

Discussion Questions

1. How would you define innovation in the context of testing?
2. What are the disadvantages of innovation?
3. What is keeping you from being innovative?
4. How can you remove obstacles to innovation?

Brainstorming Techniques

Mind Mapping

A mind map is a diagram that organizes information around a central topic. Mind maps provide a pictorial method of recording and structuring knowledge and ideas.

Tony Buzan suggests seven steps to making a mind map (adapted from [1]):

1. Start in the centre of a blank page turned sideways. Why? Because starting in the centre gives your brain freedom to spread out in all directions and to express itself more freely and naturally.
2. Use an image or picture for your central idea. Why? Because an image *is* worth a thousand words and helps you use your imagination.
3. Use colours throughout. Why? Because colours are as exciting to your brain as are images.
4. Connect your main branches to the central image and connect your second- and third-level branches to the first and second levels, etc. Why? Because your brain works by *association*. It likes to link two (or three or four) things together.
5. Make your branches curved rather than straight-lined. Why? Because having nothing but straight lines is *boring* to your brain.
6. Use one key word per line. Why? Because single key words give your mind map more power and flexibility.
7. Use images throughout. Why? Because each image, like the central image, is also worth a thousand words.

Impact Mapping

An impact map is a version of a mind map, created collaboratively to visualize scope and underlying assumptions [2]. The impact map is created in four steps, answering the questions:

1. *Why* are we doing this – what is the purpose? What goals are we trying to achieve?
2. *Who* can help us reach our goals, and who could impede success? This defines the *actors*.
3. *How* should the actors' behaviour change? This defines *impacts*.
4. *What* can we do to support the needed impacts? This defines the *deliverables*.

6-3-5 Brainwriting

6-3-5 Brainwriting [3] is a method aimed at promoting creativity and innovation in groups. Six participants spend five minutes writing down three ideas on a piece of paper, and then pass the work sheet with the ideas on to the group member on their right. The participants are free to look at, and take inspiration from, the ideas on the sheet passed to them at the beginning of each round. After six rounds and 30 minutes, a total of 108 ideas will have been generated.

Changing Perspectives

Changing perspectives is often a successful way to brainstorm, whether individually or as a group. John Boitnott [4] suggests a number of approaches:

- *Teleporting Storming*: Imagine yourself in a different place, or a different time. Would you approach the issue differently?
- *Figuring Storming*: Try to put yourself in someone else's shoes and imagine how they would view the issue. If you find this type of roleplaying hard to engage in, try instead to just imagine that one or two of your attributes – e.g. gender or age – are different.

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[1] <http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/mind-mapping/>

[2] <http://www.impactmapping.org/drawing.php>

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6-3-5_Brainwriting

[4] <http://www.inc.com/john-boitnott/10-longtime-brainstorming-techniques-that-still-work.html>