1-day ideation workshop

Full agenda and
10+ tools included

Make this guide your own.

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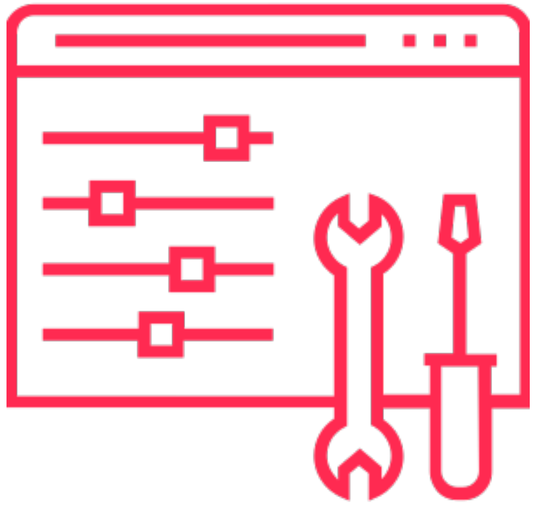
We make corporates innovate like startups through strategy consulting, HR talent schemes, and organizational transformation programs.



Some of the clients with whom we are proud to work

What's the point of this guide?

WHY WE CREATED IT...
We want to empower people to innovate by giving them the tools they need to be creative and come up with bigger, better ideas.

HOW WE MADE IT...
We read all the research, held a gazillion ideation workshops, compared notes with other innovation strategists, and then summarized the lot in this simple, actionable guide.

WHAT CAN IT DO FOR YOU?
You can use this to host your own 1-day ideation workshop. You'll find 3 possible agendas, several proven ideation tools, step-by-step instructions on how to use them, as well as pro-tips based on our experiences. Good luck!

Ideation

Where does it stand in the innovation process?

ideation •
n, the formation of ideas or concepts

WHAT IS IT?

In the corporate environment, “ideation” is a process for generating new ideas and concepts to solve specific problems. These can be problems that your customers or clients are facing (enabling you to come up with concepts for new products and services your organization can offer), or problems that your organization is experiencing (thus improving the internal structure or processes).

In both these scenarios, you’ll need to gather the right set of people from your organization and a good mix of facilitators (we can help with that) to build awesome new ideas for your team to act on.

We run ideation workshops and brainstorm sessions with Fortune 500 companies. Check out some of our most popular programs below.

Innovation transformation

Accelerators

Design sprints

Ideation is the very first step to innovation, right?

Ideation is the very first step in innovation, right?

WRONG!

Where does ideation stand in the innovation process?

Where does ideation stand in the innovation process?

YOU MIGHT NEED TO TAKE A STEP BACK

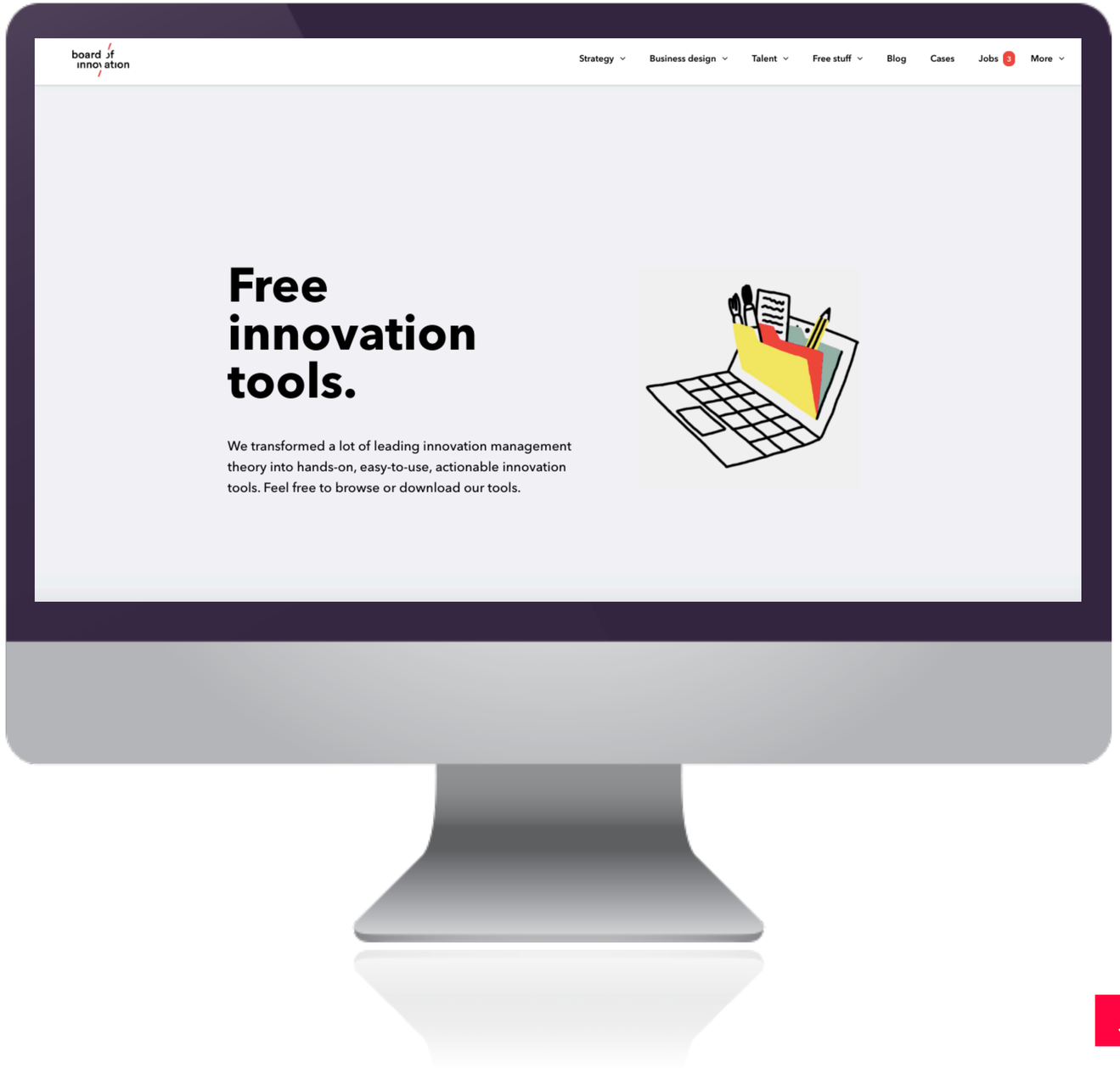
Innovation doesn't start with ideation. You should only ideate once you've identified a problem that's worth solving. In other words, coming up with new ideas (value propositions of new services or products) is pointless if you're ideating over problems that your audience doesn't actually face.

So you should already have defined a specific problem (in the form of a How Might We (HMW) statement) before reading this guide. If not, stop what you're doing and go through a 'problem discovery' phase to unearth a clear problem that's worth solving.

Need more information?

At www.boardofinnovation.com/tools, you'll find a world of free tools, guides, and other innovation resources.

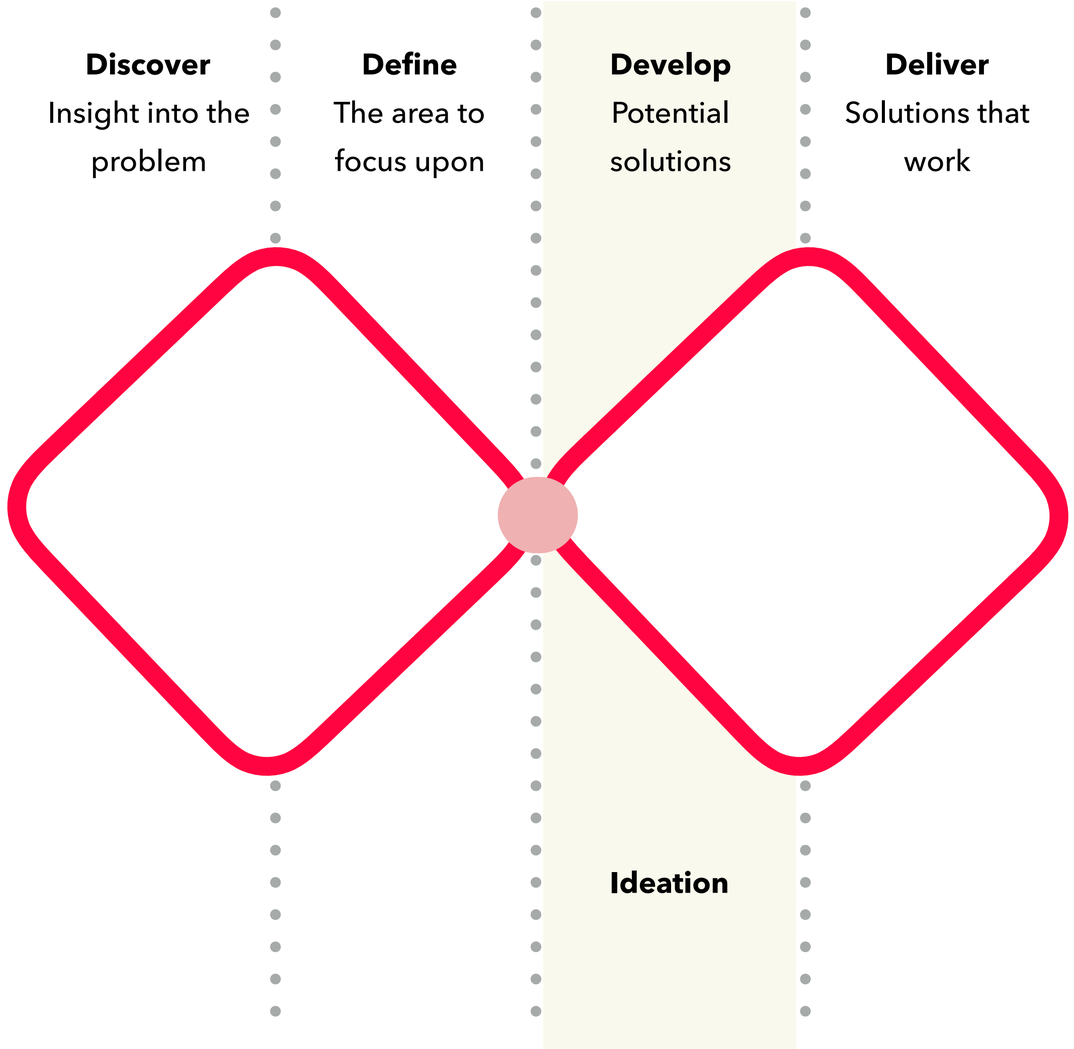
Explore our tools!



Where does ideation stand in the innovation process?

Ideation is the starting point of the second ‘diamond’ in the popular Double Diamond framework.

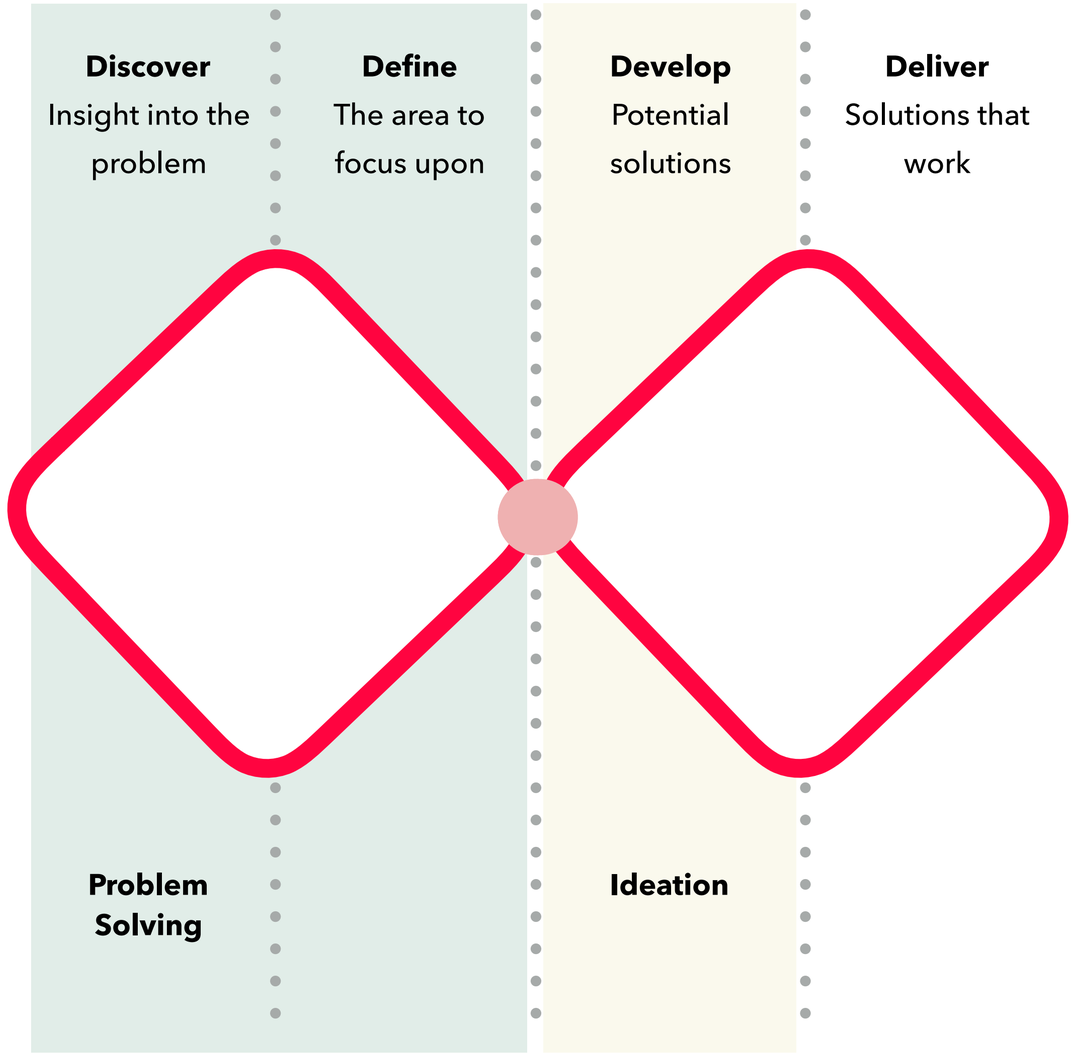
Learn about Double Diamond



Empathy research comes before ideation.

Before ideating, you should do empathy research to define a clear problem that's worth solving.

Learn about Double Diamond



Where to start.

The starting point of any ideation exercise is a challenge or a question. This is sometimes referred to as a design brief, a design challenge, or a problem definition. It basically lays out the problem in a constructive way.

By reframing insights as How Might We (HMW) statements, you can turn interesting ‘problems’ into questions worth answering and tackling as a team.

HOW MIGHT WE

These three little words point the team in a direction that is:

- Solution-oriented (How)
- Optimistic (Might)
- Collaborative (We)

Try our HMW statement builder

The 4 golden rules of ideation

Rule #1
There are no bad ideas.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

The key to a good ideation session is that everyone in the room feels comfortable contributing their ideas. How do you get there? By asking everyone to kill judgment completely: no negative thinking, no “yes, but,” no nah-faces. If someone hesitates in jotting down an idea, tell them, “At this stage, there are no bad ideas.”

Of course, this is easier said than done. When developing new products/services/business units, it’s very easy to be tempted by critical thinking. Indeed, initial ideas often just sound absurd – and “this can’t work” may immediately jump to mind. However, great business concepts are an unusual combination of (not-so) crazy ideas that become meaningful when combined.

Consider each idea as a piece of a puzzle. No matter how insignificant it could look at first, it may be a piece of a bigger picture later on.

Rule #2
Capture everything.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

In the heat of the action, brilliant ideas might get lost (“it’s such a good idea, tomorrow we’ll remember it for sure” – you won’t). There’s only one way to solve this: capture every idea on a Post-It Note.

Too many ideation sessions happen during regular team meetings, without the participants being fully aware that they’re ideating. Ideas are spoken and jotted down in the meeting minutes. Instead, a key element of the best ideation sessions is that each idea is tracked for use as a building block in following sessions.

A few extra tips:
1) One post-it, one idea.
Simple. Don’t try to fit an entire business model on a 7×7 cm piece of paper.
2) Use markers, not pens.
This will help you find the most concise way to describe your idea – your teammates will love you for it.
3) Be visual.
If possible, instead of using verbal language, draw a sketch of your idea.

Rule #3
Go for hybrid brainstorming.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Group brainstorming is always better than individual brainstorming, right? Well, not really. Research shows that combining individual brainstorming with group exercises leads to more ideas and better ideas.

Best solution? Hybrid Brainstorming
Do individual ideation first, then group ideation. Starting an ideation session with group brainstorming will make the loudest voices in the room set a determined direction (thus narrowing the breadth of ideas), and frustrate the most creative minds in the room. Instead, begin with an individual component. Once everyone has set their own approach to solving the problem, move to the group session. Leave enough time to discuss and build upon each other's ideas.

Rule #4
Quantity over quality.

WHAT IT MEANS

The old adage ‘quality over quantity’ doesn’t hold during ideation exercises. Nothing stops the creative juices flowing quite like critically thinking about the quality or feasibility of your ideas. Being selective is important, but it shouldn’t be done during creative exercises. Go for quantity and worry about the quality later.

Need help? Check out our free brainstorm cards – a collection of 52 cards to help you come up with new ideas.

Download the cards

Ideation: practical information

Who can facilitate?

Quick answer: Anyone with time to prepare (since you're reading this, you qualify).

Long answer: Facilitating an ideation workshop is something which might be out of your comfort zone, but as long as you understand the exercises, you should be fine.

If you do feel like you need a hand, let us know.

Contact us

Who should participate?

Quick answer: Anyone can and should participate in an ideation session from time to time.

Long answer: Innovation projects work best when there's a multi-disciplinary team driving the venture, and the same goes for ideation sessions. Try to get a good mix of technical and commercial profiles from different business units in the room.

PRO-TIP:
Involve your clients – this can be particularly powerful in a B2B context.

How many people should participate?

Quick answer: Between 6 and 25 people.

Long answer: We've run ideation workshops with as little as 2 people and with groups of over 100 people. Generally, you should divide big groups into smaller teams of 3 to 5 people. The more people in the room, the more ideas you'll get (and the more complicated the workshop becomes). The sweet-spot is 12 people.

PRO-TIP:
Ensure that you have a sufficient number of experienced facilitators at hand. Our rule of thumb is 1 facilitator per 15 participants.

What do I need?

Quick answer: A dedicated space, participants, Post-Its, and markers

Long answer:
Have a look at our workshop checklist.

Download the checklist

Workshop Checklist

ROOM SETUP

- [ ] **Provide a workshop location outside the office with spacious rooms**
  teams and facilitators will be walking around the room a lot so we need the space
- [ ] **Provide a creative workspace, preferably open, bright spaces**
  we can provide tips for inspiring workshop places
- [ ] **Provide enough wall space to hang posters, templates, post-its: +/- 3m per team**
- [ ] **The rooms should have 1 table-island per team of 4-5 people and 1 table and chairs close to the screen for our facilitator(s)**
- [ ] **Beamer or white wall for presentations**
- [ ] **1 flip-chart per team of 4-5 people (can vary)**

FOOD & DRINKS

- [ ] **Make sure people have drinks all day long: coffee, tea and water**
- [ ] **Preferably lunch outside the room so that people can get some air**
- [ ] **Preferably a light lunch**
- [ ] **2 coffee breaks one in the morning one in afternoon**

DOCUMENTATION

- [ ] **We will take pictures to use in our marketing efforts**
- [ ] **If we're pitching at the end of the workshop, it's always great to film that!**

board of innovation

About this tool
Use this checklist to prepare yourself and the team for the upcoming workshop. Setting up a proper room and having the right material is essential to a great workshop! To be sure about the perfect setup try to have most op the boxes checked.

If you have any questions about the workshop preparation contact your facilitator.

printsize: A4
boardofinnovation.com/tools

Ideation workshop: agenda 1

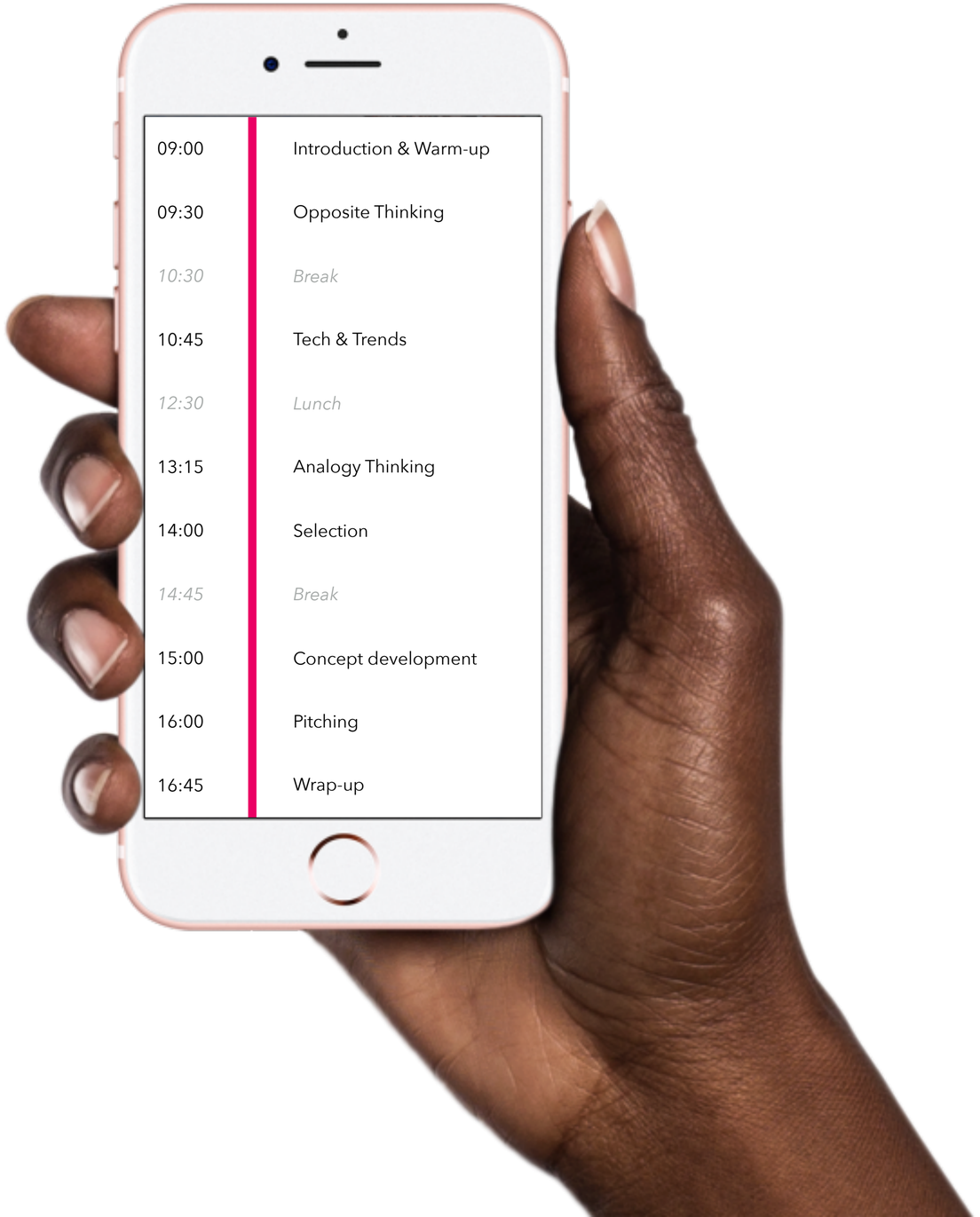
Agenda 1

GOAL

To come up with a large number of innovative ideas and inspire participants with disruptive cases, future tech and trends, along with opposite thinking.

THE SPECS

Facilitators: 1-2 experienced facilitators
Participants: 12-30
Difficulty level: Medium
Time: Full day (adjust the length of each exercise to suit your goals)
Output: 1-2 concept cards per participant



h 9.00

INTRODUCTION AND WARM-UP

A good ideation session starts with pulling people out of their comfort zones and getting the energy level right. Don't start with a 30-minute presentation on why you are organizing this session. Instead, follow this 3 step approach:

Step 1
Take two minutes to Introduce yourself and the context.
Pro-tip: Ask everyone to put away laptops and phones, and tell them they are welcome to send an email or take a call outside if they have to.

Step 2
Ask everyone to draw their neighbor. Yes, really. Then tell them to give said neighbor the drawing and introduce themselves.

Step 3
Put a ridiculous HMW statement on the board (eg. How might we improve the life of monkeys in the zoo?) and distribute brainstorm cards for a quick 10-minute brainstorming exercise.

h 9.30

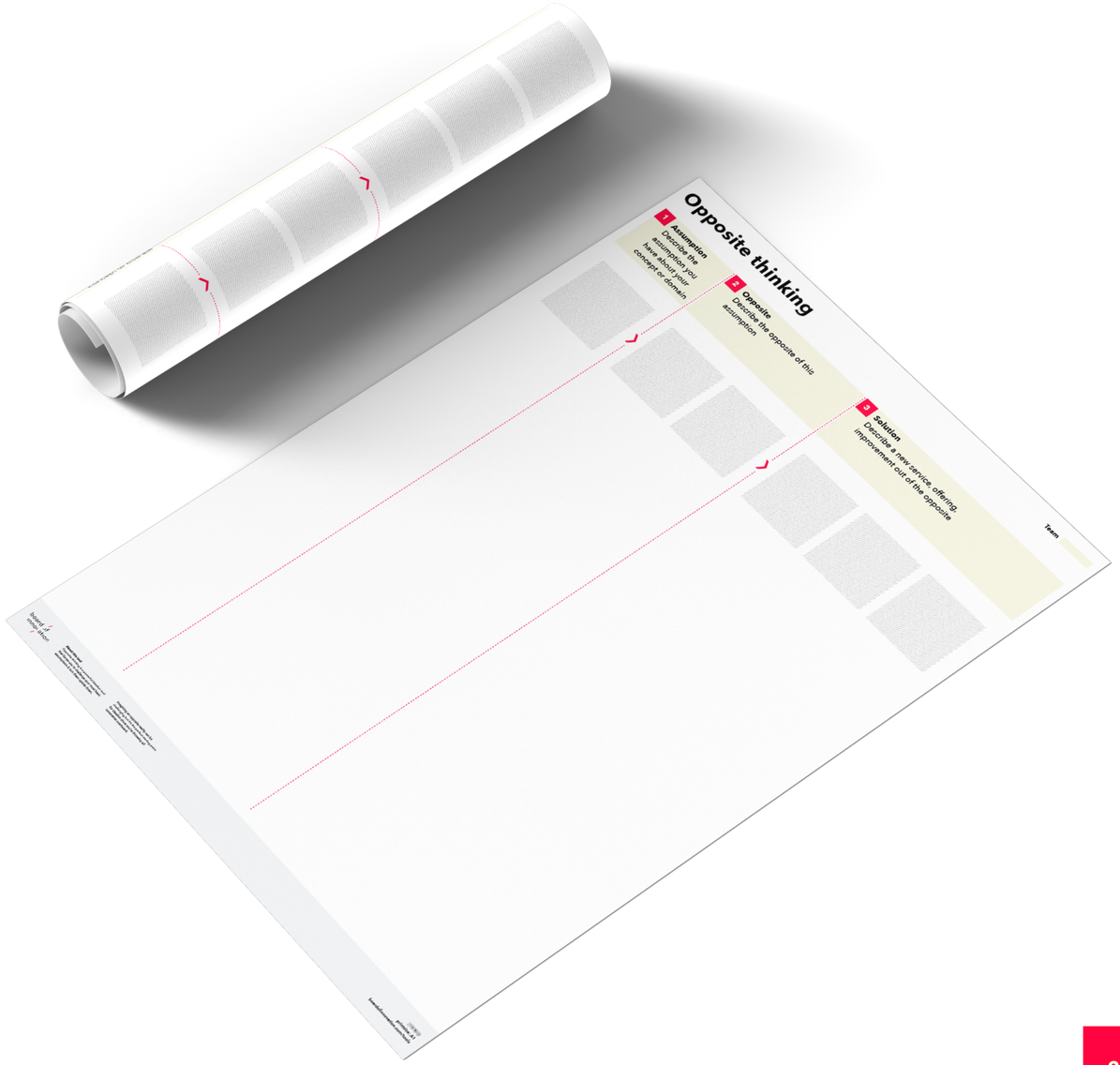
OPPOSITE THINKING

Constraints and mental blockages have no place in an ideation session. To overcome these inhibitions, we designed the Opposite Thinking Tool.

This tool is as easy to use as it is powerful. Opposite Thinking asks you to familiarize yourself with the opposite side of things in order to stretch the horizon of possibilities. **The goal:** To boost your brainstorming session by solving assumptions and coming up with additional, more creative ideas.

For instance, when designing a chair, you can list the assumptions of a chair (it needs to have legs) and think of its opposite (no legs?!) to trigger additional ideas (eg. what if chairs were hanging from the ceiling?).

Download the tool



h 9.30

OPPOSITE THINKING – PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1
Individually list 2 assumptions you have either about the problem you're trying to solve, or the solutions you have in mind.

Step 2
Share your assumptions and write them down in the left column of the Opposite Thinking template.

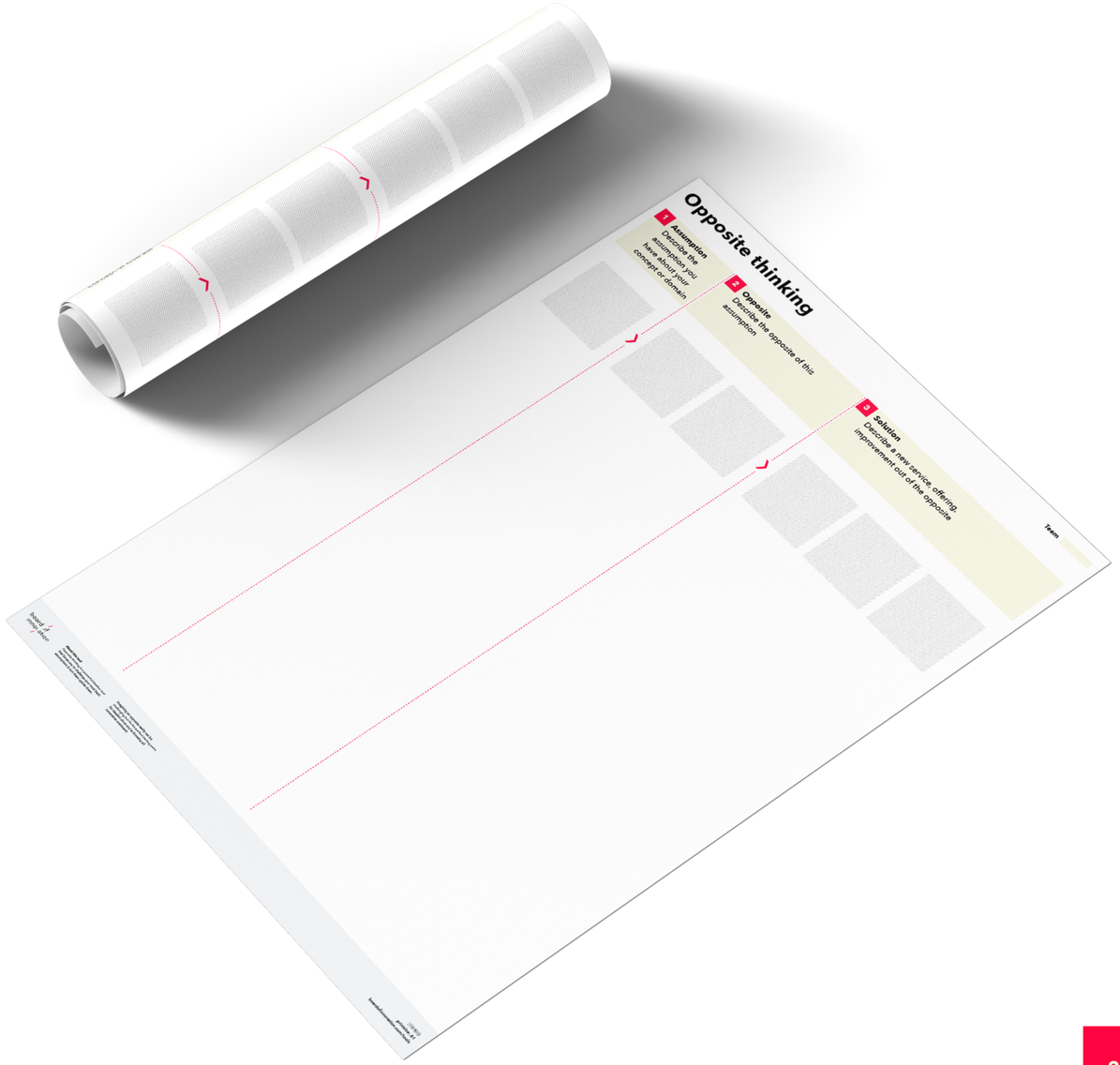
Step 3
Individually pick an assumption and define one or two opposite realities in the second column.

Step 4
Individually think about these new realities, how they affect your problem, and add potential solutions to the third column.

Step 5
Keep repeating steps 3 and 4 until you have identified opposite realities and potential solutions for all assumptions.

Pro-Tip: Encourage participants to build upon the opposite realities or proposed solutions of your team members!

Step 6
Review all proposed solutions as a team and build on each other's ideas.



h 10.45

TECH & TREND MATRIX

Ideation starts by looking around you and by getting inspired. We developed the Tech & Trends Matrix to:

- Introduce your team to new technologies and trends that can trigger innovative ideas. Explaining each technology and trend by using inspiring startup and corporate innovation examples makes these high-level concepts extremely actionable.

- Explore how specific trends and technologies can impact the challenges at hand.

Download the tool!

h 10.45

TECH & TREND MATRIX

Step 1
Download the PDF and print it on an A2 sheet. If you can't print it, you can also draw it on a piece of paper.

Step 2
Frame your challenge.

Pro-tip: How Might We… these three little words set the team in a direction that is solution-oriented (how), optimistic (might), collaborative (we).

Step 3
Select relevant Social/Tech Trends. Aim to select around 8 Trends.

Step 4
Ask participants to define 4 HMW statements related to the challenge at hand.

Step 5
Give the HMW/Trends presentation.

Step 6
Ask people to select 4 Trends they find inspiring.

Pro-tip: Provide handouts of your Tech & Trends presentation.

Step 7
Ask the participants to ideate on each HMW statement and use the selected Trends as triggers to come up with new ideas.

h 13.15

ANALOGY THINKING

80% of new ideas come from analogy thinking. Pablo Picasso knew this when he said, “Good artists copy; great artists steal.”

What is it? Analogy thinking is a method for identifying those factors that make a business, product, or service successful and translating them to your context – not simply copying existing products or business models.

We’ve looked all over the world and identified 50+ business models from famous multinationals to obscure startups which you can use as inspiration for this exercise.

Download the tool

h 13.15

ANALOGY THINKING – PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1
Individually look for 2 inspiring examples (1 within your industry and 1 outside your industry).

Step 2
Present the examples to each other. Don't take more than 1 min per example.

Step 3
Decide on the 3 most inspiring examples as a group and take 1 analogy thinking template per example.

Step 4
Individually list what makes the example great and put it on Post-Its on the left side of the canvas.

Step 5
Individually try to apply those lessons to your problem or solution, don't just copy, build on what makes it great.

Step 6
Have a group discussion to build on each other's ideas.

Step 7
Repeat steps 4-6 for the remaining 2 examples.

Tip: Replace step 1 by downloading the 50+ business models you should copy.

h 14.00

SELECTION

The first phase of an ideation session is all about diverging and generating as many ideas as possible. The second phase is where you narrow things down and select the best ideas to take further.

This is a crucial part of an ideation exercise and it is also the hardest part. Guiding your participants through this process requires patience. People tend to snap back into corporate mode and insist that everyone should review all ideas, it's your job to explain to them that this isn't feasible, so you've designed a process to weed out the most promising ideas.

Start by repeating the scope of the ideation exercise and explain the selection criteria (next page). **You'll need the Idea Shopping Cart tool for this process.**

Download the tool!

h 14.00

SELECTION

Step 1
Download the Idea Shopping Cart (previous page) and print it on an A3 sheet of paper. You can also draw the diagram on a sheet of paper if you can't print.

Step 2
Tell everyone to walk around the room (all posters with ideas should be hanging on the walls), read through the ideas and indicate the ones they like with dot-votes.

Pro-tip: Encourage discussions but try not to let people spend 10 minutes discussing 1 idea.

Step 3
Hand out the Idea Shopping Cart. Explain that everyone should fill in the top half of the template by selecting and copying (not taking off the wall) **6 ideas**:

- An original idea
- An idea for in 5-10 years
- An 'implement now' idea
- An idea addressing a new market
- An idea about a new offering
- An idea you just really like

Pro-Tip: Change the 6 criteria based upon your goals.

Step 4
Ask people to sit down and turn their 6 ideas into a top 3.

Pro-tip: Explain that they don't have to copy ideas literally – they can build upon existing ideas and tweak them.

h 15.00

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

We believe innovation is the commercialization of good ideas. An idea might seem great to a lot of people, but that's often because different people understand different things.

To review ideas in a structured manner, we developed the Concept Card. Print this out and hand it to participants during the session. They will use it to:

- **Summarise your concept by answering critical questions**. Who is your target audience? Which problems are you solving? What is the solution?
- **Make an initial idea more mature**. The Concept Card is a great way to make sure that important aspects of an idea have been thought through.

Download the tool

h 16.00

PITCHING

Pitching is an art and, as a facilitator, you'll need to be the time keeper.

Pro-Tip: Energy levels at the end of the day might be low. Try an energizer exercise or take a break to bring everyone outside for a walk!

- First, tell people what they should be pitching and how long they have (this will depend on the number of people/teams in your group). Give them some pitching tips, and copies of the pitching checklist.

- Start the pitch and be strict on your time-keeping.

Pro-Tip: Ensure that the audience applauds at the end of each pitch – people are getting out of there comfort zones here:)

Download the checklist

h 16.45

WRAP UP

At Board of Innovation, we have 2 key rules for each session we do: Always end on a high, and always end on time! Make sure the pitches are done 15 minutes before the published end-time so you have time to:

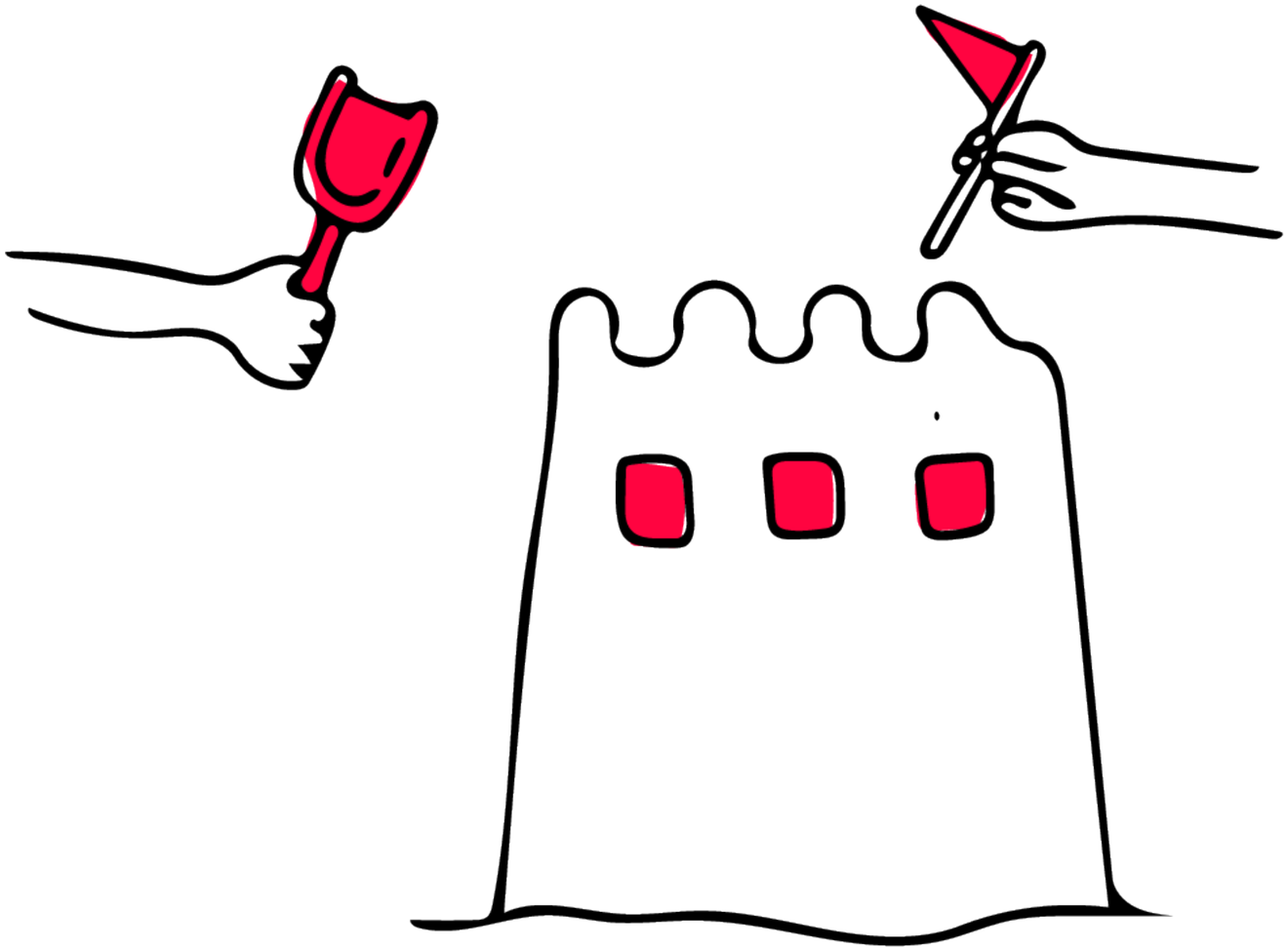
Ask for feedback.

- Always ask for feedback it shows participants that you care about their opinion and it's a great opportunity for you as a facilitator to learn.

Recap the day.

- Provide a quick overview of what you did during the day and give some examples of ideas that were generated.

Pro-Tip: End with an inspirational sentence, such as, "I hope that the ideas generated today will help you… Thank you!' The 'thank you' in the end should trigger an applause.



Ideation workshop: agenda 2

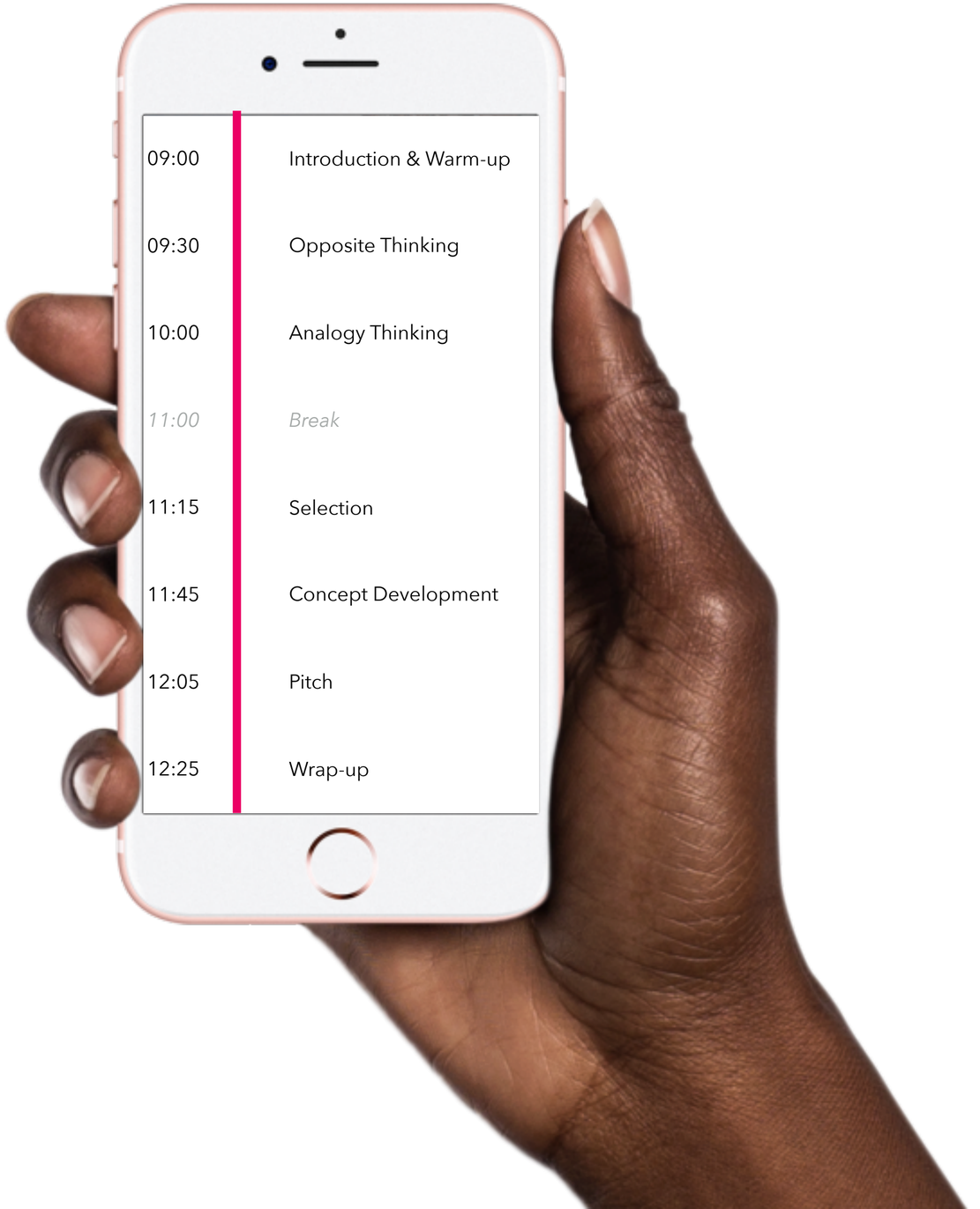
Agenda 2

GOAL

Short session to inspire participants and enable them to come up with new ideas.

THE SPECS

Facilitators: 1 -2 experienced facilitators
Participants: 12-30
Difficulty level: Medium
Time: Half a day (the timing of each activity will depend upon your goals)
Output: 1-2 concept cards per participant



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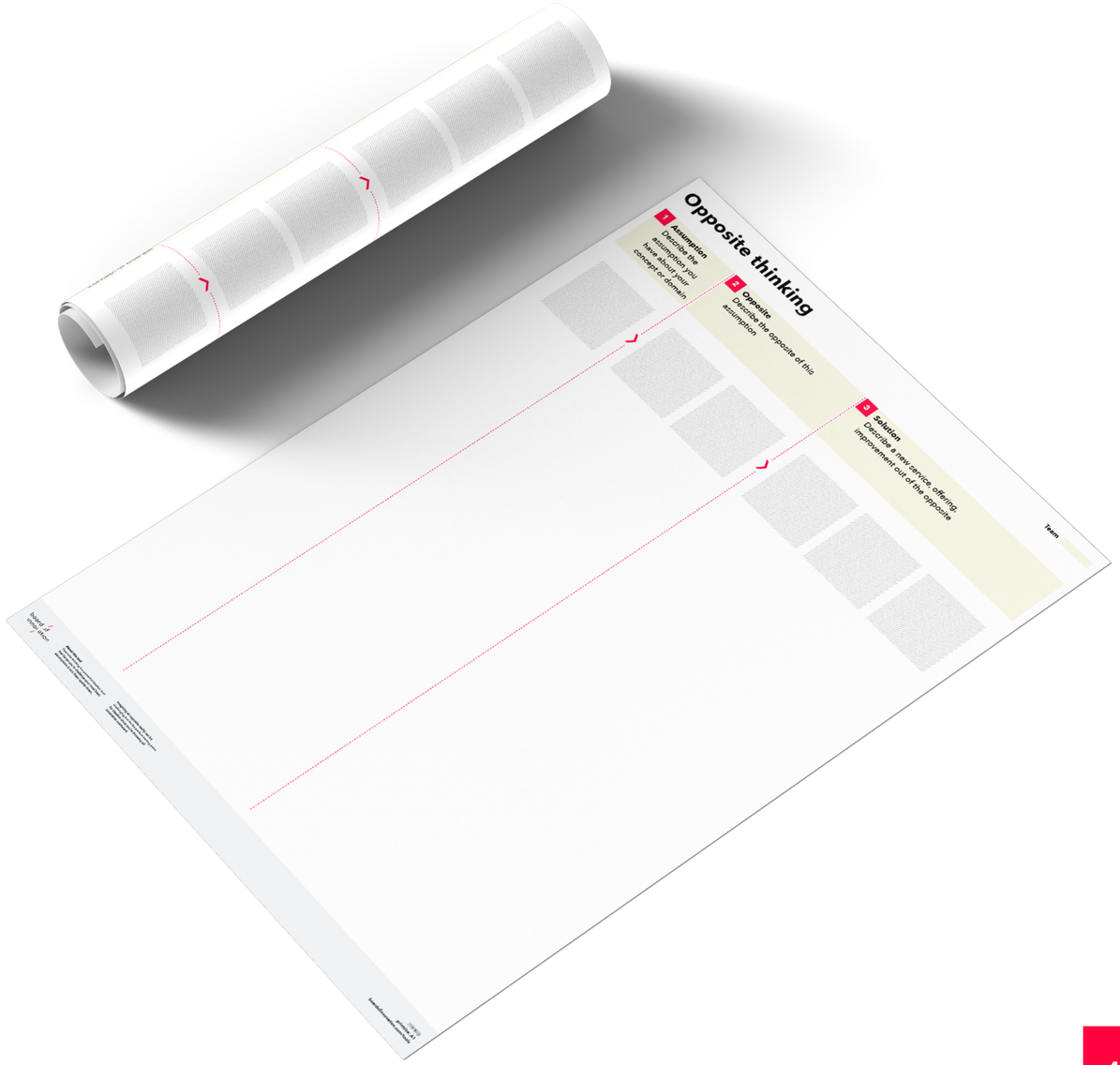

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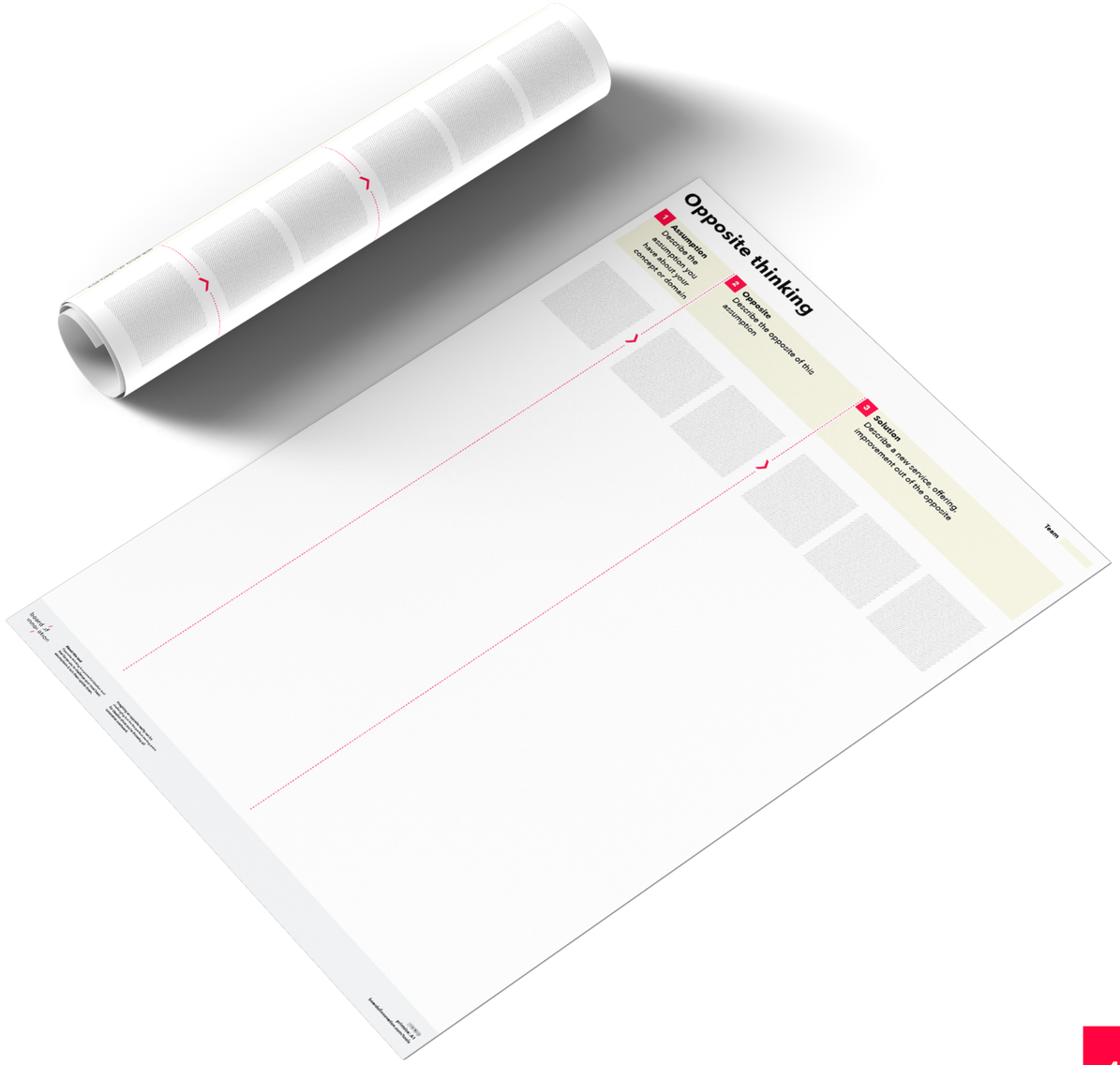

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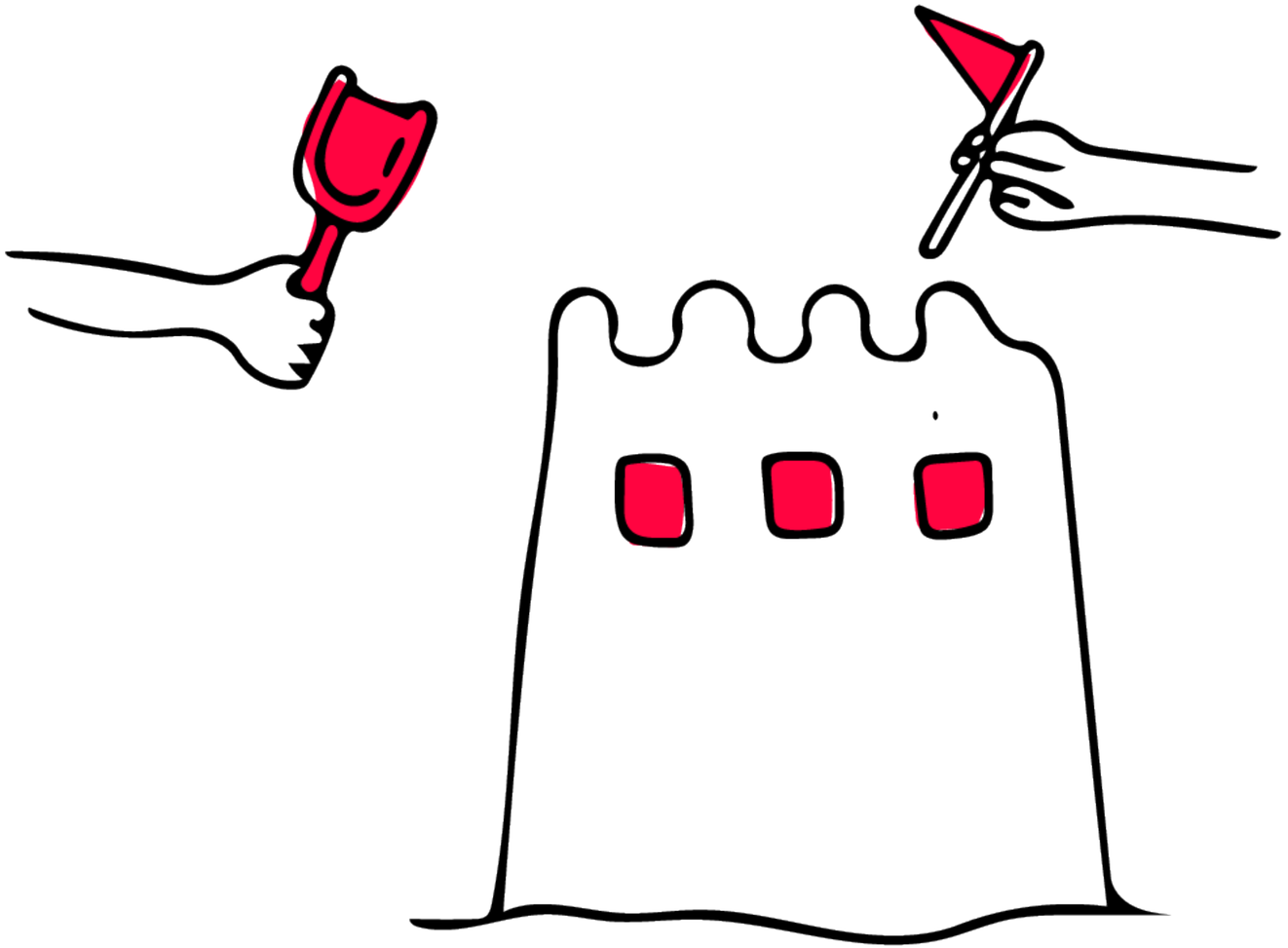


Ideation Workshop: Agenda 3

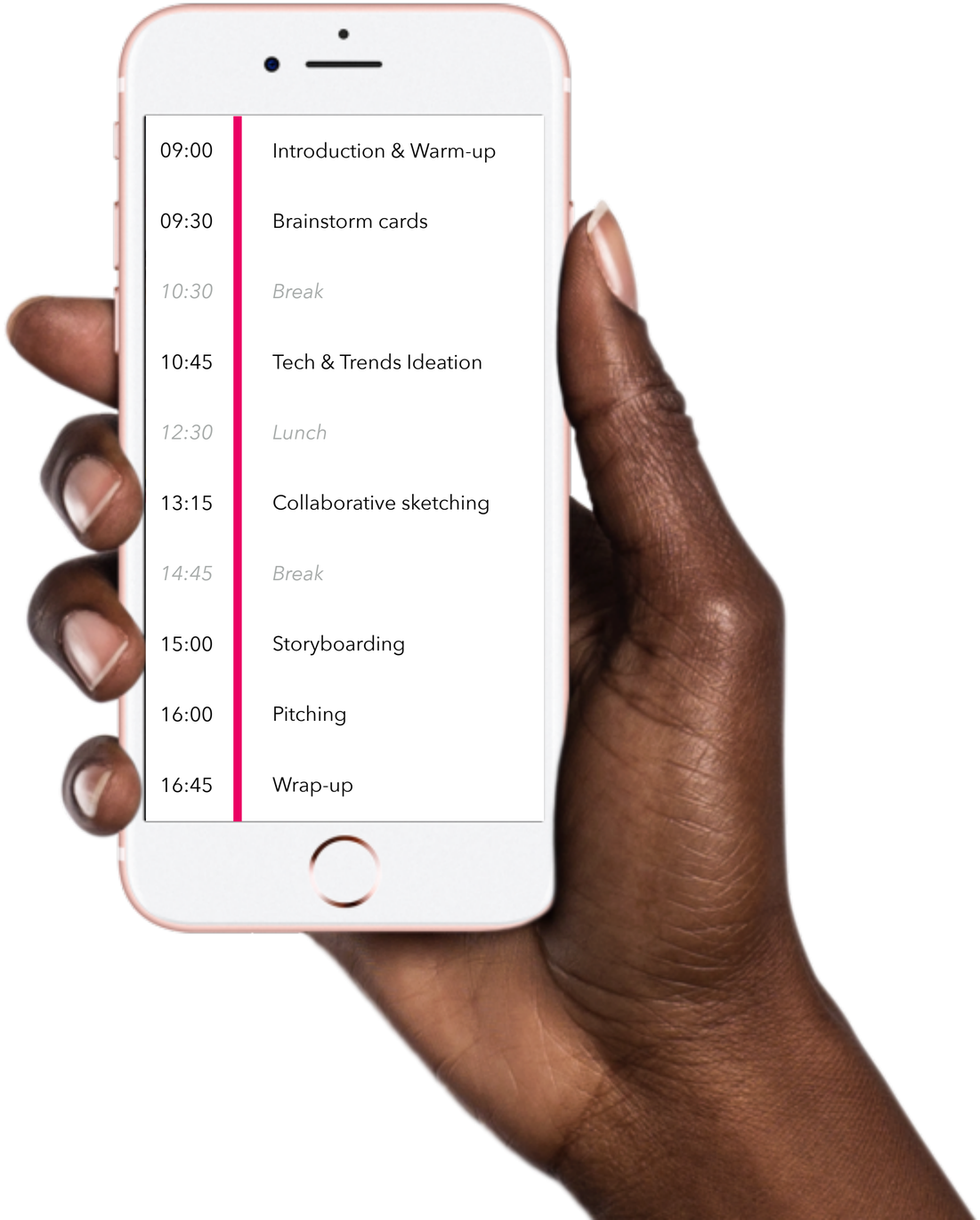
Agenda 3

GOAL

Short session to inspire participants and help them come up with new ideas.

THE SPECS

Facilitators: 1 -2 experienced facilitators
Participants: 12-30
Difficulty level: Easy
Time: Full day (adjust the session according to your goals)
Output: 1-2 concept cards per participant



h 9.00

INTRODUCTION AND WARM-UP

A good ideation session starts with pulling people out of their comfort zones and getting the energy level right. Don’t start with a 30-minute presentation on why you are organizing this session. Instead, follow this 3 step approach:

Step 1
Take two minutes to Introduce yourself and the context.
Pro-tip: Ask everyone to put away laptops and phones, and tell them they are welcome to send an email or take a call outside if they have to.

Step 2
Ask everyone to draw their neighbor. Yes, really. Then tell them to give said neighbor the drawing and introduce themselves.

Step 3
Put a ridiculous HMW statement on the board (eg. How might we improve the life of monkeys in the zoo?) and distribute brainstorm cards for a quick 10 minute brainstorming exercise.

h 9.30

BRAINSTORM

Use our free collection of 52 Brainstorm Cards to help your group come up with new ideas. For best results, do the following:

Step 1
Start from a challenge or problem.

Step 2
Use the cards for inspiration individually. Come up with ideas for 20 minutes.

Step 3
Share ideas in team and develop the best ones.

There 4 types of cards, each featuring a different starting point for innovation:

- Technological trends
- Regulation trends
- Customer trends
- Market trends

Download the tool!

h 10.45

TECH & TREND MATRIX

Ideation starts by looking around you and by getting inspired. We developed the Tech & Trends Matrix to:

- Introduce your team to new technologies and trends that can trigger innovative ideas. Explaining each technology and trend by using inspiring startup and corporate innovation examples makes these high-level concepts extremely actionable.

- Explore how specific trends and technologies can impact the challenges at hand.

Download the tool!

h 10.45

TECH & TREND MATRIX

Step 1
Download the PDF and print it on an A2 sheet. If you can't print it, you can also draw it on a piece of paper.

Step 2
Frame your challenge.

Pro-tip: How Might We… these three little words set the team in a direction that is solution-oriented (how), optimistic (might), collaborative (we).

Step 3
Select relevant Social/Tech Trends. Aim to select around 8 Trends.

Step 4
Ask participants to define 4 HMW statements related to the challenge at hand.

Step 5
Give the HMW/Trends presentation.

Step 6
Ask people to select 4 Trends they find inspiring.

Pro-tip: Provide handouts of your Tech & Trends presentation.

Step 7
Ask the participants to ideate on each HMW statement and use the selected Trends as triggers to come up with new ideas.

h 13.15

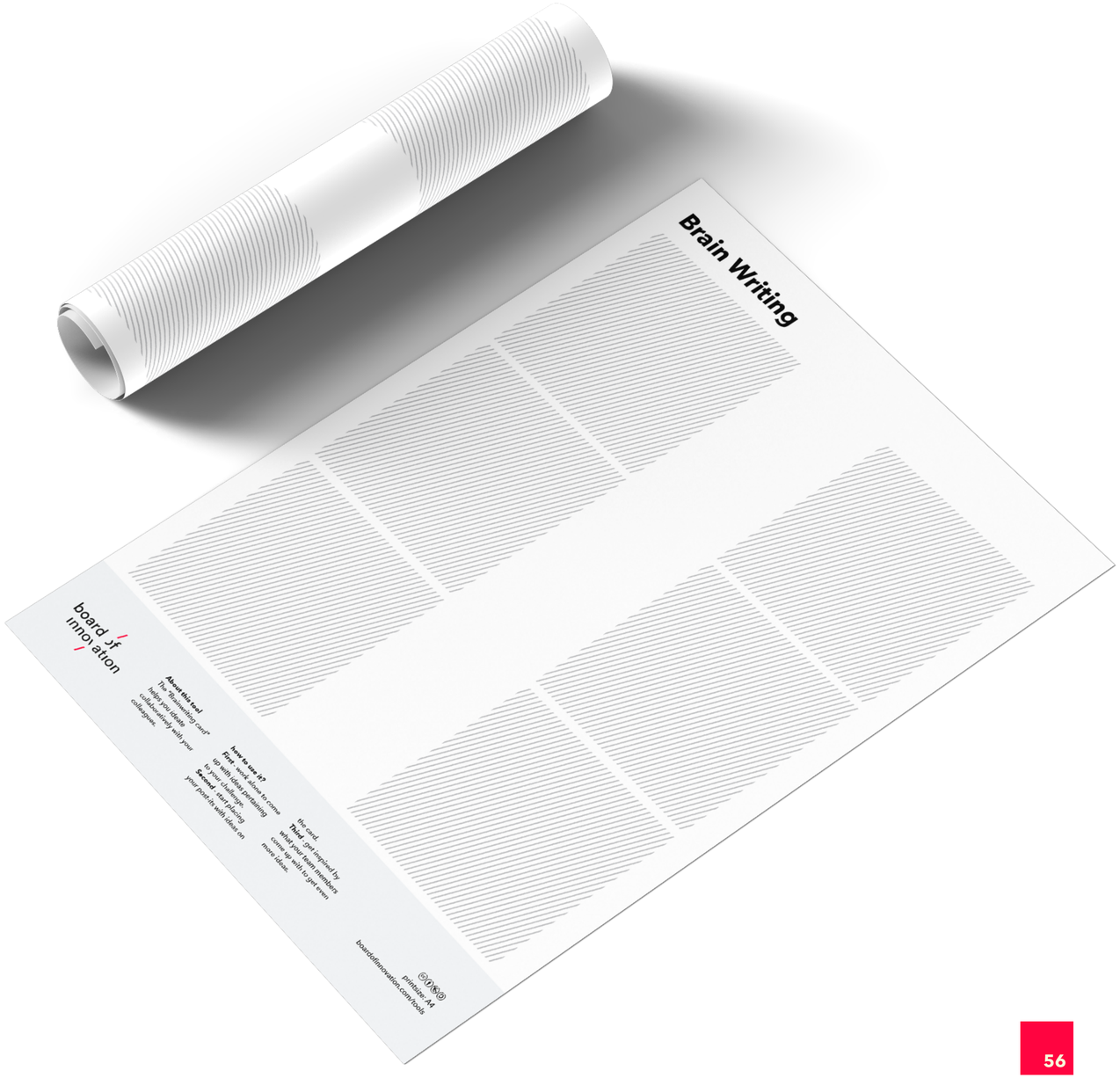
BRAIN WRITING

The brain-writing card helps you ideate collaboratively with your colleagues.

This tool is ideal to use in the solution-development phase, after you've understood the problem and you have a clear HMW defined. It also helps:

- To keep the most extroverted and loudest people from unintentionally dominating the sessions.
- To make sure that everyone gets the opportunity to present their thoughts and ideas so they can be considered by the whole group.

Download & learn more



h 13.15

BRAIN WRITING – PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS

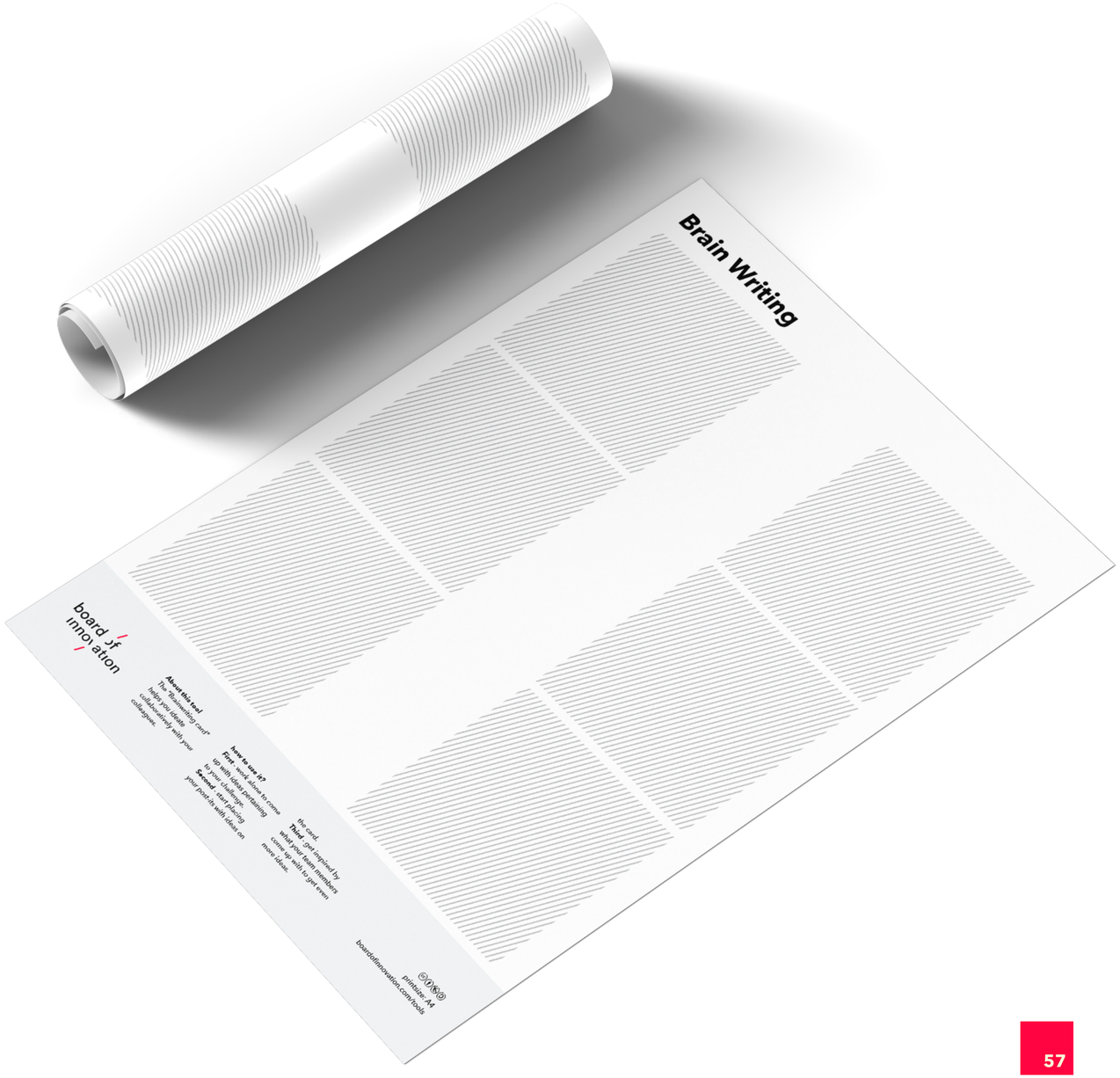
Step 1
Working alone, stick a Post-It featuring your HMW to the top of your card. Come up with ideas pertaining to your challenge.

Step 2
Stick 1 or 2 Post-Its featuring your ideas (drawings are great) on the card.

Step 3
Pass the sheet to the next person in the group. Receive your neighbor's sheet.

Step 4
Get inspired by the ideas your team members stuck to the sheet. Build on their ideas by adding more Post-Its.

Step 5
Pass the sheets around until multiple people have built upon each idea. You might even receive your original sheet a few more times.

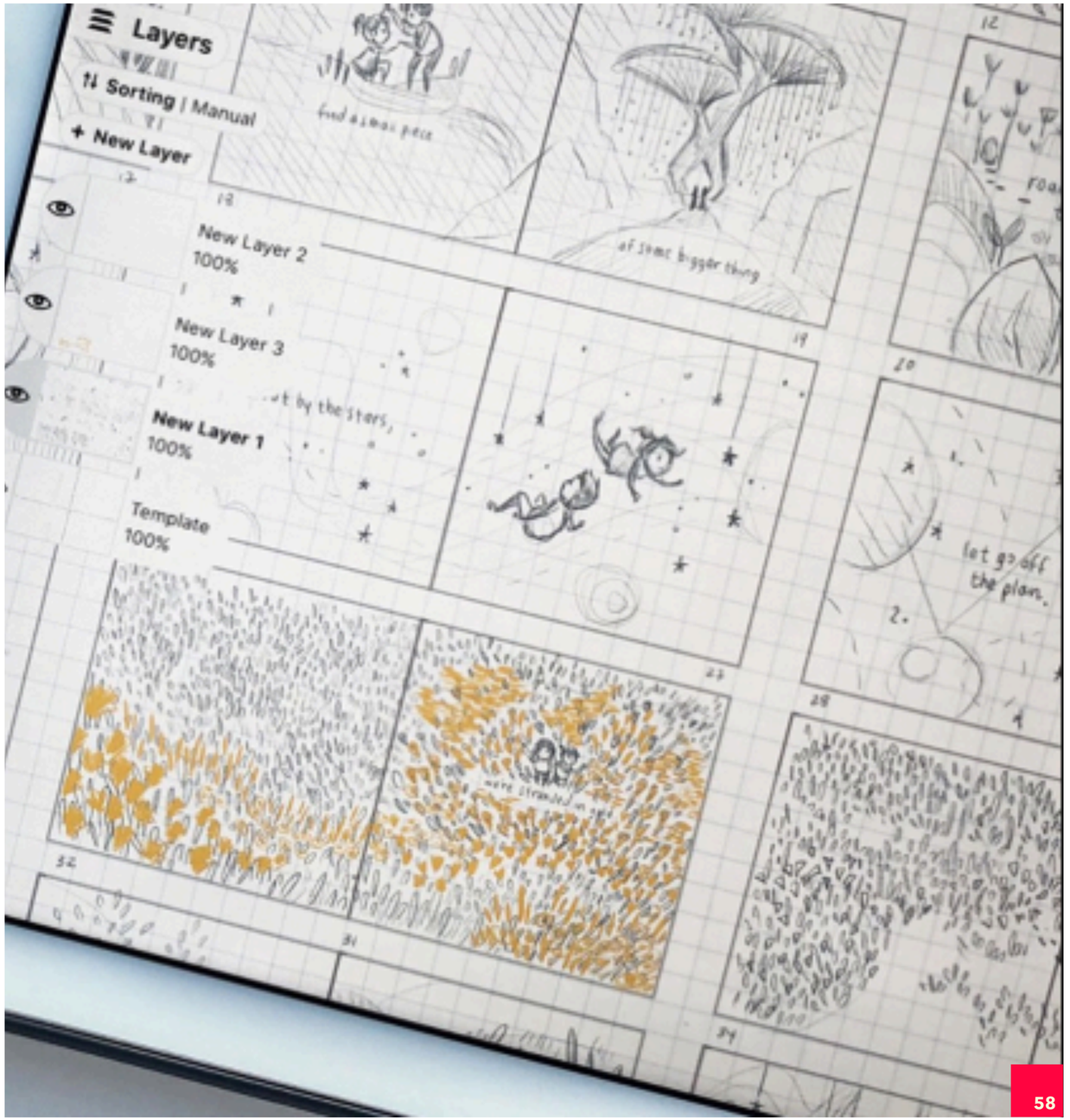


h 15.00

STORYBOARDING

Storyboarding helps you to develop concepts further by visualizing them in a comic book style frames. Storyboarding helps you to focus on the user and the way this person interacts with your offering.

- Ask participants to divide into groups of 2 and select one artist and one director.
- Each group should try to visualize the main interactions of a key stakeholder with their offering.
- If there are multiple key stakeholders, create multiple storyboards.



h 16.00

PITCHING

Pitching is an art and, as a facilitator, you'll need to be the time keeper.

Pro-Tip: Energy levels at the end of the day might be low. Try an energizer exercise or take a break to bring everyone outside for a walk!

- First, tell people what they should be pitching and how long they have (this will depend on the number of people/teams in your group). Give them some pitching tips, and copies of the pitching checklist.

- Start the pitch and be strict on your time-keeping.

Pro-Tip: Ensure that the audience applauds at the end of each pitch – people are getting out of there comfort zones here:)

Download the tool

h 16.45

WRAP UP

At Board of Innovation, we have 2 key rules for each session we do: Always end on a high, and always end on time! Make sure the pitches are done 15 minutes before the published end-time so you have time to:

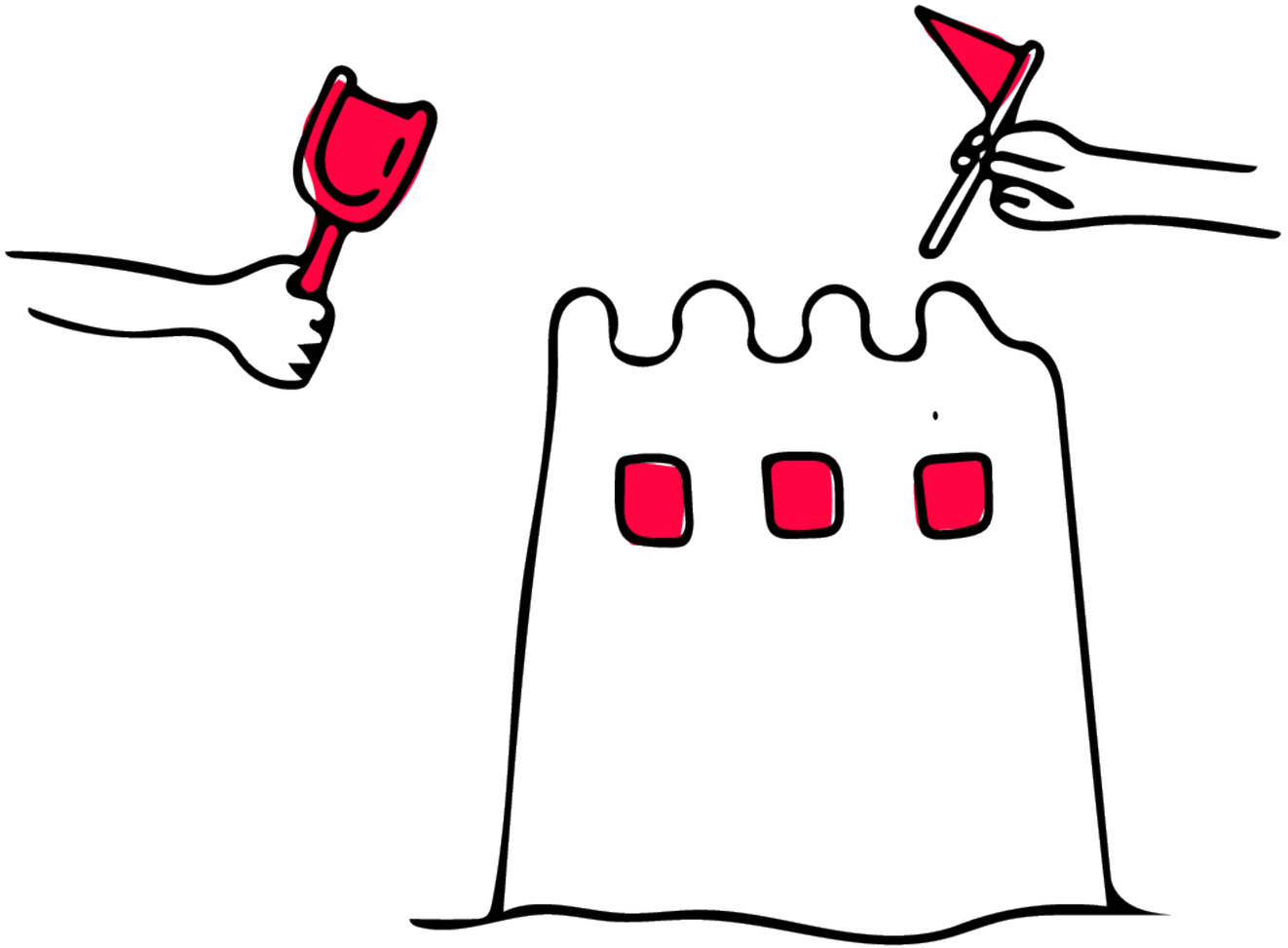
Ask for feedback.

- Always ask for feedback it shows participants that you care about their opinion and it's a great opportunity for you as a facilitator to learn.

Recap the day.

- Provide a quick overview of what you did during the day and give some examples of ideas that were generated.

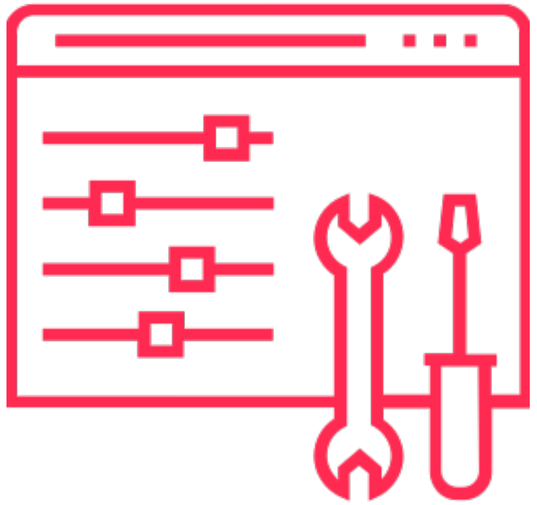
Pro-Tip: End with an inspirational sentence, such as, "I hope that the ideas generated today will help you… Thank you!' The 'thank you' in the end should trigger an applause.



Now you're ready to make your own!

Feel free to tweak or remix any part of this guide, as long as it is for non-commercial purposes. Good karma for you if you credit Board of Innovation.

We make corporates innovate like startups through strategy consulting, HR talent schemes, and organizational transformation programs.



Some of the clients with whom we are proud to work

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We help large enterprises innovate like startups.
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