CREATIVITY TOOLKIT

Tools and techniques to reintroduce fun and energy back into the workplace



This toolkit contains a selection of creativity techniques to help you and your team develop great, new, and diverse ideas to solve your problems.

Try them out – creativity is like a muscle, the more you use it the easier it becomes!

CONTENTS

1. Why we need creativity tools

- 2. Preparation
- Guided Visioning
- Root Cause Analysis
- Creative Breaks
- 3. Brainstorming techniques
 - Crazy Eight
 - Colliding Worlds
 - Worst Ideas
 - Walk it and Talk it
 - Re-Expression
 - Random links
 - Revolution
 - Related worlds

- 4. Selecting ideas
 - Disney's Creativity Approach
 - Judgement Triangle
 - Laddering
- 5. Appendix: Examples

Is the brain on our side?

As soon as we're born, we start receiving huge amounts of information every day from our senses. To ensure our brains can process, retain, retrieve and use what we've learned, it stores information in a similar way to a file cabinet – putting together pieces of data that relate to each other.

This is very helpful when we're trying to remember something or repeat what we've done before. However, it can be a drawback when we want to think differently about challenges or create new solutions.

Thinking differently

Creativity tools can help us break out of our usual ways of thinking – it encourages us to see the world from a different perspective, make new connections and come up with some wild and wonderful ideas!

There are many tools available; this pack highlights some of our favourites at Gate One.



PREPARATION

Getting the brain ready to

create



1.1 GUIDED VISIONING

Getting the brain ready to create

People often say an idea just comes to them or they are at their most creative when they are running, showering, taking a walk etc.

What these things have in common is that they are times when we're not focussed on a task. The brain is **relaxed** – in neuroscience language, the brain's default mode network (DMN*) is engaged, and research shows the DMN is important for creative idea generation – it helps you come up with many more ideas.

Guided visioning is a great way to help people relax and move away from task focussed thinking, and should be used to kick off a creative / ideation session. There's a sample three-minute guided visioning script in the appendix – and you can find more online if you want different lengths.

How to run a guided visioning session



Set the scene: Find a quiet place without distractions (physical or virtual). Ask participants to sit/lie in a position that feels comfortable. Use a calm and even voice to explain the purpose of the guided visioning session - think Stephen Fry reading a bedtime story!

Guided script: Continue using a voice that's soft and slow while reading your planned script. Don't rush and be comfortable with pauses. Breathe evenly yourself as you do this. An example of a script you could use is included <u>here</u>.

Return to the room: Once you've read the script and people have opened their eyes, you're ready to tap into your team's creativity. Don't rush this – let people move easily and comfortably from the visioning exercise into the work.



Why

Switches on parts of the brain that we use when being creative; helps transition from 'work day busy-ness' into a creative mindset.



When

At the beginning of any session where people will be asked to generate ideas or thinking outside the every day.



Who

- A facilitator
- Anyone involved in the creative session



Duration

5 -10 mins

- Set up 1 mins
- The script 3-8 mins
- Return 1 mins

1.2 FIVE WHYS

Getting ready to create with focus

5 WHYS is a technique to explore the underlying cause-and-effect of particular problems. An individual or team successively asks the question "Why?" to try to uncover the root cause of a situation. The number '5' comes from anecdotal observation that five iterations of asking why is usually sufficient enough to reveal the root cause. Used appropriately, 5 WHYS can uncover root causes that were not very clear or obvious, without deep statistical analysis/research. The technique originated in Japan in the 1930s is still widely used today.

It's simple, and it works.

- Set up: Gather people who are familiar with the specifics of the context and share the problem statement you're trying to explore (eg 'software release A resulted in too much user resistance' or 'team B aren't meeting their productivity targets'). Write this on your whiteboard (physical or virtual).
- Ask the first WHY: Ask why this problem happened and write answers near the problem statement. Search for responses grounded in fact where you can. Be specific (eg 'targets are too high given changes in the market' rather than 'targets').
- WHY again (and again): Keep asking "why" to each of the successive answers you write down for each response, until you reach the root cause of the problem. Each time, frame the question in response to the answer you've just recorded. An example of how to use this technique is included here.

Know when to stop: Getting to a root cause may take more or less than five "why"s. Check alignment as you move through the questioning, ensuring your team sees eye-to-eye with each of the questions being answered as well as the final root cause.

Whu

Helps identify the root cause of a problem, and doesn't need a lot of complicated analysis.

When



Before an ideation session, to identify the root cause to be solved; best for simple to moderately difficult contexts (eg project delays, customer complaints, product defects).



Who

- A facilitator
- Owner of the business problem
- People who have experience in the business area, or people who have experienced the challenge



Duration

10-30 mins (minimum)

- Set up 2-5 mins
- Why exploration 5-20 mins
- Agree root cause 5 mins

1.3 CREATIVE BREAKS

Getting the brain ready to create

The brain works best when we are feeling at ease and relaxed. Taking a short break to perform a creative activity can help to reset the mind ahead of an ideation session; often leading to more innovative ideas.

3

Examples of creative activities





Colouring





Lego / Play-doh

Sorting a shuffled deck of cards

- **Decide on the right creative activity:** Consider the size of your group, the materials you have or could obtain and whether you group is in-person, virtual; or hybrid. Tip: Origami can be a good activity if you have virtual attendees as you just need a square piece of paper.
- 2 Set up: This activity could be done solo or in small groups. Ensure your participants have the materials and ask them to spend 5-10 mins performing the activity.
 - **Present back:** Ask participants to quickly feedback how they got on with the task. You can also make this competitive if you ask participants to vote on the best output. Or for speed, just ask one 'feeling word' from each person.

Next steps: Take that creative mindset into your brainstorming or ideation session.

Why Gives y

Gives your participants a break and allows their minds to wander, helping to increase creativity.

When

At the beginning of any session where people will be asked to generate ideas or thinking outside the every day.



Who

A facilitator
Participants



Duration

5-15 mins

- Set up 1 min
- Creative activity 3-10 mins
- Present back 1-3 mins

CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES

Coming up with (really!) new ideas

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2.0 BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES

Brainstorming 101

Brainstorming is a process to generate new ideas, for possible further development into solutions. Better solutions are more likely if the starting ideas list is large, bold and inventive. Different brainstorming techniques leverage the collective creativity of the group, helping teams go further than obvious solutions and towards breakthrough ideas.

6 brainstorming guidelines help create a safe environment where people feel they can generate and contribute any ideas, no matter what creativity technique you apply.



Start with a problem statement



Aim for quantity



Defer judgement and encourage all (wild) ideas



One conversation at a time



Be visual (think pictures, lego etc)



Build on each other's ideas ('yes, and...')

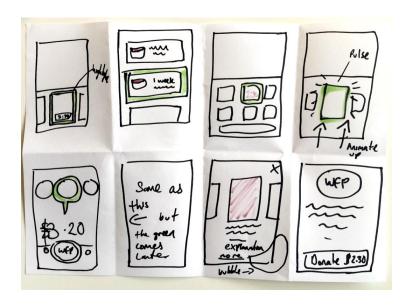


2.1 CRAZY EIGHT

Fast and furious creativity

This approach is especially effective when there are **introverts** in a group as it gives them time to think through their ideas in a quiet environment and then provides a space to share ideas during the feedback session.

- **Set up:** Clearly articulate the problem statement that the ideas should be looking to solve.
- 2 Ideation: Give each person a sheet of A4 sheet and ask them to fold it in half 3 times, then unfold it voila! you have eight boxes. Set a timer for eight minutes and ask everyone to, in silence, draw or write (a minimum of) eight ideas. The frenzy that follows can produce some weird and wonderful ideas.
- **Feedback:** Ask everyone to share their ideas (2-3min each) without judgement.
- **Consolidate & next steps:** Identify the themes and start to build on one another's ideas. Use the 'yes and' principle i.e. start each sentence with the phrase 'yes, and'. Collectively agree which ideas to take forward.



Why Generate the easy ideas and start to push people to be more creative



When At the beginning of a creative / innovation session, particularly when there are introverts in the room

Who



 Typically 6-12 participants who have knowledge of the challenge



Duration

15-30 mins

- Session set-up 2 mins
- Ideation 8 mins
- Feedback 2 mins per person
- Consolidate 5-15 mins
- Next steps 5 mins

2.2 COLLIDING WORLDS

Forcing connections for new insights

- **Set-up:** Develop visual stimuli that show two unrelated objects/scenes (e.g. below) maybe 3 or 4 different pairs depending on how big your group is and how long you have (truly random images can be generated using AI!). Agree the challenge you want participants to ideate around (e.g. come up with a new way of meeting customers' needs).
- **2 Force a connection:** Split the group into teams of 3-4 people and give each team one of the dual images. Ask them to find a connection between the two items, starting by thinking about attributes and associations for each image, then thinking about how these could collide. Use the new 'forced connection' insights to develop ideas that will solve the challenge you've posed. Each idea should be written on to a single post-it note (physical or virtual). Once a team finishes with one 'colliding worlds' dual image, give them another do this up to three times and see how whacky their ideas can get!
 - **Feedback:** Get each team to play back their ideas (pause for laughter!). As thy do, move their favourite ideas (on post-its) onto the main board (physical or virtual) and cluster them to the identify the themes.
 - **Consolidate and next steps:** Start to build on one another's ideas, using the 'yes and' principle (i.e. start each sentence with 'yes and'). Collectively agree which ideas to take forward.



Why

Helps teams think more broadly about your challenge and come up with new possibilities (eg improve products / services / processes).

When



Once the root causes have been identified

Who

- A facilitator
- *Typically 6-12 participants from across the teams affected by the challenge*
- Think about bringing in someone unconnected as a different voice

Duration



- Session set-up 5 mins
- Force a connection 15-45 mins
- Feedback 5 mins each group
- Consolidate 15 mins
- Next steps 5 mins

2.3 WORST IDEAS!

Finding the beauty in the bad

Set-up: Split your group into 2 teams (or paired teams). Give everyone some paper (or a virtual working space) to take notes. Remind them of the challenge they are there to solve.

Worst ideas: Ask each team to come up with the absolute *worst* possible solution to the challenge – the type of idea that could get them fired or make embarrassing headlines in the local paper! Spend 5-10 minutes brainstorming and agreeing the absolute worst response.

Switcheroo: As each team to swap with the team next to them, take the 'worst idea' they been given and think about how to tweak, evolve and adapt it to make it a great idea! Spend 5-10 minutes turning straw into gold.

Share and consolidate: Let each team share their golden nuggets, and start to build on one another's ideas (using 'yes and')

Why A fast way to trigger unique and creative ideas.

When

When you have a problem statement and need some rapid creative brainstorming.



Who

- A facilitator
- At least 2 groups/teams



• Set-up – 2 mins



- Worst idea 5-10 mins
- Golden idea 5-10 mins
- Consolidate 5-20 mins • (depending on how many groups)

2.4 WALK IT AND TALK IT

Let the ideas flow

- **Set-up:** Split your group into pairs, remind them of the problem statement, and tell them to walk for 10-20m (let them know exactly when they're due back!). If the team is virtual, ask them to call each other and walk.
 - **Stream of consciousness 1:** Tell each pair to set a timer and give each speaker 5 minutes to talk nonstop without the other person interrupting, commenting or responding (as difficult as that might be!). Individuals should say whatever they are thinking and keep talking. If anyone gets stuck, their partner should relay the task again, and any tensions around it and see what comes to mind.
 - **Stream of consciousness 2:** When the first 5 minutes time is up, walk back the way you came and let the other person talk uninterrupted for 5 mins. Again, their partner should prompt and remind them of the challenge if they get stuck but not start to build or respond.

Consolidate and share: Once back in the room (physical or virtual) the pairs can share their reflections and favourite ideas, then the full team can start to consolidate and reflect on the results.

Why

Engaging in stream of consciousness means individuals are more likely to stumble upon different thoughts and ideas in response to the challenge.

When



When you need some rapid brainstorming and to shift the energy in a broader workshop



• Team split into pairs



2.3 RE-EXPRESSION*

It's all in a name

Re-expression aims to break-down the pre-conceived ideas, experiences or associations people may have with particular words, phrases or problems. It helps participants reframe and push their thinking beyond the obvious.

- **Define the challenge:** Ask each participant to write down a description of the challenge / issue you are seeking to innovate and share them back to the group. Split the group into teams of 3-4 and ask them to pick one of the descriptions related to the topic.
- **Re-express in different words:** Considering their chosen issue description, ask each team to come up with as many related words, metaphors or phrases for that topic. For example, if considering "fitness", they may think of words like "endurance", strength", "health" or "play". Then think about the associations they have with the new words and how this could inspire ideas for the original statement.
- **Re-express in different senses:** Once the teams have finished the first exercise, ask them to consider how to they could express the issue through different mediums; e.g. could they draw it, act it out or build it out of Lego. Then think about how this could inspire the original issue, what connections can the teams see that may not have been initially obvious.
 - **Re-express from another perspective:** Next ask the teams to try to think about the issue from the perspective of different persona e.g. how would a child describe this? how would an alien first arriving to earth see this? Again, think about how this inspires a different response to the original challenge.
- **Brainstorm and consolidate ideas:** Identify the themes from these exercises and ask the teams to share these back to the group. Pick a couple of ideas and begin to build on these to formulate ideas and next steps.



Why Useful for breaking the constraints put on us by the language the business uses.

When

At the beginning of the ideation process as it helps frame the challenge to be solved.

Who



A facilitator

Typically 6-12 Participants from across the teams impacted by the challenge



Duration

90 mins +

- Session set-up 10 mins
- Defining 10 mins
- Re-expression activities 30 mins each group (~10 mins per activity)
- Feedback and brainstorming 30 mins
- Next steps 10 mins

Stealing with pride

1

Stimulus: Ahead of the creative/ideation session, think about the related worlds for your challenge so that you can develop the stimulus, i.e. companies/groups that have activities similar to the area in which you are having challenges – they do not need to be in same industry or your competitors. For example, if you are looking at supply chain issues, you may look at Zara's effective stock control system or Amazon's delivery network.

Alternatively, you can ask the participants to brainstorm a list of related worlds at the beginning of the session.

- 2 **Related world lessons:** Split the group into 2-3 teams and give them a related world. Using their experience and/or internet research, ask them to identify the aspects of the other organisation / group that makes it successful in the area you want to ideate. Put each lesson learnt onto a post-it note (real or virtual).
- 3

Back home: Ask the teams to take one of the lessons and think about how it can be applied in your organisation. Do this for up to three lessons. Get each group to feedback what they have learnt.



Consolidate & next steps: Identify the themes and start to build on one another's ideas. Use the 'yes and' principle i.e. start each sentence with 'yes and'. Collectively agree which ideas to take forward.

Why

This technique is useful for learning lessons from other organisations. It's especially useful when generating ideas around how a business operates e.g. process improvement, business issues.

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When Once the root causes have been identified



Who

- A facilitator
- Typically 6-12 participants split into groups of 3 to 4 participants

Duration



90 mins +

- Session set up 2-5 mins
- Stimulus 15 mins
- Lessons 30 mins
- At home 20 mins
- Consolidation 15 mins
- Next steps 10 mins

?What*If! – Sticky* Wisdom (2002)

DEVELOPING IDEAS

Choosing what to take forward



3.1 DISNEY'S CREATIVITY APPROACH

Dare to dream

Walt Disney had an idea to make a full-length animated film. To make his dream come true he knew he would need to understand how to overcome the challenges he may face in the process – he developed an approach to consider all angles. The result was Snow White.

Set up: Share the problem statement with the group and then split them into teams of 3 or 4 people.

Roles: Set a timer and ask each group to collectively take on the three roles in turn: 2 Dreamer role: The role of the dreamer is to imagine what's possible. The group should take the initial idea and develop it by imaging what it could be without constraint (eq budget/time/resources) - don't worry about the real world. Write the expanded idea on a flipchart (real or virtual).

Realist Role: The role of the realist is to take the idea and question whether it is possible or practical. Take the 'Dreamer' vison and brainstorm, record how it actually could be implemented. Critic role: The role of the critic is to examine the ideas from a more critical viewpoint, scrutinize and refine. Try to find all the faults on each point of the Dreamer's and Realist's ideas.

- **Repeat:** Cycle around the three roles until the idea is fully developed or until it has been shown to be impractical.
 - **Next steps:** Use the final output to develop the idea and agree next steps towards implementation.

Why

This technique is useful to understand if / how an idea can be developed further



When

Once the spark of the ideas have been developed in an ideation / creative session



Who

- A facilitator
 - Typically 6-12 participants who will be involved in the development and implementation of the idea



Duration

90 mins +

- Session set up 2 -5 mins
- Dreamer role 20 mins
- Realist role 20 mins
- Critic role 20 mins
- Repeat all roles till idea is fully developed
- Next steps 10 mins

3.2 JUDGEMENT TRIANGLE

Sense check critically

- **Set up:** Compile a list of all the ideas identified in your ideation session(s) and share these with the group. If your group is over 6 then you may want to break into smaller teams.
 - **Evaluate:** Going through each idea one by one discuss each point of the triangle. Make sure to jot down all the points brought up in discussions both positive and negative: On-brief: Does the idea fully meet the brief and align with your overall strategy? If not, then go no further.

Enactable: Is this idea actual possible given the current context? If it cannot be done, then it doesn't count as a true idea.

Viable: Is the financial/benefits case sufficient? If it isn't going to be viable then it will not benefit anyone.

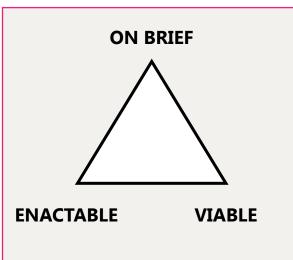
As soon as an idea fails any of the criteria, reject it, or change a fundamental part of it in order to make it acceptable.

3

2

Feedback: If you have broken the group out into smaller groups then take some time to feedback the decisions to the rest of the group.

Next steps: Take the final list of ideas which have been deemed on-brief, enactable and viable and agree the best next steps towards implementation.



Why

This technique is useful to critically evaluate and narrow down all the ideas you have come up with and understand whether they could work in reality.



When

Once a list of ideas have been developed in an ideation / creative session



Who

- A facilitator
- The team who will be involved in the development and implementation of the idea



Duration

30-60 mins dependant on the number of ideas to go through

- Session set up 5 mins
- Idea evaluation 20-40 mins
- Feedback & next steps 5-20 mins

3.3 LADDERING

Deciding on the 'best of the best'

- **Set up:** Start by sorting your ideas into a list, considering only the most viable ideas, and make this visible to the group. Tip: It could be useful to write each of the ideas on cards for this exercise and move them about visually (physical or virtual).
- 2 **Compare:** Take the first two ideas on your list and ask the group to compare these and decide which they view as the most important, beneficial and/or time-critical to implement.

Position the ideas visually to reflect the 'laddering' of importance.

- **Repeat:** Take the next idea on your list and ask the group to compare this idea to the deprioritised idea currently at the bottom of your 'ladder'. '
 - If it is more important, beneficial and/or time-critical, then compare it to the idea above and position it to reflect whether it is more / less important.
 - If it is less so then put it at the bottom of the 'ladder'.
 - Repeat this step until all your ideas have been considered. If the group is having problems deciding which is more important ask them to consider the following question... 'if you had only 1,000 [pounds / dollars / bucks etc] to spend, which idea would you spend more money on?'
 - **Next steps:** Use the final 'ladder' as your priority list to agree which ideas to move forward into implementation.



Why

This technique allows you to narrow down and prioritise your ideas collectively.



When

Once a list of ideas have been developed in an ideation / creative session.



Who

- A facilitator
- The team who will be involved in the development and implementation of the idea



Duration

45-60 mins dependant on the number of ideas to go through

- Session set up 5 mins
- Idea comparison– 30-45 mins (aim for around 5 mins discussion per idea)
- Next steps 10 mins

APPENDIX 1.1 GUIDED VISIONING – 3-MIN EXAMPLE

NOTE: Anything in square brackets [...] is NOT to be said out loud, they are a note for you to do something eg. [pause].

Begin by finding a quiet and comfortable place to relax without distractions. Sit or lie down in a position that feels comfortable to you, and gently begin to close your eyes. [PAUSE]

Take a moment to focus on your breath, allowing it to slow and deepen naturally. [PAUSE]

As you breathe deeply, imagine yourself standing in a lush, vibrant meadow on a warm summer day. [PAUSE] Feel the softness of the grass beneath your bare feet and the gentle breeze brushing against your skin. [PAUSE] Take a moment to immerse yourself in the beauty and tranquillity of this natural setting. [LONGER PAUSE]

In the distance, you notice a sparkling, crystal-clear stream. As you walk towards it, you can hear the soothing sound of water trickling over smooth stones. [PAUSE] As you reach the edge of the stream, take a moment to observe its clarity and brilliance. [LONGER PAUSE]

Imagine stepping into the stream. [PAUSE] Feel the coolness of the water as it surrounds your feet and ankles. With each step you take, imagine the water becoming warmer and more comforting. [PAUSE] Allow the stream to carry away any tension or stress you may feel as if gently washing them away. [PAUSE] As you walk through the stream, notice the colourful fish swimming gracefully beneath the water's surface. Observe the vibrant hues and patterns of their scales as they glide effortlessly. [PAUSE] As you watch them, you can't help but feel a sense of serenity and peace. [LONGER PAUSE]

Further downstream, you come across a small waterfall. The sound of cascading water fills the air, creating a symphony of tranquillity. [PAUSE] Imagine yourself standing under the waterfall, allowing the water to cascade gently over your body. [PAUSE] Feel its refreshing and rejuvenating energy washing away any lingering stress or worries. [PAUSE] As you step out from under the waterfall, you feel completely revitalized and renewed. Take a moment to bask in this newfound sense of relaxation and inner peace. [LONGER PAUSE] Allow the beauty of this natural oasis to nourish your mind, body, and spirit. [LONGER PAUSE]

Start to bring your awareness back to the present moment. [PAUSE] Take a few deep breaths and notice the sounds around you. [PAUSE] Gently wiggle your fingers and toes. [PAUSE] When you're ready, gradually open your eyes. [PAUSE]

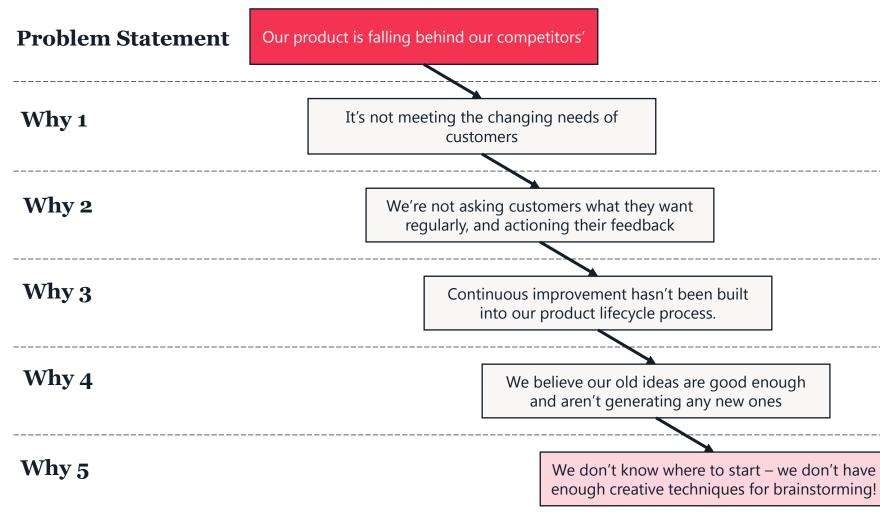
As we breathe together, I encourage you to carry this sense of tranquillity with you as you continue with your day, knowing that you can return to this peaceful meadow and stream whenever you need a moment of calm. [PAUSE]

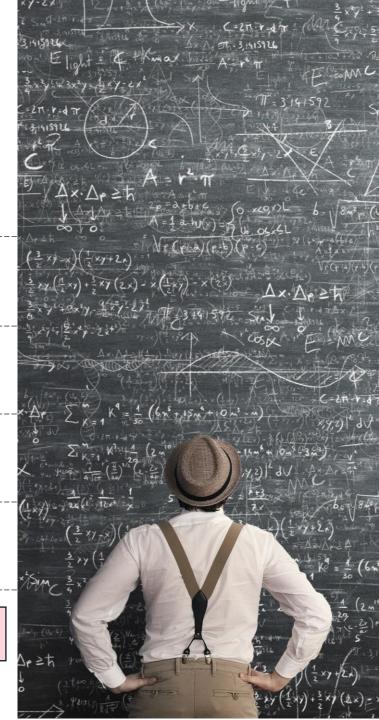


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APPENDIX 1.2 FIVE WHYS - EXAMPLE

Ok, the below is slightly tongue in cheek! But you get the idea – it's a very easy technique to apply. More complex scenarios will likely have multiple branches of 'WHY' responses at each level – all to be explored.





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creativity is intelligence having fun

Einstein



FURTHER INFORMATION

Gate One is a leading digital and business transformation consultancy, part of the global marketing and communications firm, Havas.

We work with the leaders of some of the world's most **innovative and influential** organisations to conceive and deliver the **big ideas** that will bring about **meaningful change**.



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