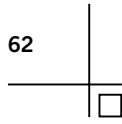


■ Using Jump-Starting: Stimulating New Connections

Breakthrough creativity will not come from walking on the well-traveled path of your company's history. Jump-starting requires changing systems: planning, measuring, designing, financing, marketing, manufacturing, and hiring. Sometimes the first step to creating is by starting from scratch.

This breakthrough strategy is not suited for a stable company with a solid market share that needs to be protected from competitors, unless it can be introduced in a smaller part of the organization that is in crisis or performing exceptionally well. Otherwise, healthy operating units will resist these changes because the intervention will impair existing business structures and efficiencies. It is almost impossible to “destroy” the firm and sustain established, effective systems at the same time. However, sometimes senior leaders will elect to create a crisis in an effort to jump-start their firm out of mediocrity. Without this, radical innovation is likely to succeed only at the margins of the firm, where change is possible and policies and procedures are not entrenched. It is usually easier to change 20 percent of the firm by 80 percent than it is to change 80 percent of the firm by 20 percent.

Using jump-starting to create a wild and freewheeling experience requires some careful thought and planning. As you initiate jump-starting at your organization, pay careful attention to the environment, people, and processes. Remember that jump-starting processes are intense, and pacing is essential to avoid burnout. Moreover, one cannot expect inspired ideas on demand. Optimal experiences for peak creativity—called *flow*—depend on the union of well-matched goals, abilities, and concentration.⁶ Self-consciousness can make it hard to achieve such optimal states, and pressure can create discomfort, distraction, or resentment. You must be vigilant for good ideas when they occur rather than forcing them to happen. You need to facilitate breakthrough ideas by focusing on environment, group design, and problem definition.



Environment

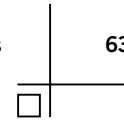
Your team will need the space and freedom to create. Help them along by creating a stimulating environment. Use games and physical activities to energize the participants. Sensory stimulation—images, music, textures, scents, and flavors—can help elicit connections between the mind and the physical world. Fun and pleasure tend to coincide with the flow experience, which is the goal of a jump-start brainstorming process.

Often the best way to jump-start a new idea is to leave the office and work with potential clients because they will offer a new context for generating ideas. Similarly, many companies visit specialized jump-starting facilities such as the Eureka Ranch in Cincinnati, Ohio, or the knOwhere Store in Palo Alto, California, to challenge conventional thinking, develop teamwork, and energize the group. Such an off-site, facilitated excursion allows the group to escape the bounds of their usual work setting. The Eureka Ranch crafts a dynamic environment in many different ways.⁷ Its staff employs a process that focuses a person or group on a problem and introduces diverse and disorienting stimuli and activities that force new associations. These new ideas can then be developed into practical concepts through trial and error. Although facilitators can be helpful at the start, eventually the team members become trained to run a jump-start on their own.

Group Design

Carefully consider the group of people who participate in a jump-start effort. Typically, small groups are more effective at generating ideas because a tight-knit group will have a greater sense of ownership, and members are more likely to have a closer connection with the group experience, improving rapport and helping ideas to flow. Smaller groups also make things happen because they are not bogged down by size. If jump-starting took place in a larger R&D unit, it might take forever.

Good ideas come when there is a tension created by different perspectives about the task, so this should be a goal when



you select people to participate.⁸ Whenever possible, choose the participants to bring functional diversity to the team, and when you let them loose, make sure their style of interaction encourages new ideas, because conflict about the process is not helpful. (This doesn't mean that everyone needs to get along, but they do need to be able to create healthy tension and solve it creatively.) Specialists may be particularly useful at certain points in the jump-start process, involved with the group for a specific period of time. For example, content experts can provide a quick and easy source of information about a problem, and jump-start facilitators can inject energy into the group or guide the participants through a sequence of jump-start steps.

Problem Definition

A common mistake in the jump-start process is incorrectly identifying the problem to be solved or the challenge to be met. At Fluke, Parzybok saw that the problem was not about making the company's existing products better; the problem was about discovering client needs. Once Fluke identified the correct problem and outcome, the company could move ahead to generate ideas and select appropriate solutions.

One way to identify the right problem is to keep asking *why*, like a small child. Why do we have this problem? Why is that?" Sometimes, seeing the source of the problem is difficult because our perspective is too close. Have you ever received sage advice from a stranger on an airplane? You've poured out your troubles, and this stranger turns to you and says the most insightful thing you've ever heard. The stranger's secret is having enough distance from your situation to see what is at stake, while you are too close to see the big picture. Some companies get this kind of distance by bringing in an expert in jump-start facilitation or by appointing someone to that role. Whatever approach you take, once you choose the right problem statement, jump-starting can proceed.



■ Tool: Jump-Starting ■

Desired Outcomes

- Generate breakthrough ideas quickly.
- Create energy and fun.
- Transform winning ideas into new initiatives, products, or services.
- Challenge institutional thinking and boundaries.

Time Needed

- Planning and setup: One day (or more if you are arranging an elaborate environment or need to connect with outside clients).
- Sessions: Half-day to full day. You might want to plan a sequence of jump-starting days.
- Frequency: As needed to spur ongoing innovation.

Setting

- Find a place where the group is away from the distractions of an ordinary business day, such as the phone or e-mail. A large room with smaller breakout spaces is desirable. Make sure there are lots of breaks for fun and games, and plenty of creature comforts (good food, congenial music, scenery, pleasant temperature). Encourage casual dress.

Materials

- Lots of flip charts, sticky notes, markers, toys, records, and videos are helpful. Web access and computer projection can help.

Who Should Participate

- Invite up to fifteen or twenty people from diverse backgrounds, departments, and thinking styles. Emphasize the importance of differences. Ask all team members to suspend their voice of judgment.
- You may want to divide a large group into smaller breakout groups of five to six people. The breakout groups can reconvene periodically to share progress.

Facilitation

- Bring a small group of facilitators trained in jump-starts to help with the breakout groups. This is especially important if your company is unfamiliar with the process. If possible, bring in a graphic designer with a computer to create mock-ups of ideas.

Steps of the Process

Brainstorm Possible Challenges

- What's the challenge? Is it to create something new or to solve a problem? Identify several key issues that may be root causes of the challenge.



■ Tool: Jump-Starting, Cont'd ■

Identify the Key Problem

- Write a challenge statement that clearly articulates the challenge to be solved.
- Make sure the challenge is within the means of this group to solve. If not, shrink the challenge or divide it into manageable pieces.

Collect Data

- What do we know? What do we need to know? Who knows what? Gather some facts, information, and opinions on the challenge.
- Consult people with experience and knowledge in this area in order to help the group quickly gather facts and insights and identify land mines and tricks of the trade.

Generate Ideas

- Generate as many ideas as possible in thirty minutes. Write every idea on a sticky note and post them all on a wall where everyone can see them. The greater the volume of ideas and the crazier the ideas are, the better the end result will be.
- Keep in mind some basic guidelines for brainstorming. Design firm IDEO, a champion of brainstorming, uses these rules:⁹
 - One conversation at a time.
 - Stay focused on the topic.
 - Encourage wild ideas.
 - Defer judgment.
 - Build on the ideas of others.
- When you run out of ideas, use the CREATE and CRITIQUE trigger questions (listed in Exhibit 3.1, at the end of this Tool section) with your idea to boost your output. Add your own ideas to these lists of trigger questions. Ask yourself, "What if we did _____ with this challenge?"
- Time permitting, generate analogies by creating a list of nouns (things). Take the challenge statement and ask how is the challenge like the thing. For example, "How is holiday shopping like a toothbrush?" (or a fish, a typewriter, a first kiss, spring turning into summer, and so forth.)
- Reviewing your ideas, identify those promising the greatest problem breakthrough. Feel free to combine interesting ideas or add new ideas.

Develop Criteria for Success and Select the Most Important Measures

- Value: Is the payoff big enough?
- Cost: Can we afford this?
- Utility: Can it be used in other situations?



■ Tool: Jump-Starting, Cont'd ■

- Feasibility: Can we really do this?
- Time: How long do we have to do this?
- Interest: Who cares?
- Ownership: Who will champion this?
- Immediacy: Is this urgent?
- Direction: Does this fit with our strategy?
- Knowledge: Do we know how to do this?
- Culture: Does this fit with our values?
- Other: Make your own criteria

Select the Best Solutions

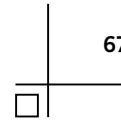
- Rank your ideas according to each of the criteria you have selected as important.
- Look at your ranked lists and select the ideas that ranked highest on the most criteria. These are the ideas you should develop further.
- Keep the challenge statement in mind. Work toward a feasible solution, and be objective and willing to confront difficult implementation issues.

Gain Acceptance for Ideas

- Identify key stakeholders—people in your organization who can make this idea happen or stop it from happening.
- Evaluate what they will gain and lose from further implementation of the idea.
- Follow an acceptance-gaining process:
 - Communication: Have you adequately listened to stakeholders' concerns (especially from those who are likely to resist)?
 - Participation: Have you asked important people to join your team? (This helps to alleviate the "not invented here" syndrome.)
 - Facilitation: Have you invited an impartial third party to help mediate differences?
 - Negotiation: Have you considered what the resisters stand to lose by implementing your idea? Can you offer something to offset any losses?
- Create consensus and agreement about next steps and course of action.

Repeat

- If any step doesn't work, go back and try it again until it does. Remind the group that small, temporary failure is part of a successful trial-and-error process. It is not truly a failure if you learn something.

**■ Tool: Jump-Starting, Cont'd ■****Exhibit 3.1. Trigger Questions**

If your best ideas are not sufficiently better or new, try diverging and expanding possibilities by asking the following CREATE questions:

Combine: What if we combined this with something else?

Reverse: What if we did the opposite?

Expand: What if we made it larger?

Adapt: What if we changed some part of this?

Trim: What if we made it smaller?

Exchange: What if we traded places with something else?

If your best ideas are not sufficiently feasible, try converging and focusing ideas by asking the following CRITIQUE questions:

Credibility: How would we get stakeholders to believe we have what it takes to pursue this idea?

Resources: What money and other resources are required to pursue this idea?

Interest: What do we personally want from pursuing this idea?

Time: What are the time lines for pursuing this idea?

Information: What facts and data should we apply to this idea?

Qualifications: What expertise do we have to pursue this idea?

Understanding: What do we know about this idea? (Apply the familiar newspaper questions: who, what, where, when, why, and how.)

Effect: What result will this idea produce?

Source: From *Creativity at Work* by Jeff DeGraff and Katherine A. Lawrence. Copyright © 2002 by John Wiley & Sons.