and transfer them using Elaboration and/or Roleplays



■ Based on your Use Case work - Ideate and Elaborate a Product Brochure in the team



■ Based on your Use Case work - Ideate, Elaborate or Prototype a Product Brochure together with a Persona/End User



## What can you do for your customer?

Step 6 - Full Life Cycle Use Case  
Step 7 - High Level Product Specification



# 8.

## How does your customer acquire your product?

- Using Creativity to Elaborate your Product to match your Decision Making Unit (DMU)

Based on your research on the Decision Making Unit (DMU), you can Elaborate your product/business using Roleplay and Prototyping.

In a Roleplay the team members can get more insights about DMU by simulating a purchasing process (Process to Acquire a Paying Customer), where team members are assigned as the identified DMU members. Throughout the roleplay the team meets new challenges with new ideas to overcome them.

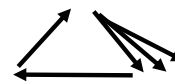
The ideas and insights you get from playing with your knowledge about DMU helps you to create a map of the Process to Acquire a Paying Customer

Finally Prototyping your product, preferably together with real potential members of DMU, will make your product and business match the market even better.

- Ideate or use Roleplay to simulate the Process to Acquire a Paying Customer



- Look for and transfer horizontal businesses with similar approaches to the Process to Acquire a Paying Customer. In this case a horizontal business, on a principle level, holds a similar DMU as yours.



- Based on your work on your DMU and the Proces to Acquire a Paying Customer, Elaborate or Prototype your product together with potential DMU members



## How does your customer acquire your product?

Step 12 - Determine the customers DMU

Step 13 - Map Process to Acquire a Paying Customer



# 9.

## How do you make money out of the product?

- Using Creativity to work with your Business Plan

In this section you should focus your creativity on creating an innovative Business Plan.

In most business areas or domains you find dominating business models. Before you decide for the same Business Model as your competitors, you should spend some creative effort in creating a new model.

Search for inspiration to your Business Model outside the area you are operating in. You can make a random search for alternative Business Plans or you can search in horizontal business areas, which have something more principal in common with yours. The latter may be easier to transfer to your business and they will, most likely, be regarded innovative in your business area.

When you have calculated the Cost of Customer Acquisition (COCA) you need creativity to step back and look for alternative Business Models that may reduce your costs. It will also be a continued creative process to find ways of reducing your COCA (and increasing LTV)

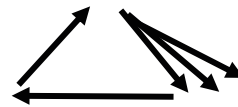
- Come up with initial ideas for a business plan and elaborate them a bit.



- Use the 17 general ideas for business plans in the book Disciplined Entrepreneurship as Stimuli for your business plan and elaborate them a bit.



- On a more general level - What is your business about? Look for horizontal businesses in other business areas and transfer their business plan



- When you found a business plan you like - Use the principal idea behind it to generate alternatives and elaborate them a bit.

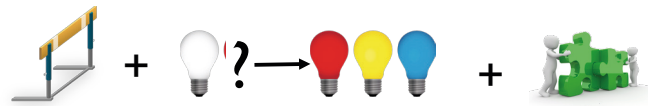


## How do you make money out of your product?

Step 15 - The Business Plan



- Look at the Sales Process to Acquire a Customer. Now Challenge each step in it. Does it have to be like that? Challenge each step and ideate Alternatives that will reduce your COCA



- Having calculated your COCA, Ideate ways of reducing it. You may use the list with focus points in the book Disciplined Entrepreneurship (p. 210)

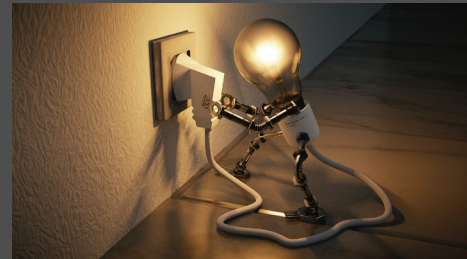


- Ideate alternative Business Models that will reduce your COCA. Remember to calculate the new COCA for each model that looks promising.



## How do you make money out of your product?

Step 19 - Calculate the Cost of Customer Acquisition (COCA)



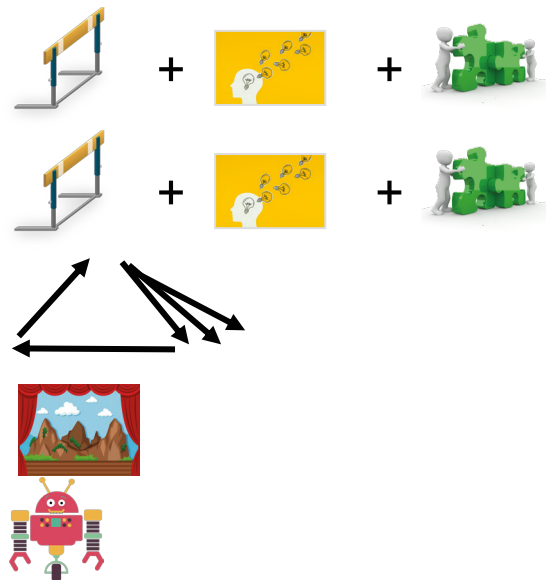
In this section you should focus your creativity on building a Minimum Viable Business Product (MVBP)

To build a MVBP is a creative challenge. Think in extremes? Do the car in a MVBP need an engine?, or will the customer be satisfied if we push the car while he steers it? Use the technique Challenge to challenge both important and random parts of your business. Do we need this?

For each Challenge you of cause have to ideate a MVBP. It will be helpful to coinsider your MVBP to be a fully functioning Prototype that you can sell and have feedback on.

A side win to this step is that you are likely to encounter some blind spots that have been paralyzing you throughout the first 21 steps in building your startup.

- Identify the 3 most important parts of your business and Challenge them - Do we need them? What happens if they are removed? Can they be replaced with something very simpel in a first MVBP?
- Do the same to random parts of your business in your quest for a MVBP
- Look for horizontal businesses in other domains, which successfully met the same challenge
- Use Roleplay to ideate on a challenge
- Prototype a MVBP that successfully meets the challenge



## How do you design and build your product?

Step 22 - Define the Minimum Viable Business Product (MVBP)





# 11.

## The Creativity Mindset Bootcamp

- Creating the Mindsets and Working Environment to do succesful startups

This handout has been developed to empower the process of creating a startup based on the book Disciplined Entrepreneurship - 24 steps to a successful startup with creativity.

The Creativity Techniques and the Creative Collaboration model in this handout is presented and trained during a 48h Creativity Mindset Bootcamp prior to the process of launching a startup using the 24 steps In Disciplined Entrepreneurship.

The Creativity Mindset Bootcamp is designed for startup teams at ESA-BIC Denmark`s LAUNCHPAD 2020. The purpose is to train and master how to merge the Creativity Techniques and Creative Collaboration with a startup process.

Even more important is that the bootcamp also equips the participants with a creative MINDSET, which is fundamental for sustaining an innovative working environment where successful startups can be launched.

# 12.

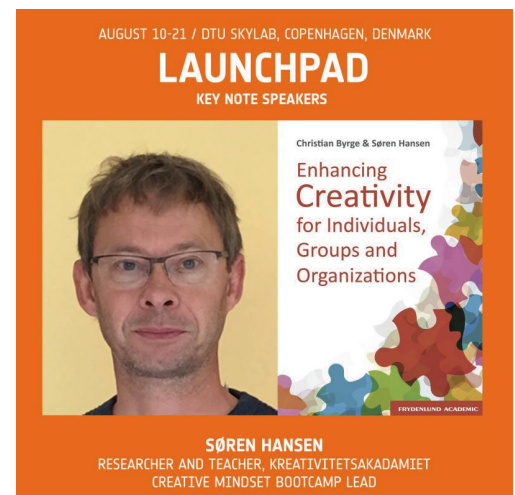
## About the author of this handout and facilitator of Creative Mindset Bootcamp

- Using Creativity to work with your Business Plan

Søren Hansen has researched how to Enhance Creativity for Individuals, Groups and Organizations for 15+ years. Based on the research he co-developed The Creative Platform and the Creative Genius education at Aalborg University.

Today Søren focus on teaching entrepreneurship and helping private and public organizations, enhancing creativity.

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- Disciplined Entrepreneurship, *Bill Aulet, WILEY*
- Enhancing Creativity for Individuals, Groups and Organizations, *Christian Byrge and Søren Hansen, Frydenlund Academic*
- Business Model Creativity: A Horizontal Insight Model, *Kristian Brøndum, Christian Byrge and Søren Hansen, Journal of Business Models*

August 10.-21. 2020

DTU Skylab, Copenhagen, Denmark

# LAUNCHPAD

by  **esa** business incubation centre  
Denmark

- 48h Creativity Mindset Boot Camp
- Creativity Plug-Ins
- Disciplined Entrepreneurship process
- Morning Creativity Training Programs
- Handout with all creativity methods merged with the 24 steps in Disciplined Entrepreneurship