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Developing a Workshop to Help Small Businesses Get Unstuck

Lauren G. St. George

Buffalo State College, laureng.stgeorge@gmail.com

Advisor

Dr. Sue Keller-Mathers

First Reader

Dr. Sue Keller-Mathers

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Developing a Workshop to Help Small Businesses Get Unstuck

by

Lauren St. George

A Project in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2015

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

Abstract of the Project

Developing a Workshop to Help Small Businesses Get Unstuck

This master's project presents my journey of developing and running a two-day workshop specifically designed to help entrepreneurs get unstuck. It includes principles, frameworks, and materials developed for this two-day workshop. Inspiration for this project came from my own entrepreneur experience over the last 13 years. Over that time period I have encountered many roadblocks and found that the resources available to established small business owners were limited and those that do exist did not always meet my needs. This workshop has been developed keeping in mind the two things that are most important to small business owners, time and money. The tools and materials shared in this project have been designed from my experience along with my studies at the International Center for Studies in Creativity.

Keywords: Creative Problem Solving Workshop, Small Business Solutions

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "W. George".

5/1/15

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Sue Keller-Mathers, Ed.D
Associate Professor

____5/1/15_____



Lauren St. George

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I would like to thank our teachers and professors for paving the way for the decades before we arrived at Buffalo State College. You are responsible for moving the needle and creating an environment that is that much more inviting of your graduating WOOs.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Ines Kuhn who fearlessly rode the back of the small business tiger called unitOne for 8 years with me. They were some of the toughest most thrilling years of my life and while they may largely be over it's a long chapter that I will always cherish. It was during these years that I truly progressed from a self-employed entrepreneur to a small business owner.

I would also like to thank my unitOne team for their dedication, belief in the company and tireless creativity. You made me a better manager and person for it.

Lastly I would like to acknowledge my previous business partners Kathy and Erika. We knew each other a lifetime ago but Critical Focus was the beginning of my "not for the faint of heart" small business owner journey that has been my career thus far. Wherever you may be I thank you for teaching me how to be okay with failing.

Dedications

I'd like to dedicate this paper to my wife, Juli and my mother, Denise.

Juli, you have supported me through every step of this master's degree. You are a constant reminder to live a more creative life. A life full of openness, tolerance for ambiguity and risk, and no silence my reptilian brain. You have encouraged me to keep going even when I was not sure if I could.

Mom, you taught me all about creativity tools from the time I could talk, lateral thinking when I was 8, about self-assessment tests at 6, and have nurtured my thirst for knowledge throughout my life. You have even offered to do my homework but we won't tell the professors that. I truly thank you for fanning my creative flames throughout my life.

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SECTION ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Project Purpose and Description

The purpose of this Master's Project is to develop a two-day Creative Problem Solving (CPS) based workshop to help small business owners get "unstuck". "According to Bloomberg, eight out of 10 entrepreneurs who start businesses fail within the first 18 months. A whopping 80% crash and burn" (Wagner, 2013). The true number of small businesses who close their doors before the end of year two can differ considerably depending on the source. In a Forbes article it was said that roughly 30% of small businesses do not survive their first two-years. 50% of small businesses close before year five and 65% do not make it to year 10 or beyond (Kessler, 2014). Regardless of the actual agreed upon percentage there is a definite rather steep drop off rate over time. So how do small businesses get help when they hit a roadblock?

There are a number of resources and programs available to new business startups these range from investors, mentors, accelerators, incubators and government subsidized organizations. There however are fewer options for companies who have been going for more than three years. My workshop is aimed at the small business owner who is no longer an early stage startup and now needs help facing a whole slew of new challenges. I make this distinction because early stage startups have two primary challenges. The first is how to raise money to launch their product or service and the second is to how to scale their business. Whereas small businesses have a far wider range of challenges

by year two or three. These challenges often center on marketing, sales and product development all of which connect well to my career experience as well as the CPS process itself. For the last 15 years I have been a small business owner as well as a marketing consultant working with medium to large size businesses.

This project is born from many years of experience and my entrepreneurial passion. As a result of developing this workshop I hope to add *Fresh Idea Labs* to my company's list of services so that small businesses in Atlanta, around the USA and beyond have a resource that actually delivers results in a timely manner for an affordable cost.

Description

Fresh Idea Labs are two-day workshops designed to take small business owners through Creative Problem Solving (CPS) tools, creativity exercises and networking activities. The powers of collaboration and community are at the heart of each *Fresh Idea Lab*. This highly interactive format brings entrepreneurs together who each have a unique problem to solve for their company. Over the two days entrepreneurs will work in a variety of formats depending on the activity and the CPS stage they are working on. At times participants' work in teams where they each take a turn presenting their challenge--and the team, as a whole, will become their resource group to help them come up with new ideas. The participants are able to lend fresh eyes and their personal/professional experiences to help each other solve their challenges. At other times they will work in pairs in order to achieve clarity in a more intimate environment. This two-

day workshop is a great opportunity to meet other entrepreneurs and uncover new thinking to help small businesses owners break through barriers and ultimately grow their company.

Rationale

I have been a small business owner for almost all of my business life. During that time I have run and closed three businesses. I am on my fourth. I believe most would call me a serial entrepreneur at this point. Over the last 15 years I have hit many roadblocks along my journey. These are inevitable for any business. Each time I have gotten stuck I have sort out different solutions to help me overcome the barrier. To assist with strengthening my business, I have tried a year long Emerging Leaders Small Business Administration (SBA) group, Greater Women's Business Council (GWBC) mentor-protégé program, a life coach, a business consultant, Georgia Small Business Development Center (GSBDC) program, and the Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council's (GMSDC) offerings, all established to help small businesses.

I have found through my searches that there are not many options available for small businesses that have been around for a few years and the ones that do exist are not always the right fit. In the case of funding or accelerators Atlanta is teeming with tech startups / small businesses. My area of expertise is not specifically technology based and I was not a startup at the time I needed help. For both of those reasons a lot of doors were closed to me. This is true too for other small businesses in the non-tech arena. In other cases, for example when I have applied and interviewed for a spot in the GMSDC's mentor

protégé program, my business was not eligible because I was not a million dollar business. In another attempt I was required to make a yearlong commitment to the Emerging Leaders program and while these programs can be beneficial to some businesses there are times when speed is of the essence. When your business is failing waiting a year to find a possible solution is just too long.

I know that if I have felt this way that other entrepreneurs have too. And from speaking to several small business owners this belief has been verified. I believe that there is better answer, one that I can develop and provide to small businesses at an affordable rate. My Masters Project is the perfect place to develop the thinking and pilot a two day workshop specifically designed to help entrepreneurs get unstuck. I am passionate about this area because if I had had better resources when I needed help who knows where my previous companies could be today. On the rare occasions that I found an organization that worked for my needs I know how empowered I felt as a business owner. I want to help others get unstuck and I believe a workshop based on CPS and other creative principles can do just that.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE AND RESOURCES

Literature and Resources

The books and resources I have researched for this paper fit into three main areas. The first group looks at other well-known creativity processes in order to add, change, tweak and try out new ideas beyond what I learned in the Master of Science in Creativity program. My second area of interest was to find ways to discuss creativity concepts using clear, simple examples that I could introduce to the group throughout the workshop. The third and final group of resources were those that could help me to choose and develop appropriate exercises and tools for the various stages of my workshop.

Alternative Processes

Creative Problem Solving (CPS)

Over the last two years the Buffalo master's program has focused on and taught us two main processes that I will refer to throughout this paper as CPS. "CPS is a comprehensive cognitive and affective system built on our natural creative processes that deliberately ignites creative thinking and, as a result, generates creative solutions and change" (Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2012, p. 43).

"Since Osborn first introduced CPS in the 1950s, the process has undergone continuous development and research, keeping it dynamic and fresh" (p. 42). One of the variations of this original CPS thinking is the Thinking Skills

Model. It is an eight-part process that guides groups from exploring the vision through to formulating a plan. The second process that we have spent time understanding is based on the Foresight Preferences developed by Dr. Gerard Puccio. The four preferences are clarifier, ideator, developer and implementer (p.255). While the Foresight Preferences were first developed as an assessment it is also a synthesis of the eight-step process. Foresight can also be used as a four-step process starting with clarifying the challenge and working your way to implementing a plan. Both processes are based on decades of development and research. "The basic reason why the CPS process has stood the time is that it works!" (p. 42).

I knew as I began to develop my workshop that the two main processes we had delved deeply into worked well. It was never my intent to try and recreate the wheel. Instead I wanted to delve deeper into some other processes that we spent less time discussing in our program to see if there were elements that were worth adding to my workshop. The similarities between the processes I researched are quite noticeable but there were a few key ideas or differences that I have taken into account while developing my workshop.

Six Thinking Hats

In CPS we instruct our resource groups for example to defer judgment or go for quantity. De Bono (1999) central belief that led to the development of the Six Thinking Hats is,

The main difficulty of thinking is confusion. We try to do too much at once. Emotions, information, logic, hope and creativity all crowd in on us... What

I am putting forward in this book is a very simple concept, which allows a thinker to do one thing at a time (de Bono, 1999, p.xi).

CPS does separate thinking out to a degree with diverging and converging rules. These rules help session participants to focus on one area of thinking at a time but this is not done to the same level as the Six Thinking Hats. Six Thinking Hats is a powerful tool but only when taught to the group ahead of time and used frequently to become fluent in it. In de Bono's model he uses the white hat to signify information gathering, the red hat gives the emotional view while black is about caution and concern. The yellow hat is all about hope and positive thinking and the green hat is used to focus on creativity and new ideas. The final hat is the blue hat, which is concerned with the organization of the thinking process (p. 13-14). "The hats can be used singly to request a type of thinking. Or, the hats can be used in a sequence to explore a subject or solve a problem" (p. 16). Yet there is no set order to the sequence in which you use the hats only some recommendations. This definitely makes using this method tricky in a two-day workshop where people are encountering this for the first time in amongst all the other CPS tools they will use to solve their challenge.

For this reason I would not add Six Thinking Hats to this particular workshop. I believe that adding this level of detail will only confuse my participants more than help them. Instead I plan on talking about this idea of focusing on one way of thinking, be it divergent or convergent, and likening it to swapping hats. This makes for a strong analogy and will help the group know when to use a certain set of rules over another.

Whatlf's Approach

The Six Thinking Hats concept connects well to Whatlf's behavior called signaling. "In a nutshell, signaling is how you let a recipient of information know what state to be in when they receive your information. Do you want them to judge your idea or help you build it into a better idea?" (Allan, Kingdon, Murrin, & Rudkin, 2002, p. 146). Signaling would be another simple concept to teach participants that they can use in their every day conversations with others. My only question is whether there is enough time in our agenda to add it in.

Whatlf's book *Sticky Wisdom* lays out their rules for engagement. They call theirs being in the SUN versus the RAIN. SUN stands for suspend judgment, understand the world through another's eyes and nature ideas by making them better, finding the value in them and finding alternatives (Allan, Kingdon, Murrin, & Rudkin, 2002, p. 59-61). This is a really clever way of explaining these creativity principles in an easy to remember acronym. Whereas when someone is in the RAIN they are reacting without thinking, assuming without asking questions and insisting that their way is the right way (Allan, Kingdon, Murrin, & Rudkin, 2002, p. 59-61). I think this is a memorable way of imparting creativity principles to the group but I still prefer diverge and converge principles as a middle point between Six Thinking Hats and SUN/RAIN.

Sun and rain recap



	
<p>S Suspend The two-minute pause – every time you hear an idea you practise this drill.</p> <p>Visualise yourself giving the idea rather than receiving it.</p> <p>Give out positive energy.</p>	<p>R React React quickly with a view of your own.</p> <p>Remain in opposition; your focus is on your own arguments.</p> <p>Just do the above, and the negative energy will take care of itself.</p>
<p>U Understand Really try to get inside the other person's head with open questions: 'Tell me more...' 'Let me understand...' 'What else do you like about your idea...?' Great listening.</p> <p>Paraphrase what you think they mean, and check you've got it right: 'So are you saying that...'</p>	<p>A Assume Keep thinking about your own agenda.</p> <p>Assume you know: 'I think...' 'I know that...' 'I only meant...'</p> <p>Listen in order to pick holes in their argument/idea.</p>
<p>N Nurture Make it better by 'building': 'So if you think X, maybe we could do X and Y.'</p> <p>Seek value/find an angle 'What's the big idea behind this idea.'</p> <p>Find alternatives: 'How else could we do this?'</p>	<p>IN Insist Find fault or 'knock': 'That will never work.'</p> <p>Find another flaw in the idea and insist you're right. 'I know that won't work, we've tried it before.'</p> <p>Insist that there is only one way to do it.</p>

Figure 1: Sun and Rain Recap (Allan, et al. 2002) gives a concise explanation of each acronym.

Another piece of WhatIf's process that I think is definitely worth adding to my workshop is the idea of momentum. "Most people say generating ideas isn't the problem – it's making them happen that's really hard (Allan, Kingdon, Murrin, & Rudkin, 2002, p. 110). Momentum is so often forgotten in workshops or processes. Helping people to figure out what needs to happen once they leave the room is so important. In fact it is the most important part of a successful workshop. If your participants leave and never use the new thinking or plan that they worked so hard on then why bother even attending. People are prone to fall back into their old ways of doing things and it is vital that as a facilitator we help

them avoid this pitfall. Whatl makes several suggestions on how to make momentum. The first is to seek alignment. This will be crucial when the business owners arrive back in their office. In order to implement new ideas they will need everyone on the team to be aligned. “Chaos kicks in when people’s motivations are not aligned with those of their projects” (Allan, et al. 2002, p. 125). The second is to create crisis. We all know how much quicker we can accomplish things when we are under a tight deadline. “People rally round. They drop what they are doing and muck in” (p. 127). However they do caution that creating fake crisis too often will have a detrimental effect. Their final suggestion is to just say no. “We’ve observed that successful innovators have a ruthless streak – they know how to say ‘no’. The power of a fresh mind, not entangled with suffocating detail, makes tough decisions much easier” (p. 133).

Design Thinking

Two key ideas from Design Thinking that I would like to incorporate into the workshop are empathy and prototypes. Empathy is the first phase of Design Thinking’s process. Design Thinking uses “empathy for the users that we are designing for... using the tools of anthropology and ethnography to study users and their activities” (Burnett, 2013). This is an important element to add to the clarification phase of CPS or in my workshop this stage is called Focus. During Focus we gather all the data that has impact on the challenge as well as understanding what the end user wants and needs are all vital pieces of information to take into consideration when solving the problem. In the case of my workshop this is an element that I will add to the pre-work that each

participant will do before arriving. Pre-work will allow us to maximize our time together as well as it's a great way to "heighten anticipation", the first phase of the Torrance Incubation Model of Teaching (Murdock & Keller-Mather, 2008).

The second Design Thinking idea I would like to share is the concept of prototyping. There is by no means enough time during our two days to fully delve into the area of prototyping but it is a very worthwhile idea to discuss. When my participants return to their offices they should choose the idea that they want to prototype. "Prototyping, testing, failing all the time. But failing quickly and cheaply in order in order to succeed" (Yang, Huang & Tsai, 2012). Prototyping is an economical way to test thinking that allows you to course correct and move thinking along quickly. "You can prototype just about anything – a new product or service, or a special promotion. What counts is moving the ball forward, achieving some part of the goal" (Kelley & Littman, 2001, p. 103).

Other processes and methods have a wealth of ideas and options that can be added to CPS and tried throughout our two days together. It is not my intention to add a large number of new components to an already busy two days but I do believe that there is room to add certain elements to enrich our time together or to help the day flow well.

Creativity Concepts

Lateral Thinking

The first creativity concept that I would like to share in my workshop is that of lateral thinking. "With lateral thinking we move "sideways" to try different

perceptions, different concepts, different point of entry” (de Bono, 1992, p. 53).

De Bono’s explanation goes on further and is quite lengthy so I would rather use the following illustration that Coca-Cola’s Ignitor team uses in their problem solving sessions to explain lateral thinking and river jumping.

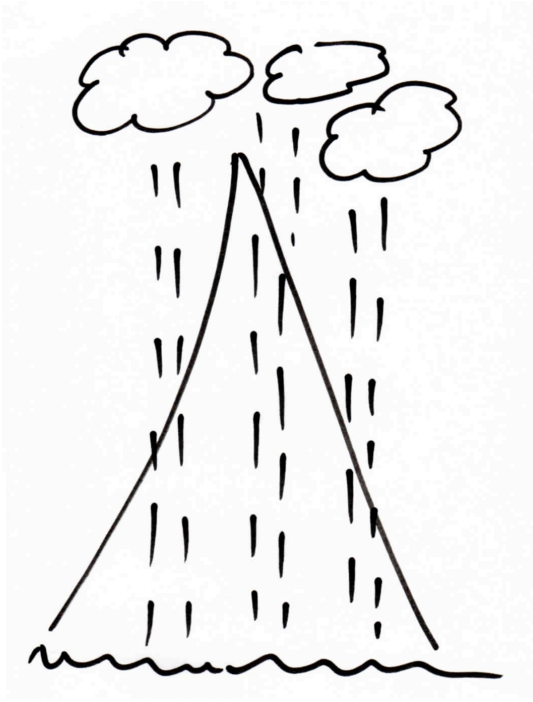


Figure 2: River Jumping Illustration used in Coca-Cola’s Ignitor Process (used with permission)

Thoughts fall like raindrops and over time they begin to create grooves in the mountain. As they continue to fall the grooves turn into rivers and these are the rivers that we have come to know as vertical thinking. It is vertical thinking that allows us to do routine, mundane tasks everyday without having to consciously think about them. These are tasks such as brushing our teeth or tying our shoes every morning. The only way to get out of old ways of thinking in order to solve challenges is to river jump. In order to river jump we use lateral thinking. The

tools and exercises that we will use during my workshop are designed to help people think laterally.

Framing Questions

This concept of how we think can then be expounded upon as we head into challenge clarification. How we frame questions and think about challenges can have a dramatic affect on whether we solve challenges. How to frame questions is nicely explained by Tina Seelig (2012),

What is the sum of $5 + 5$? What two numbers add up to 10? The first question has only one right answer, and the second question has an infinite number of solutions, including negative numbers and fractions. The two problems, which rely on simple addition, differ only in the way they are framed. In fact, all questions are the frame into which the answers fall. (p. 12)

I also really appreciate the way that Tina Seelig uses Michael Barry's example to explain why we should keep asking questions and not stop at the first answer.

If I asked you to build a bridge for me, you could go off and build a bridge. Or you could come back to me with another question: "Why do you need a bridge?" I would likely tell you that I need a bridge to get to the other side of a river. Aha! This response opens up the frame of possible solutions. There are clearly many ways to get across a river besides using a bridge. You could dig a tunnel, take a ferry, paddle a canoe, use a zip line, or fly a hot-air balloon to name a few. You could open the frame even farther by asking why I want to get to the other side of the river. Imagine I told you

that I work on the other side. This, again, provides valuable information and broadens the range of possible solutions even more. There are probably viable ways for me to earn a living without ever going across the river. (p. 21-22).

These examples set the stage for how we need to remain open to asking questions and digging deeper. River jumping is a great topic to bridge us to the conversation around doing things differently and remaining open to participating in all exercises over our two days together.

SAVI Learning

Another way of explaining the reason why we should all remain open to participating in the workshop exercises is explained well in the SAVI learning philosophy. “Combining physical movement with intellectual activity and the use of all the senses can have a profound effect on learning. I call this SAVI learning” (Meier, 2000, p. 42). There are four types of learning;

- Somatic learning, which is learning by moving and doing.
- Auditory learning, which is learning by talking and hearing.
- Visual learning, which is learning by observing and picturing.
- Intellectual learning, which is learning by problem solving and reflecting.

“Learning is optimized when all four SAVI components are present in a single learning event” (p. 50).

Reptilian (Triune) Brain

Meier also has a great way of explaining we are all apt to kill new ideas. This too is a concept I would like to share with the group. “The reptilian brain is

the primal part of the brain. Its major goal is survival... It governs automatic functions like your heartbeat and circulatory system. It is the seat of the instinctual, repetitive behavior and tends to follow precedent and routine blindly and ritualistically” (p. 35). Understanding that it is in our nature to kill anything new that we perceive as threatening will alert participants to look out for this behavior in themselves and to then consciously stop themselves from acting upon it. A hard habit to break but it can only be broken if it is explained.

Dr. Firestein’s (1998) example of the wheel barrow with a small wheel in the back and a larger hopper in the front is a great example of why we should defer judgment and remain in ideation mode.

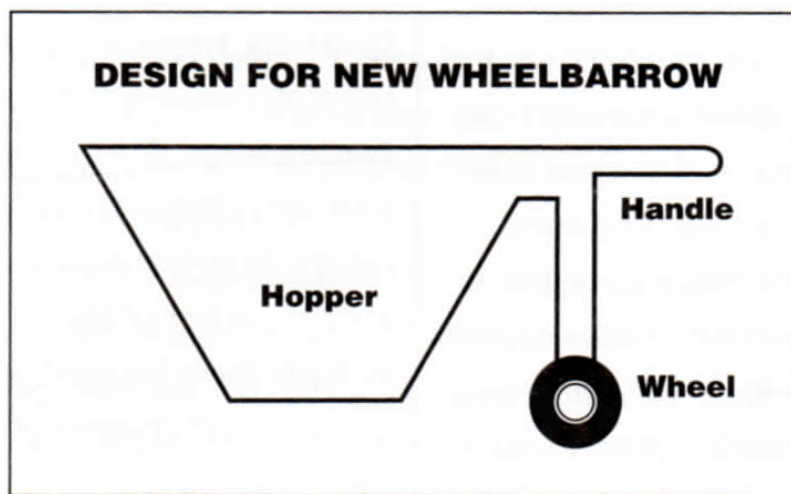


Figure 3: New Wheelbarrow Design (Firestein, 1998)

It really is used. You see, it’s used for high-rise construction. To operate this wheelbarrow you push down on the handle instead of pulling up on it. Because you push down on it the wheelbarrow has a lower center of gravity and it’s much easier to control... That’s what new ideas look like

sometimes. They can look pretty strange... What would have happened if I had redrawn the wheelbarrow according to your comments? You'd have the same old wheelbarrow with the one wheel in the front and the two long handles in the back. (Firestien, 1998, p. 44-45).

Deferring judgment, remaining open, understanding lateral thinking and how we frame questions are some important concepts to introduce to anyone who is new to any creative problem solving process. These are the main concepts that I will talk about on day one of the workshop.

Tool and Exercise Resources

Beyond the tools and exercises that have been taught to graduate students as part of their Creative Problem Solving strand in the MS in Creativity program I have found some other worthwhile sources that may be of assistance when you get bored with past tools or stuck with finding a particular tool for a certain challenge.

Sticky Wisdom (Allen et al, 2002) is correct in it's assertion that there are hundreds of tools out there to help with generating new ideas. In fact I'd posture that that there are in fact thousands. So how do you choose which ones to use? WhatIf asserts that there are only four categories that all tools fall into.

Hundred of tools have been devised to help people stimulate different thinking, but we believe there are in fact only four main categories of behavior that jump your thinking, and almost all creativity tools fit into one of these areas. Once you understand the underlying principles, you will be

able to invent your own tailored to the exact challenge you are working on at that the time. (p.14-15)

The four ways are re-expression, related worlds, revolution and random links. Re-expression is about finding an alternative way of describing or experiencing and issue. Related Worlds is when you look at other areas where similar issues or benefits can be found. Revolution has one identify and then challenge our own rules and assumptions that we are using and then break them. Finally random links is all about making connections between random elements such as items and issues in our world that already exist (p.15). Again each process has their steps to their process. I find that these four areas are best suited to clarification and ideation but does not cover development and implementation.

Two great books that are worth owning and keeping on your shelf as thought starters or for training are *Caffeine for the Creative Mind* and *Caffeine for the Creative Team*. “That’s the very purpose of this book, to help you prepare and train to create ideas in greater quality and quantity” (Mamaw & Oldfield, *Caffeine for the Creative Mind*, 2006, p. 18). They are jam packed with hundreds of exercises. These are great for warm-ups or even to be used as ways to spark new thinking while ideating. I personally enjoy randomly opening the books to a page and seeing what they stimulate for a particular facilitation. Here is an example,

The perception is that adults do everything better than kids. Au contraire!

There re tons of things that kids do better than adults. Your task is the

name twenty things that kids do better than adults. And if you're really feeling saucy commit to doing one of those things sometime today. (p. 34)

If you understand the process you are using and the nature of the challenge these books can help you tailor an exercise for your purposes. They are a great resource to have on hand too if you get stuck during a session or workshop.

A point that struck home while watching a video on how to increase your creativity also makes a great case for using improv during my workshop.

Would an athlete run a mile without warming up first? No he would pull a muscle. I see people jumping into brainstorming as if they couldn't pull a conceptual muscle... He (Dan Klein) warms them up by using a lot of games from the improve world. Improvisation much like brainstorming you have to be ready in the moment to create. There's always an offering from your partner and always a yes, and. (Burnett, 2013)

This sent me off on a lovely journey to discover improvisation game resources for my workshop. It then led to an AHA moment for me. In previous CPS sessions I have had a particularly hard time getting people to comfortable framing challenges as questions. This then reminded me of an improvisation that I had done years before where two people are supposed to have a dialogue but they have to frame each sentence in the form of a question. I think this may be a great way to help people shift from their natural inclination to come up with ideas into stating challenges as questions. I will most certainly be using this improvisation during my workshop. Dr. Burnett explains it by saying "These games (improvisation) teach you to start the free association process. They relax the

analytic side of your brain while the synthesis and verbal playful side warm up and emerge. It creates much better brainstorming sessions” (Burnett, 2013).

The design thinking for museums website (<http://www.designthinkingformuseums.net>) has some great improvisation games sectioned by purpose. They have some for kicking off meetings, warm-ups for brainstorming and embracing failure and others for user testing and prototyping. This is a great resource for people taking their first step into improve (Silvers, 2014)

The app Oflow (Christensen, 2013) is another fun resource and a convenient one at that. It’s a simple download to your iPhone but it provides 156 different creative techniques that you can use during a meeting, session or even when working on your own.

Just as there are hundreds of tools out there are just as many resources and sites you can use to find them. I have included a few that I particularly like but this is just the tip of the iceberg. These new tools and exercises will help me to change up my workshop over time so that I do not get bored or returning participants won’t either after all this workshop is designed to help business owners solve one challenge they are certainly welcome to return whenever they hit their next road block.

Literature Reviewed

There are other processes that I did not include in this paper. I instead chose some that I felt worked best with the overall design of my workshop. Here

are the resources that I reviewed in order to provide a fair look at alternative processes, tools and exercises as I developed my Fresh Idea Labs.

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Christensen, T. (2013) Oflow: Creativity App (Version 1.9.1) [iPhone application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/oflow-creative-ideas-app/id536919134>

De Bono, E. (1992) *Serious creativity: Using the power of lateral thinking to create new ideas*. 1996 Reprint. New York, N.Y.: HarperCollinsBusiness.

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Kelley, T., & Littman, J. (2001). *The art of innovation: Lessons in creativity from IDEO, America's leading design firm*. London, UK: Profile Books.

Mumaw, S., & Oldfield, W. (2006). *Caffeine for the creative mind: 250 exercises to wake up your brain*. Cincinnati, OH: HOW Books.

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Seelig, T. (2012). *Ingenius: A crash course on creativity*. New York, NY: HarperOne.

Silvers, D. (2014, January 27). Using improv games to foster creativity and collaboratio. Retrieved March 12, 2015, from <http://designthinkingformuseums.net/2014/01/27/improv-games-1/>

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SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

Goals and Outcomes

My goal is to run a full two-day workshop during this semester to fully test the approach and my thinking. In order to do this I have contacted several groups and organizations in Atlanta to source my entrepreneurs / small businesses for the workshop. I would like the pilot workshop to consist of 10 small business owners, each with a specific business challenge. The workshop will either take place at my office or at the organizations space if it is an appropriate environment for creativity to flow. Entrepreneurs will pay a small fee to cover food and supplies. They will of course be informed and asked to provide consent to be included in my final Masters Project paper as well as have footage and testimonials captured for a marketing video.

Prior to the workshop each participant will be asked to fill-out and return an application form so that I can better understand their company and their challenge (See Appendix A). I will follow-up with a phone conversation to make sure we are a good fit for one another. By partnering with a local group or organization the workshop will have people of a similar background. I am interested in working with established small businesses with at least two years of experience under their belts. Prior to arriving for day one of the workshop each participant will receive some pre-work to complete (See Appendix B). The pre-work should take one to two hours of their time and will be helpful beyond what we cover during our two days together. This will be done to maximize our time together, get their minds into the right place and to heighten anticipation.

During the workshop participants will have opportunities to work alone, in pairs, in groups and as a whole. A varied learning experience will help participants get to know one another better, form relationships, network and use the collective genius in the room. As starting any CPS session with the right challenge is paramount we will begin each workshop with a clarifying session done in pairs. Once we move into ideation depending on the number of people in attendance I will either split the group into two teams of four to five people. They will work together as each other's resource group. I will run the whole session with or without a co-facilitator. If in the future the workshop were scaled up to 20-30 people at a later date I would most definitely have a co-facilitator. Throughout the time together I will also include fun exercises to prepare people for various tools or to energize them post lunch or a break.

Momentum is important and so we will end the time together with an action plan as well as accountability partners. Partners will agree to hold each other accountable for the plan and will check in at agreed upon times to make sure the plan is executed and that people do not fall back into old patterns.

Project Timeline

Week	Task
February 9 th	Concept paper due. Design Fresh Idea Labs introduction document for recruiting groups / organizations.
February 16 th	Final concept paper due. Begin working on the lab workbook and supporting materials.

February 23rd	Workbook designed and ready for printing. Complete evaluation sheet. Complete participant introduction sheet for pre-call evaluation.
March 2nd	Confirm group / organization that I will be working with. Determine number of participants.
March 9th	Complete legal disclaimer regarding use in masters and video. Complete NDA form for participants. Intro sheets emailed to participants to be returned before their call.
March 16	Complete and submit Masters Project Sections 1-3. Tweak two-day workshop according to new thinking during literature review.
March 23rd	Schedule calls prior to workshop. Send pre-work to participants.
March 30th	Complete 2-day schedule of activities, tools and exercises. Design facilitator handbook for running the two-days. Print workbooks, buy supplies, make food arrangements, and purchase snacks and drinks. Setup space for workshops.
April 6-7	Run Fresh Idea Lab. Collect evaluation forms and record video testimonials.
April 13th	Complete and submit Masters Project Sections 4-6. Begin editing marketing video.
April 20th	Make changes to Masters Project final write-up.
April 27th	Complete and submit final Masters Project write-up.

	Complete editing video. Complete webpage for Fresh Idea Labs on Fresh site. Prepare for presentation.
May 5 th	Present Masters Project on Skype

Evaluation Plan

Evaluation will take place in four ways:

1. Participants will be asked prior to the workshop to determine what their goal for the two days is and what success would look like. They will share this with the group in their intros. At the end of the workshop I will ask each person to fill out a two-part evaluation form. The first part will ask if they achieved their goal and how.
2. The second part of the evaluation sheet (See Appendix C) will ask them to answer some questions on their experience. Since they will have already been introduced to POINT I would most likely do it in this fashion.
3. At the end of day one, the beginning of day two and in the closing activity of day two I will ask people to share their thoughts on their experience with the group. This will help me gauge how we are progressing.
4. On the last day I will ask willing participants to record a video testimonial of their two day experience (See Appendix D).

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

Materials

In order to recruit, market and run my Fresh Idea Lab I needed to create a variety of materials to help me accomplish my goals. I created a short presentation for recruiting, a workbook, facilitators guide, feedback form and legal paper work for the Idea Lab and for marketing I designed a new page for my website and edited a video based on footage from the pilot.

Recruiting Documents

When it came time to recruit participants for the pilot Fresh Idea Lab I found quickly that I would need to provide a short presentation to further explain my concept and my needs. I used my company's established look and feel when designing all of the materials for this workshop. I did this because it is my intention to add this workshop to my list of services. I found that the PowerPoint was a great resource for the people I was talking to. It gave them a piece that they could refer back to as well as email to colleagues. I believe that a visually appealing marketing/sales piece goes a long way to helping build credibility with interested parties. People are used to seeing well-designed materials from brands they trust. By spending extra time and effort to provide people with polished marketing materials you are subconsciously communicating that you are serious about your product.

The image shows three overlapping PowerPoint slides for 'FRESH idea labs'. The top slide is titled 'Idea Labs: Looking for a few good entrepreneurs' and lists details: 'Who: 10 entrepreneurs', 'When: 2 days TBD', 'Where: A warm midtown environment ready to inspire new thinking.', and 'Why: You feel stuck or need help figuring out the next step. You have a clear marketing or sales challenge that you would like help working through in an interactive and collaborative environment. You are looking for a different approach and an opportunity to meet fellow entrepreneurs to forge new relationships and find sounding boards for future endeavors.' The bottom slide is titled 'How: Using our FRSH Process of course.' and 'Clients' with a grid of logos including Hersheys, Johnson & Johnson, Citi, CNN, MWV, G, Kids II, SPANX, Coca-Cola, Coke, Frito, vizio, vi, DAMANI, AAGCO, United Nations, Loews, and Maggiano's.

FRESH
i d e a l a b s

Idea Labs:
Looking for a few good entrepreneurs

Who: 10 entrepreneurs
When: 2 days TBD
Where: A warm midtown environment ready to inspire new thinking.
Why: You feel stuck or need help figuring out the next step. You have a clear marketing or sales challenge that you would like help working through in an interactive and collaborative environment. You are looking for a different approach and an opportunity to meet fellow entrepreneurs to forge new relationships and find sounding boards for future endeavors.

How: Using our FRSH Process of course. **Clients**

At FRESH, we lead teams through a specialized creative problem solving process that helps you go from "what's next" – to the big "AHA"! Using workshops, retreats, training sessions or one-on-one coaching - we'll guide you through challenges that are as substantial as determining the company's future direction or more immediate such as conceiving your upcoming marketing creative.

HERSHEYS Johnson & Johnson citi CNN
MWV G Kids II SPANX
Coca-Cola Coke Frito vizio vi
DAMANI AAGCO United Nations Loews
MAGGIANO'S EstHillbrewer

Figure 4: Select Fresh Idea Labs Introduction PowerPoint Pages

Workshop Materials

For the day itself there were a variety of documents and materials that needed to be create for before and during the workshop.

Company introduction form.

This form was emailed to each participant once they signed up for the workshop. It was a quick two page word document that would allow me to get a better sense of each company, their challenge and key information before our telephone call. Once I received this form back from each participant I scheduled a call to talk through her responses. During our telephone call we talked about their challenge to better determine whether it was the right fit for the CPS process. I helped to frame their potential challenge in the appropriate format and then sent them two follow-up emails. The first included their pre-work for the workshop and the second answered all logistical questions such as location, time, attire and food preferences/allergies.

Non-disclose agreement.

At the start of the Idea Lab I asked each participant to sign a NDA (See Appendix E) before we began working together as a group. I did this to help create a safe environment so that people felt secure in openly sharing their specific business and/or their personal challenge details.

Consent form for shooting and documenting.

I also created a permission form (See Appendix F) to allow my videographer to shoot some video footage of the workshop. This footage would be used in a marketing video to market future Idea Labs. In addition to getting permission to record footage I also asked for permission to talk about the participants in this paper. Again I wanted to be sensitive to everyone's need for privacy.

Pre-workshop work.

To both create excitement prior to the workshop and make sure that we managed to get through all of our tools I sent a short three page PDF to each participant. I included these pages in the workbook so that they could transfer their thinking into it and have everything in one place. The first exercise was to draw the first and last frame of their storyboard. How the currently felt versus how things would look and feel if their challenge was solved. Second I asked them to do a SWOT for their business and the third page included two exercises to help them hone their sales pitch. These pieces would later be discussed in pairs or presented to the larger group.



Figure 5: Pre-Work 3-page PDF

Workbook.

I designed a workbook (See Appendix G) for each participant to record his or her thoughts, ideas and plans in. I had the 20-page booklet printed and saddle stitched. This was another piece that showed I valued their time with me. I handed them out at the beginning of our two days together and as participants thumbed through they were immediately able to get a sense of fun and light heartedness that would follow. Tonya from the workshop even said that it reminded her of her eight-year-old son’s books from school and this made her excited.

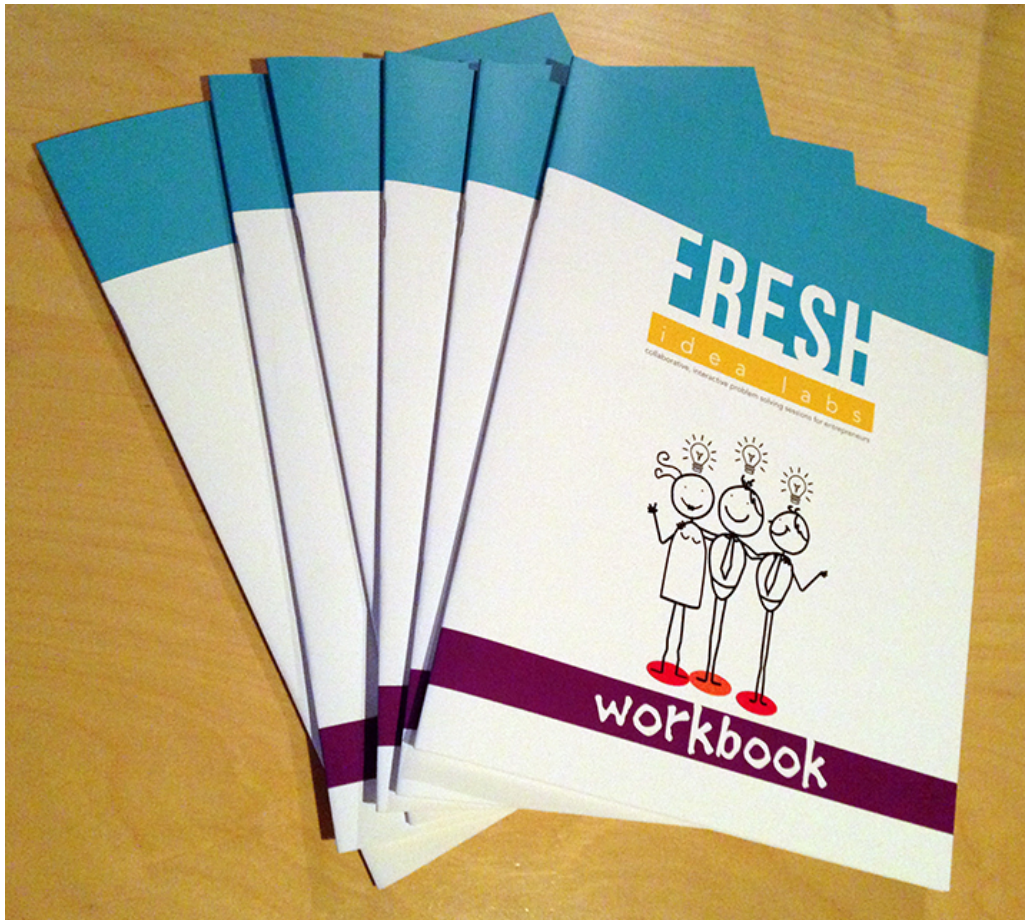


Figure 6: Printed workbooks

Facilitator guide.

To make sure that I had a firm plan of what we would accomplish over the two days I created a 56-page PowerPoint (PPT) deck that walked me through what needed to happen each step of the way. I created this so that I would also be able to share it with future facilitators should I need to bring help in for larger groups. In addition to the PPT I also created a timeline that covered every minute of our two days together. On the whole we kept on schedule. It also allowed me to look ahead and make decisions about what we should do next. There were times I skipped scheduled exercises because I felt they were not needed or that

my group was too tired and that we should move on. In one case I chose to add in an exercise I had been a part of at a workshop a few before and it just felt like the right tool at that moment. I happened to see Margaret the day after the workshop finished and she admitted she was still a little over whelmed but felt ready to implement her ideas and next steps.



Figure 7: A few pages from the Facilitator Guide

Idea starter cards.

It was my intention to find 10 companies to participate in the Idea Lab. If this was the case I would split the group into two teams of five for the ideation section of our time together. At this point each group would be the resource group for those members of the group. I decided that I would like to facilitate this experience without any help. This forced me to answer the question “how would

each group ideate if they got stuck?”. To address this possible problem I created idea starter cards to keep both groups going at the same time. This would allow the problem owner to help inspire their group to come up with more ideas if needed. I found that these cards were also easy for me to refer to when I needed another way to get the group generating ideas. I had 12 cards and laminated them for longevity. It turned out that I only ended up with four businesses and so I facilitate the whole time myself. I intend on adding cards over time so that I can preselect my tools prior to ideating depending on the group and challenge.



Figure 8: 12 Laminated idea starter cards

Budget.

Several groups asked me how much I would charge per person for the workshop. It was my desire to ask for a nominal fee to cover food and out of pocket expenses. In order to figure out the bare minimum that I could charge I created a budget and determined that \$100 would cover the majority of our needs for the pilot.

To do list.

Prior to the workshop I needed to send out emails, schedule phone calls and order supplies. To make sure that I didn't forget anything I created a schedule and a shopping list.

Marketing Pieces

In order to continue to grow and market the Fresh Idea Labs I knew that I needed marketing materials. I asked the participants at the end of the two days to provide an on camera testimonial if they felt comfortable to do so. The finished piece can be seen on my website <http://thefreshway.co/services/idea-labs/>. The web page was designed and added to my overall site in order to market the workshops further. The video is a great way to show what happens and give people a better sense of what to expect. I believe that having a stronger web presence that includes a marketing video it will be easier to get people interested in participating in future Fresh Idea Labs.

FRESH what we do who we are services creative juices clients contact

IDEA LABS

The powers of collaboration and community really come into play with Idea Labs. This highly interactive format brings entrepreneurs together who each have a unique problem to solve for their company. The participants work in teams where they each take a turn presenting their challenge—and the team, as a whole, will help them work through the FRSH Process. The participants are able to lend fresh eyes and their personal/professional experiences to help each other solve their challenges. These 2-3 day workshops are a great opportunity to meet other entrepreneurs and find new thinking to help you break through barriers and grow your company.

We have labs planned throughout the year. Challenges tend to cover marketing, sales and product development for our general workshops however we also conduct more focused workshops based upon requests and interest. Please contact us for more information about upcoming Idea Labs.

Lauren@theFRESHway.co 404.386.9361 Based in Atlanta, Georgia

Figure 9: Website page for Fresh Idea Labs

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

Partnerships

In order to find participants for my workshop I decided to reach out to existing groups and organizations in the Atlanta area. These groups ranged from as small as 10 members all the way up to organizations with 900 members. I used this approach so that I did not have to recruit participants on a one by one basis for this workshop. It was a journey I started well before the semester even began in the hopes that it would help my semester run that much smoother. My number one learning is that being an unknown, even though groups were interested, meant that no one was ready to move forward in any particular hurry. I was not a priority. In the case of my project timing was of the essence and so I made a lot of calls and had a lot of meetings. I learned something from every group I spoke to making it a very valuable journey.

What I offered each group was a two-day workshop that we could co-produce. I would charge \$100 to cover my expenses and they could generate additional funds for their group by charging over and above my fee. In return I would ask participants to consent to video recording some of our time together as well as video testimonials for those who were willing to be recorded at the end of the two days. This would allow me to create marketing materials to continue to recruit and run the workshop after my master's program was complete.

I started by meeting with a friend of mine who is well connected in the Atlanta community. The first lesson here was spend some up front time thinking through who do you know and who would be the first person to reach out to. After

explaining what I wanted to achieve he put me in contact with Brian who runs a micro-entrepreneur accelerator for Emory University called Start: ME Accelerator. They run a 14-week accelerator program for entrepreneurs in the Atlanta community who only have one to four employees and have been running for less than two years. The program takes 15 selected business owners through skills based training, networking and mentoring. I met with Brian just after they had finished recruiting their last entrepreneur for the East Lake chapter. Start: ME Accelerator is beginning to grow and run accelerators in multiple parts of the city. Through our discussion it began apparent that alums of the program would be better suited for my workshop. I agreed with Brian but of course this meant that timing was not in my favor. Brian was interested in running my two-day workshop closer to the summer and not during an accelerator session. The bad news meant I had to keep looking for participants the good news was two fold. First Brian said that he would introduce me to the Center for Civic Innovation (CCI) and second that I would have the possible opportunity to run the workshop in summer with Emory footing the bill. The lesson here was how key networking is and how you can use it to your benefit. So began my journey into who do I know and who do they know.

So Brian put me in contact with Rohit the founder and Executive Director of CCI. Several emails and months passed and finally we had a call. Rohit was interested in partnering and said that he would go back to his CCI members and see if there was any interest. I later heard that the timing was not right and perhaps I would be interested in doing a free teaser evening at the Center to

drum up interest. The bad news was that this did not fit into my masters project timing. The good news was that I now have another open avenue and all I have to do is lock in a date and design a teaser experience. I am sure that the teaser will come in handy with future opportunities and therefore worth developing as another recruiting tool. My lesson in this case was really to look deeper at what kinds of tools or approaches would I need to implement should I want to recruit participants for future sessions. Developing a marketing strategy is definitely a next step item for after completing this semester.

At the same time as I was having conversations with Brian and Rohit I had reached out to Veronica at the Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council (GMSDC). I knew about this program because my ex-business partner and I had applied to take part in their mentor-protégé program. Unfortunately we were not eligible despite our making it through to the final interview round. We were not a million dollar company. Veronica responded quickly to my email and we met a few weeks later. It is through my initial discussion with her that I realized that I needed to put together a overview presentation that I could share with these groups so that they not only understood what I was trying to do but that they would also have something that they could take back to their team and share with confidence. The learning here was that the more legit that I could look the more serious people would take me. It was during my conversation with Veronica that I realized I had to become very clear about what kinds of participants I was looking to work with. I explained to her that I was looking to work with companies who had been in business more than three years and had a challenge in sales

and marketing. She felt confident that she had alums from her mentor-protégé program that would be interested in participating. She asked if I would be prepared to take her through the two-day experience in greater detail so that she would be able to talk in more depth to the companies she would approach. We agreed that early-March would be a good time frame to run the workshop. I then lost contact with Veronica. Five emails and a call later she said she needed more time. A few more emails later she popped out of the wood work saying now was a good time to discuss and would end of April work? The good news is that GMSDC is still interested in partnering. The bad news is that it did not fit into the timeline for my master's project. This experience has definitely made it clear that I need a sales pipeline with the workshop. The more irons I have in the fire the easier it will be to fill my workshop.

Next I reached out to another friend who is a facilitator and asked her for any recommendations. Jeffri suggested that I attend the Startup Chicks next meeting. At this point I was still going back and forth over who would make the best group to pilot the workshop. In my mind it could be either startups or small businesses, as long they were not mixed together. So I showed up the next monthly meeting, which luckily just so happened to be the next week. Nancy was the guest speaker that week. At the end of her talk Jeffri told me to approach Nancy about my workshop. Nancy was lovely and said that there was a few groups she thought would be a good match and gave me a card to contact her. I did the next day and she put me in contact with Lissa at the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). NAWBO has a CEO Roundtable group

that Nancy thought would be a good option because she used to run it. Lissa was interested and pitched it to the group. Unfortunately the group is only five people and no one took us up on the opportunity. Lissa and I are still talking about how to leverage this opportunity to the greater NAWBO and potential member network. This hopefully will turn into an opportunity in the long term. Lissa is still interested in talking further and finding the right way to offer this to their members.

The founder of Startup Chicks is woman by the name of Jennifer. She started the group because she was a successful serial entrepreneur who also helps run an accelerator at Georgia Technical Institute. I managed to get an introduction to Jennifer which led to a scheduled phone conversation. It was truly enlightening. In a few short minutes she said to me “I don’t believe startups are the right group for you. They only have two main challenges they are trying to solve. The first is how to raise enough money to launch and the other is how to scale their business”. This helped to make it that much clearer that startups are not where I would like to start. This was a reaffirmation of my original belief that small businesses were best suited to this workshop and Jennifer made that very clear in less than 10 minutes.

Then out of the blue I get an email from Nancy. She has a CEO group that she coaches through her company and she believed that she has four to six people from her group that would be interested in participating. So there you have it. I was able to pilot my workshop after four months of emails, meetings, phone calls and people going missing. My number one learning on how to

partner with groups is this, spread your net wide, take meetings with anyone who is remotely interested and have well designed materials to make your endeavor look legit. Each person asked enough questions to either prove or push my thinking. This was an invaluable experience.

Participants

Largely I found through talking with various people that my hunch was right. Small businesses were the best place to start for a variety of reasons. First I have been a small business owner for close to 15 years. Second there is a cycle that all small businesses go through. We begin as startups trying to find the money to open our doors. Usually it takes one large client to grow us quickly and then you are faced with how to scale. After you have scaled two to three years later you are faced with how to sustain the business. You have employees, one great client, several smaller clients and a realization that if you lose the big client you are dead. This is my sweet spot. This is the point in time when companies have tasted success, grown enough to have learned a fair amount and are now hitting a variety of new challenges. I believe this is the group that is best suited for my current workshop.

Nancy approached the eight women who were a part of her CEO group. Of the eight we had three commit and two were tentative. Nancy also chose to participate giving her a rare opportunity with this group to work on her business versus theirs. Their businesses were diverse and through scheduling conversations with each of the businesses ahead of time I made sure that each

came in with a challenge that would work in the process. The businesses covered transportation, marketing, construction and business coaching.

Workshop Experience Learnings

The content that I created for the workshop was largely based on CPS with touches of de Bono and Design Thinking. There is only so much that can be covered in two days and while I would love to add in more from other sources it isn't easy to do in two days. We covered a lot of territory and from the feedback forms provided by the participants I learned a few interesting things. The overall feeling was that they want to do more warm-ups, more exercises and to get out of their seats more. This is interesting because as a natural introvert I am very aware of how far I push people out of their comfort zones. Now I do have to acknowledge that this group largely knew each other and so there was naturally a higher tolerance for stepping outside of comfort zones because they already felt safe. How far people are willing to step out will always vary but I do know that how I position exercises and how comfortable and confident I am will help with how open they are to novelty.

I also have to point out that the group was all women and that this makes a huge difference in the experience and outcomes of our time together. Women are in general more emotionally invested and intertwined with their companies. They also process things differently. I believe all four women had an invigorating and opening experience over the two days. They not only managed to solve their current challenge but see how similar their challenges are to other female business owners. For one woman, Margaret this was a very emotional

experience and this is not the first time that I have found that taking women through the process has led to uncovering some core challenge that is actually a personal challenge disguised as a business one. This is where the power of the *Why / What's stopping You* tool is so beneficial to people. I chose to start the workshop by spending time on clarifying their challenge. We had already done a good deal of leg work on the phone but this gave them opportunity to dig deeper and either validate that this was the correct challenge for our time together or choose to change their challenge before we moved on to ideation. Again in the feedback forms an interesting question was posed "what would this experience have been like if men were in the room?". While it is unlikely that I would choose to focus only on women I think that there is a need to have some future Idea Labs as either mixed or women only. They do have different needs and only time will tell how this will impact my overall design of the workshop.

Another issue that was brought up in the feedback form was the amount of side chatter that occurred and that I needed to curtail it from time to time. This is a difficult one because I believe that at times the discussion was needed in order to work through something but it did result in us not completing the full workbook. While the group did vote to stop before doing the final exercise due to fatigue I definitely could have gotten us through to the end had I reduced side conversations. I will only know how likely this is to be the case again once I run the workshop several more times with different groups. I have several thoughts on how to deal with this challenge. First I can definitely do better at corralling people as we go so that we stay on track. The second option is to add a half-day

to allow people to finish completely. This will be easier with out of town retreats where we could start mid Friday and end Sunday afternoon. The third option is to give them a break and reconvene a week later for a one-day follow-up workshop where we flesh out a much more detailed plan. This is not only an opportunity for people to digest the two days but also an opportunity for Fresh Idea Labs to become more modular.

There is a power to this process that goes well beyond business. I know that in the future I will add personal challenge workshops to my offerings but I chose to begin with business because this is my wheelhouse. During the two days together I believe that there were plenty of times that the ladies felt like they were not alone, that they were able to open up more (if that is possible for this group) and that they can trust each other. It was a phenomenal two days for not only them but for me too. There was plenty of laughter, sharing and even some tears which to me signals success.

Upon completion of the two days I asked each participant to fill out a feedback form. Since I had taught them how to do the *POINT* tool I asked them to do the same for me. Here is a summary of their feedback.

Pluses:

- Different experience. Off the beaten path exercise that surprised me and kept me interested.
- Lots of support and digging deep
- Good sized group
- The process gave me permission to be kinder to myself

-

Opportunities:

- It might provide tools that can be used moving forward
- It might make us realize that we all have issues that we need help solving
- It might show us that we all have great ideas
- It might lead to longer events
- It might help me with other problems
- It might help me move forward and do more

Issues:

- How to minimize rambling and side conversation?
- How to have more wall space?
- How to make this work for a bigger or mixed gender group?
- How to make this workshop a week?
- How to manage personalities and needs?

New Thinking:

- Teach the group how to self moderate – anyone can call focus to get everyone back on the topic
- Encourage people to do the Lab once a year to keep their thinking fresh
- Try other groups in Atlanta

Process Learning

Schedule

On the whole we ran pretty close to the schedule time wise. But I have to say that there is no real accounting for how tired people feel even after one day of thinking differently. While the ladies came in on day two excited they also looked fatigued. We did not manage to finish my timeline and finished early the second day. I really didn't pack that much into the schedule, well that's at least what I thought. I had designed the workshop to basically have one warm up and one tool per section. But they all hit the wall as we were rounding the corner to the last and final stage. I loving call it Hatch. It is the implement section and time to hatch a plan. I talked them through the workbook pages for Hatch and poured everyone a glass of wine. They all decided to finish up at home and rather debrief the day. This is my general feeling on my schedule. If I was to do an out of town retreat I would make it two and half days. Start at 1pm on Friday and end at 5pm on Sunday. The extra time is needed. If I was to do this again in town there I would curtail the side conversations better and stick to the plan. It is doable it just takes me being more of a taskmaster.

Tools

I have had a tough time working with people in the clarity section of CPS. Over the last two years since beginning my masters I have run many sessions and they have ranged from confused, frustrated to complete shut down. This time around I chose to do a warm-up that would get their minds into question asking mode. I ran an improv session and it showed how hard only asking questions can

be. They were warmed up and we moved on to the main tool *Why, What's Stopping You?*. So in theory they understood the tool. I ran through an example with them to explain how it works and we still had trouble. I made to circulate and interject when needed but their asking of questions veered in many directions and did not follow the format. This is why I have a huge problem with the tool. The CPS process is supposed to be fluid in a sense but the specificity of language is a considerable part of the entire process. I keep trying new ways to do this and I have to say I have not yet cracked it. I am closer than I was a few weeks ago but not there yet. Is this a comment on our society that we really don't ask enough questions and that we never stick around to truly ask the difficult ones? The participants would agree that it was through this tool that they did find clarity and refocus on their challenge. Two out of four businesses changed focus. There is no beating running through this tool in person.

Flexibility

I remember when we first learned the CPS process at the start of the masters program it was daunting. I tried so hard to understand how one tool lead to the next and how to move from one stage to the next. I have come to realize through multiple sessions that this is not the true objective and that while entering with a clear road map is necessary equally is the flexibility to change course at any moment. The thought of doing this when I ran my first mock session with Doug and Russ was terrifying. The pieces weren't yet connecting in my head and I did the best I could. During this workshop I was struck with an idea when Margaret's turn came for deeper delving into New Thinking in POINT. I pulled an

exercise from a conference I went to where Lisa Nichols was the facilitator. We ran it and while it made Margaret feel vulnerable and exposed I believe that the group honored the moment and that we had a successful experience. My advice for any facilitator is never stop participating in workshops yourself, never stop learning tools and always remain open to changing your plan.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

Creativity and Change Leadership

Leadership is a skill I have grown over time. I do believe that I have embraced being a transformational leader long before starting the program but there is always room for growth. When I started the masters I was the co-owner of a creative agency called unitOne (<http://unitoneatlanta.com/>). I had run the company for years and was bored. I needed something more. At the time I think we had five or six full time employees and while we were doing well and working with large corporations I was looking for something more. I believe my team would say that I was an inspiring leader. I was always in the trenches and never asked my people to do anything I hadn't already done many times. I was compassionate, cared about who they were as human beings and was transparent and open about the company's journey. I encouraged people to try new things, to expand their horizons and worked hard to get the best work out of them possible. When I asked for a pay cut in order to keep the company a float they obliged, when I let people go and later rehired them they were only too happy to return and when the going got tough they stood by us. So I do believe

that I had a certain level of understanding when it comes to creativity leadership. I will say that now two years later as I round the corner to my graduation that I have learned and grown that much more as a leader. This new direction that my company, Fresh is going in feels right. It feels like it could be a bigger stage allowing me to have a bigger impact. That's the kind of legacy that I would like to leave. One that touches more, teaches more and solves more challenges. Fresh Idea Labs is a beautiful union of my previous experience with my new understanding and I can't wait to see how I can have an impact on the world.

Next Steps

There are a lot of next steps and that is what is so exciting about this project. My next immediate steps will be to circle back to groups that were not ready and see what I can make happen in the future. With Start: ME Accelerator I will try to line up a summer workshop with their alums. I will also lock down dates with the GMSDC to run a two-day co-sponsored workshop with their alums. In terms of CCI I will design a teaser that I can deliver one evening at a free event at the Center. Once I better understand the parameters I can design it for anywhere from one to three hours of time. I believe that these kinds of "pitches" should always be hands on and in the true spirit of creativity and the workshop. Therefore I will make sure that it has plenty of out of their seat activities to make sure that people are engaged and learning while doing.

In addition, I will circle back with Lissa at NAWBO and see if we can design a bigger experience for more potential and existing members. Now is the time to keep the momentum running with all of these groups and I can afford to

run programs at a lower rate to build up word of mouth while I continue to work with my corporate clients. They will allow me the time it will take to truly build the Fresh Idea Labs to be all that they can be. There are plenty of other groups that I can still tap into and plenty more that I currently don't know exist.

It is also my intention to build the Fresh Idea Labs side of my website out further. Long term I would like to add a calendar that highlights up coming workshops, an automated sign up and pay function as well as other videos that showcase the various topics that we will cover as I create workshops that have more focus on certain areas of concern. For instance I could create a 1-day workshop for startups to help generate non-tradition ideas on where to find funding. I could also see designing a one-day implementation workshop a few weeks to a month after they have done the first workshop. This would allow me to remove the implementation section of Fresh Idea Labs two-day workshop and to create a follow-up day with interested parties. This would add to my suite of services as well as allow my workshop attendees time to think through everything that came out of their first experience. Ultimately I would like the website to work hand in hand with my online marketing plan to help drive the right kind of entrepreneurs to my site. The positive reactions to the pilot workshop makes me hopeful that I can find more opportunities to take small businesses owners from challenge to solution. I hope that the ladies I first tried this with will become my ambassadors and for that I will grandfather them in for the pilot fee. They are welcome to do the workshop again at any point. This does raise the question of how often should I change out tools and exercises so that no one is bored or

repeating past experiences? If that is my biggest challenge then I am definitely in good shape. If business owners are doing the workshop more than once then I am on to something. Tonya said that she believes a company should do this once a year to stay focused and on track. I whole-heartedly agree. There are so many avenues to grow this concept I am inspired and invigorated. This final project is a great place and time to be graduating because I now have the momentum and a desire to keep growing my new business bigger and further than I ever imagine when I started two years ago.

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Appendix A



Company Introduction

Company Name:

Contact Person:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

In a few short sentences tell us about your company.

What is the challenge that you would like to solve during our time together?

Tell me some of the key pieces anyone would need to know in order to think about your challenge:

What would it mean to you to solve this problem?



Company Introduction

Company Name:

Contact Person:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

In a few short sentences tell us about your company.

What is the challenge that you would like to solve during our time together?

Tell me some of the key pieces anyone would need to know in order to think about your challenge:

What would it mean to you to solve this problem?

Appendix B

PRE-WORK: Dream Big

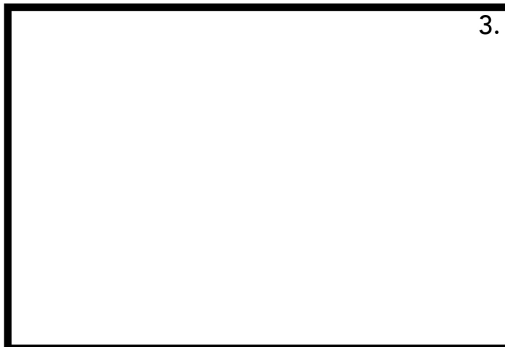
Where are you currently stuck? Draw what that looks and feels like in **box #1**. Draw what it would look and feel like to successfully break through that block in **box #6**.



1.



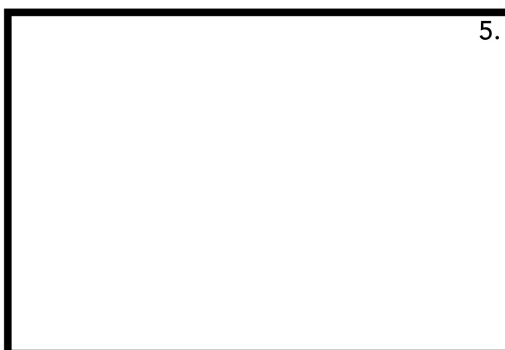
2.



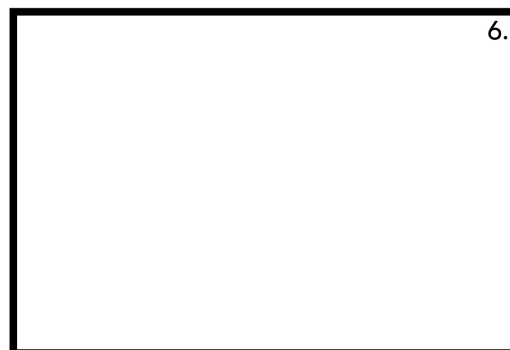
3.



4.



5.



6.

PRE-WORK: SWOT You Got

Start with a scrap piece of paper and jot down as many ideas as you can for each section. Then choose your top 3-5 and add them below.

Internal Environment

Identify your company's **strengths**: what advantages does your business have? What do you do better than anyone else? What factors mean that you get the sale / win the project?

Identify your company's **weaknesses**: what could you improve? What should you avoid? What are people in your market likely to see as your weaknesses? What factors lose you sales?

External Environment

Identify your company's **opportunities**: what are the interesting trends you are aware of? What are some opportunities for profit and growth in the market?

Identify your company's **threats**: what obstacles do you face? What are your competitors doing? What technological advancements will threaten your position?

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

PRE-WORK: Twitter Pitch

Attention spans are shorter than ever. Here are 2 exercises to help you put together a 2-minute company introduction for when you attend your Idea Lab.

In a 140 characters pitch us on your company:

Once Upon A Time...

All Pixar movies use this same structure to tell their story.
Now it is your turn. Try applying the structure below to your company.
Here's an example based on Fresh Idea Labs:

Once upon a time small businesses across the country were closing their doors at alarming rates.

Every day, they looked for resources to help them break through road blocks.

One day a small business owner with a passion for problem solving started Fresh Idea Labs

Because of that, small business owners started to learn new ways of thinking

Because of that, they found new solutions to old challenges

Until Finally, they stopped closing their doors and instead began to grow.

Once upon a time

Every day,

One day

Because of that,

Because of that,

Until Finally,

Appendix C



Feedback

Pluses (What's Good?)	Opportunities (It might...)
Issues (How to...?)	New Thinking

Appendix D

Fresh Idea Labs Video: <http://thefreshway.co/services/idea-labs/> or on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/K8nlzM6OG04>



The powers of collaboration and community really come into play with Idea Labs. This highly interactive format brings entrepreneurs together who each have a unique problem to solve for their company. The participants work in teams where they each take a turn presenting their challenge—and the team, as a whole, will help them work through the FRSH Process. The participants are able to lend fresh eyes and their personal/professional experiences to help each other solve their challenges. These 2-3 day workshops are a great opportunity to meet other entrepreneurs and find new thinking to help you break through barriers and grow your company.

We have labs planned throughout the year. Challenges tend to cover marketing, sales and product development for our general workshops however we also conduct more focused workshops based upon requests and interest. Please contact us for more information about upcoming Idea Labs.



Lauren@theFRESHway.co 404.386.9361 Based in Atlanta, Georgia

Appendix E



Group NDA Form

The purpose of this agreement is to set out the terms on which Fresh Idea Lab participants are permitted to receive and share related information:

You shall keep confidential all Fresh Idea Lab information and all matters discussed during the workshop. You shall not disclose any of the same to any third party, nor reproduce or transmit or store in any retrieval system any of Fresh Idea Lab's participant information in any form or by any means whatsoever.

Exceptions to the above include:

- Disclosure to individuals in your organization, who agree to be bound by this non-disclosure, is permitted for purposes of evaluating strategies, plans or ideas from the Idea Lab.
- Information that was in the public domain at the time of the disclosure
- Information which, though originally Fresh Idea Lab participant information, becomes part of the public knowledge through no fault of the receiving party.
- This agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of Georgia.

Your signature signifies acceptance of terms and conditions of this agreement.

I hereby acknowledge and accept the above:

Representative of: _____

Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix F



Permission Form

I, (enter name) _____ grant Lauren St. George / Fresh Inc. an irrevocable license to use and to reproduce any photographs, videos, or associated material of me for purposes related to those listed below, unless crossed out, without payment of any fee. Purposes: (please cross out any you do not want it to be used for)

Websites, social media, online and printed articles, brochures, booklets, flyers, reports, event displays and other marketing activities.

In addition, this Fresh Idea Lab pilot is being developed as part of Lauren St. George's Masters Thesis Project. The final paper will be completed by the end of April 2015. I hereby grant Lauren St. George permission to use basic company information in her final thesis paper. I hereby select that my name and/or company name can either be used or kept anonymous in this paper.

Use: _____
Keep Anonymus: _____

Signed: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G

A few example pages:



WELCOME TO THIS FRESH IDEA LAB

This workbook is designed to guide you through both your time in the lab as well as outside of it.

Our interactive format uses the FRSH Process. This process is based on the sciences of problem solving and creativity, which have been extensively studied and tested for decades. The process utilizes tools and interactive exercises that are designed to nurture your ability to remove barriers and think innovatively. During our time together you will be guided through each step of the FRSH Process.

THE FRSH PROCESS



Focus on the challenge

Reimagine the possibilities

Streamline the thinking

Hatch a plan and bring it to life

So let's get started!

HATCH: *And Action!*

What I now see myself doing is... _____

In the next 24 hours, I will...

My accountability partner is:

Email address:

Phone #:

Date and time of first call:

Permission to place this Project in the Digital Commons online

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State college permission to place a digital copy of this master's Project Developing a Workshop to Help Small Businesses Get Unstuck as an online resource.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "LStGeorge". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L" and "S".

Lauren St. George

5/1/15