

Enhanced Ideation with an IdeaKeg

An independent investigation by

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Introduction

Innovate or die has become the stark and exciting reality faced by 21st Century businesses, but many of them do not know how to promote creative thinking and problem solving. One of the best solutions is to use creativity tools, which are adjunctive to the creative process and, because they can be used by anyone, capitalize on in-house talent. We conducted a field study on one such tool, Kiln Ideas Ltd.'s IdeaKeg™, to see if it can outperform conventional brainstorming.

The IdeaKeg Process

The IdeaKeg is a tool for facilitating group problem-solving in business settings, and is used optimally in a workplace group of 6-12 with either an outsider or group member serving as the facilitator who coordinates the process and records the ideas of the group. The group begins by presenting a problem that needs to be solved, and then opens the IdeaKeg and uses the contents in conjunction with brainstorming and forced analogies to solve the problem. IdeaKeg is a component of Kiln's broader framework for the early stages of front-end innovation.

Scientific Underpinnings of the IdeaKeg

To date, research has not found a single best method for creating solutions to ill-defined or open-ended problems. A review of the research on creative problem-solving, creativity, intelligence, improvisation, and commercial applications of cultural anthropology, demonstrated that the IdeaKeg embodies all of these theories.

Methods

This study entailed solving challenges that were salient to an eldercare living facility by using either conventional brainstorming or the IdeaKeg. We conducted solution-generating sessions to produce a list of solutions that were assessed by three key stakeholders on seven measures of creativity:

- *Novel*: different from what the judges had encountered previously
- *Useful/Practical*: something that people could actually do
- *Readily Implementable*: could be done easily and/or in the very near future
- *Valuable*: worthwhile to do, profitable
- *Elegant*: does a lot with a little
- *Aesthetically Pleasing*: the solution has pizzazz
- *Overall/General*: how much the judge liked
- the idea in general

Results

Despite the control group (no IdeaKeg) having higher performance than the experimental group at baseline, we found that the IdeaKeg significantly outperformed brainstorming on the metrics Useful/Practical, Valuable, Elegant, and Overall, though there were no significant differences for Novel, Readily Implementable, or Aesthetically Pleasing. Moreover, the IdeaKeg produced a much larger set of ideas, which dovetails with comments made by participants that the IdeaKeg was fun and had an energizing effect.

Conclusion

Despite the potential setbacks of fatigue from doing two sessions, a learning curve, and a practice effect in the control group, the IdeaKeg outperformed conventional brainstorming, and reportedly promoted fun and engagement in the process.

With businesses facing high stakes in their innovation initiatives, evidence-based practices can help reduce risk in the innovation portfolio.

Given our results, we conclude that the IdeaKeg is one such practice; it is an effective tool for facilitating the creative problem-solving process in order to generate not just a higher quantity of ideas, but a higher quality of ideas.



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