

Generating Ideas

This page is an output of the Itana [Spring Face2Face 2016](#) meeting, contributed to the Itana wiki by the meeting attendees.

Definition

The process of generating and developing a pool of ideas for satisfying a need or solving a problem and sifting that pool into a workable set of useful ideas. These ideas have the support of the group that created them. Processing these ideas could involve classifying them according to some relevant framework.

Outputs

- One or more viable ideas for an issue or topic with definitions for the ideas

Context

- We are aware of a problem or need via a strategic plan, a work request, a governance group, or some other formal or informal communication of need.
- A catalyst exists for which ideas, solutions, et. al. are needed.
- This process is good to support the creation of some of the artifacts enumerated in the ITANA catalog.

Examples

- An undesired condition is defined (say, there are 20 versions of a technology throughout campus). EA is tasked with proposing one or more solutions/outcomes to this condition.
- Many application teams want to monitor many applications and would like to have a easier way to do so.
- EA is going to hold an all-day event and we want to brainstorm topics and build an agenda.
- Undergraduate Advisors want to envision what a dashboard for advisors could contain and look like
- An executive leader wants to replace an existing campus technology.
- Campus leadership wants to enable a new capability.
- A service owner needs to create, enhance, or deprecate a service
- A manual process needs to be modernized using 21st century technology
- A group lists a bunch of current state issues. The process may involve sorting those issues according to workflow or lifecycle stages.
- A state mandate is issued for stable tuition for 4 years

Source Material

Material that can be used as a source for ideas include:

- Strategic Plans (business and IT)
- Industry Trends
- IT Portfolio reports
- Existing EA representations
- IT work request system
- Leadership planning retreat
- Enterprise improvement suggestion program

Activities

This activity should include at least three aspects:

- The act of gathering a lot of ideas (ideation)
- The act of narrowing the list of ideas down to a manageable number of viable ideas. (winnowing)
- Classifying, Clarifying, defining and/or framing the ideas

Some best practices include:

- Use an Ice Breaker (“Yes, and...”, “Meet and greet”, etc.) to get the group thinking and build relationships.

[Architecture Leadership](#) > **Generating Ideas**



Links

- (to be completed)

Contributors

- (to be completed)

- Use facilitation tools (like [Appreciative Interviews](#)) to make the group comfortable and open with each other.
- Be aware of how introverts and extroverts interact.
- Use games and role-playing, scenarios of people using the idea to help people be spontaneous. ([Role Storming](#))
- Space is important. Be thoughtful of the space you are working in. Get people out of the normal work space.
- Consider and plan for supplies and materials needed to complete the exercise.
- Have a scribe and a neutral facilitator if possible.
- Consider and plan for recording the output and distributing it to participants.
- Tap a diversity of perspectives (people, backgrounds, experiences) to capture a breadth of ideas
- Mix "I" time (periods for people to think on their own) and group time.
- Break people into small teams and have them work independently for a while to prevent groupthink.
- Be explicit that this is a safe place. No criticizing ideas. "Yes, and..." type of input rather than "No, not...".
- Make sure you set ground rules and use facilitation practices to make sure everyone gets a voice.
- Be explicit about the constraints that bound the ideas or solutions.
- Be careful of seeding the topic with a preformed idea or example that will limit creativity. (Don't say, "Think of an animal like a whale" say, "Think of an animal")

Some well known techniques for ideation and or narrowing include:

- [25-10 Crowd-sourcing](#)
- [1-2-4-all](#)
- [Brainwriting](#)
- [SWOT analysis](#)
- [Note and Vote](#)
- Mindmapping
- Dot-voting
- [Rolestorming](#)
- Clustering (Post-its gathered and sorted into clusters of ideas)

[Brainstorming](#) is not recommended due to the propensity for groupthink

The outcome of this exercise, is a narrowed list of possible solutions, objects, goals, or outcomes. The items in the list might additionally be classified

Related Skills

- Meeting Planning
- Meeting Management
- Personal Leadership
- Building Relationships
- Building Political Currency

Possible Next Steps

- Choose and create an artifact that reflects the chosen idea(s) that meet unmet needs