

Random word technique

You can't use up creativity.
The more you use, the
more you have.

Maya Angelou
Entrepreneur



What the tool is

The Random word technique allows us to make free associations between something apparently unrelated to the presenting problem and the problem itself, giving creative insights not accessible using more linear problem-solving methods.

When to use it

- When you need to look beyond the obvious for a solution.

What you need

- Paper and pen or flipchart and marker pens.

How to use it

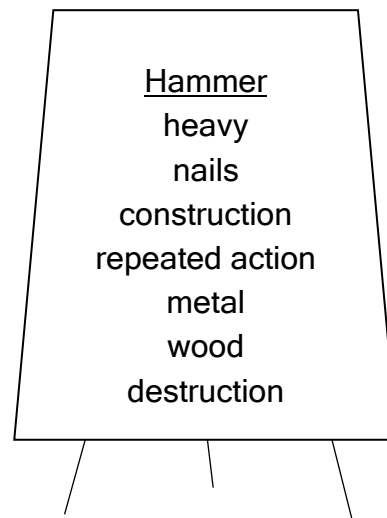
State the problem to be solved. Select a random book, random page and random line number. Find the first noun on the chosen line and write it on a flipchart. Ask the group to call out anything they associate with the chosen word - it does not matter how outlandish their suggestions are - in fact, the more creative, the better. Write each word or phrase on the flipchart as it is called out. There should be no discussion at this point.

When no further ideas are forthcoming, restate the original problem and ask the group to freely associate the brainstormed ideas with the original problem. They can combine the ideas to form new associations with the original problem.

For example:

A restaurant owner is concerned that, because of the location of her restaurant, she is not attracting the volume of the trade she needs. Although the restaurant is in the centre of a major city, it is on a side-street off a main shopping street from which it is not visible. She wants as many ideas as possible of how to attract more people to the restaurant.

After selecting a random book, page and line, the first noun on the line is 'hammer'. The group's suggestions include:



The group now starts to associate the ideas freely with the original problem. Ideas include:

- Heavy metal and other themed music nights to attract the different audiences (heavy and metal).
- Children are given pizza bases and a variety of toppings and encouraged to decorate the pizzas themselves, which are then cooked and served (construction).
- Greek-themed evenings with Greek food, music and plate smashing (destructive).
- Loyalty cards offering a free meal after each six purchased (repeated action).
- Beautician offering manicures/pedicures before lunch (nails).

Points to watch out for

Participants may, at first, try to make logical links between the random word associations and the original problem. Help them to understand that the power of the technique comes from free association and combining ideas to make new associations.

Reference

de Bono, E. (2009) Lateral Thinking: A Textbook of Creativity. London: Penguin.

Source: The Smart solutions book by David Cotton

End

Get in touch about our programmes:

enquiries@robertsontraining.co.uk

01786 447 548