

## The 60-Minute Idea Generator

Need to solve a problem? Tackle a challenge? Capitalize on an opportunity? Use these prompts to capture your ideas in text and drawings. **Use colored pencils.**

Separate *idea generation* from *idea assessment*. Generate many ideas. Assess them later. Work alone or with others.

### FIRST: Name the question.

Often, brainstorms chase answers to the wrong question. *The question named is the question answered.*

Make sure your question is important to you, or it's not worth your best efforts. Include business, family and personal questions.

Be concise, clear and specific. Focus your question narrowly. (You can brainstorm another question later.) Keep it easy to understand, so others can help you.

Be practical. Start your question with "How can I (or we) ... ?" or "What can I (or we) do in order to ...?"  
*Avoid "Why...?" because that gets too philosophical. Stay practical.*

Write a dozen potential questions, or different versions of the same question:

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11.  
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12.  
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**Circle one question on the list above.**

*Pursue that question during the rest of the brainstorm.*

**Say three times:  
"I can do this.  
I have good ideas."**

## WARM UP: Feel the future.

Imagine: you have a great answer to your question.  
How might having that answer improve life?

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And how might *those benefits* make life better?

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And, once again, how might *that* improve life?

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When you think of the improvements to life, what feelings do you experience? Circle words on the list. Add words of your own here:

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Write more about the feelings you experience when you think about the benefits of having a great answer to your question.

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**Smile and  
breathe.**

### **AFFECTIONATE**

compassionate friendly loving  
open-hearted sympathetic  
tender warm

### **ENGAGED**

absorbed  
alert curious engrossed  
enchanted entranced  
fascinated interested intrigued  
involved spellbound stimulated

### **HOPEFUL**

expectant  
encouraged optimistic

### **CONFIDENT**

empowered  
open proud safe secure

### **EXCITED**

amazed  
animated ardent aroused  
astonished dazzled eager  
energetic enthusiastic giddy  
invigorated lively passionate  
surprised vibrant

### **GRATEFUL**

appreciative  
moved thankful touched

### **INSPIRED**

amazed  
awed wonder

### **JOYFUL**

amused  
delighted glad happy  
jubilant pleased tickled

### **EXHILARATED**

blissful  
ecstatic elated enthralled  
exuberant radiant  
rapturous thrilled

### **PEACEFUL**

calm  
clear-headed comfortable  
centered content equanimous  
fulfilled mellow quiet relaxed  
relieved satisfied serene still  
tranquil trusting

### **REFRESHED**

enlivened  
rejuvenated renewed  
rested restored revived

This list of feeling words  
comes from [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org).

## Challenge boundaries.

Before answering your question, solving your problem or achieving your opportunity, make lists of...  
...the people who stand in the way. Who might try to stop you?

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...the rules that stand in the way. What aren't you allowed to do? Be brief.

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...other facts, constraints and obstacles, both real and imagined. What is off limits?

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*What is not what it seems to be? Review the lists above and draw a line through any person, rule, fact, constraint, or obstacle that you may ignore. Be sure to laugh at any boundary that you yourself created!*

What ideas arise? What would you do if you had no fear? Write ideas in just a few words, like a headline.

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## Apply your life.

Think of a time when you were in a similar situation. What was the challenge or opportunity?

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What did you do?

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What happened? How did it turn out?

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What did you learn?

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What would you do differently, if you could do it again?

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What ideas come to mind for your main question?

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• .....

• .....

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• .....

**Get up and  
stretch.**

**Sketch it.**

## Flip it.

Look at everything from the opposite perspective.

How might you turn something, anything or everything upside down?

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**Re-read the  
main question.**

How might you turn something, anything or everything back to front?

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What if this were a world of abundance? What if this were a world of scarcity?

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## Write anything.

Write any ideas, even if they have nothing to do with the topics above.

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**Draw anything.**

## Distort resources.

Separate dollars from idea generation. What ideas might work with different budgets?  
What tools and resources might help?

**Get up and  
stretch.**

What might you do if you had \$500,000 and five years?

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What might you do if you had \$50,000 and five months?

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What might you do if you had \$5,000 and five weeks?

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What might you do if you had \$500 and five days?

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What might you do if you had \$50 and five hours?

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## Company A → Company B

What are the basic attributes of your company (and how it does business) today? (This is “Company A.”)

Products:

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Services:

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People:

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Personality:

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Other defining characteristics:

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What do you want them to be 18-24 months from now? (This is “Company B.”)

Products:

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Services:

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People:

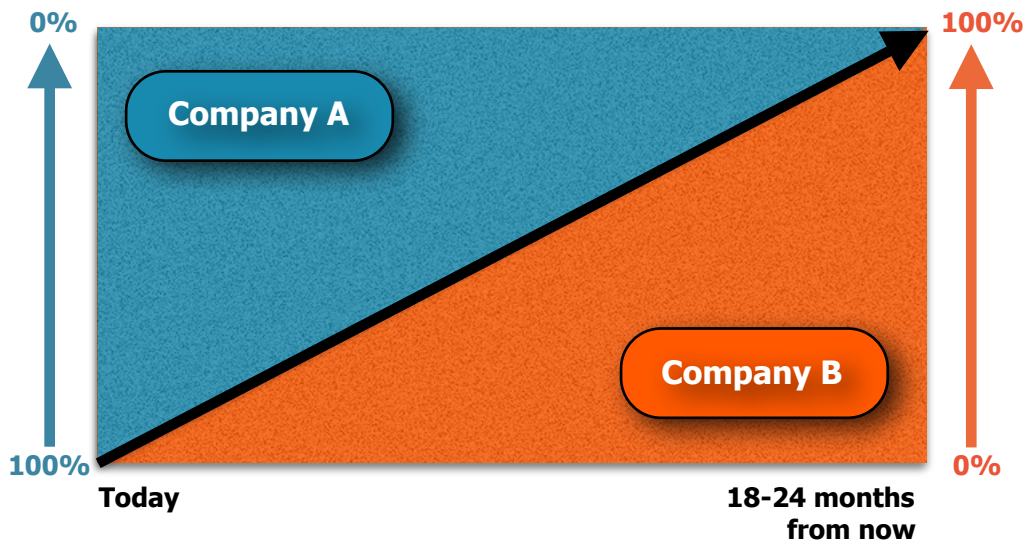
.....

Personality:

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Other defining characteristics:

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## Write anything.

Write any ideas, even if they have nothing to do with the topics above.

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

Draw anything.



## Draft a genius.

Who's the smartest person ever? What would that person do? (Choose someone with great talent and achievement, not merely fame and wealth.)

What would you do if you were this person?

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What would you do if you were your smartest friend?

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What would you do if you were a superhero? What would be your superpower? How would you use it?

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## Creative Agenda (Sample)

### Daily Team Brainstorming (10-15 minutes)

- Brainstorm a one-sentence "How Do I/We...?" question brought by a client, employee, supplier or employee:
  - Casually led, standing
  - Headlines only: "Yes, and..."
  - Guests welcome
- 30-second update on previous day's Daily Team Brainstorm

### Weekly Team Brainstorm (60-90 minutes)

- Brainstorm one "How Do I/We...?" question:
  - Referred from the Daily Team Brainstorm: worthy of deeper, more focused attention
  - Trained facilitator, formal scribe
  - Guests welcome
- Add to the *What We Don't Know List*
- Within 48 hours, manager circulates post-assessment results

### Monthly Company Re-Charge (half-day)

- Field trip
- Book club
- Employee reports on self-learning

### Quarterly Re-Focus (full day)

- Creative brainstorming on next quarter's priorities
- Review and Resolve *What We Don't Know List*
- Outside speaker

## Additional Resources

### At ArtieIsaac.com...

...a bookshelf of ideas for creativity, collaboration and more.

...updates of this tool, and other DIY tools, such as *Carry Forth*, a tool for planning creative projects for you or your team.

...and a link to my blog, *Net Cotton Content*.

### **HALF-DAY CREATIVE BOOST: Your team learns proven creative skills while addressing your key questions.**

What can you do — in one morning or afternoon — to reignite your team's creativity? Can you do more than learn? Can you also make bold strides toward addressing critical challenges and opportunities?

#### **Yes. (Here's how.)**

I provide companies and organizations with a half-day of creativity training and brainstorming for eight to 800 teammates.

#### **This is applied problem solving.**

This is *hands-on training*. Rather than simply learning about creativity and brainstorming, we will immediately pounce on the most critical questions at the forefront of your business.

*There will be useful, actionable results.*

### **Isolated at the top?**

#### **A Message To Business Leaders**

Make-or-break decisions. Economic volatility. Unpredictable humans. The stakes have never been higher. With limited time and resources, you must trust your gut.

Imagine the value of a peer group: questioning your assumptions, validating your analysis, offering perspectives, and identifying unseen opportunities.

**To consider how a peer group can make you a better leader, visit ArtieIsaac.com.**



### Who is Artie Isaac?

→ helping CEOs develop ingenuity to face *bet-the-company* moments

→ 500+ training sessions on creativity and collaboration

→ 2,000+ brainstorming

→ Chair of eight Vistage groups in Columbus

→ 300+ keynotes

→ Vistage Innovation Speaker of the Year

→ Yale B.A., Columbia M.B.A.

...accelerating **effectiveness**, **collaboration** and **creativity** with proven methods, humor, insight, and old-fashioned encouragement.



**Visit ArtieIsaac.com for brainstorm facilitation, CEO peer groups, corporate training, executive coaching, and keynote presentations.**

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# Artie Isaac

## Guidelines for Principled Brainstorming

### Get Ready

- 👉 **Create comfort and stimulation.** Serve food and beverages in an inspiring atmosphere.
- 👉 **Travel light.** Schedule two hours, but limit active brainstorming to 90 minutes. (Come back later to continue.)
- 👉 **Pledge confidentiality.** During brainstorming, secrets are revealed. Recognize your ethical obligation to maintain complete and permanent confidentiality. Do not enter the room until you can acknowledge that the stories you hear are not yours to tell. Ever. To anyone. *Beyond brainstorming, this is a milestone in the maturation of a fully-formed adult.*

### Assign Roles

- 👉 **Clients** define the question and give it to Facilitator, days before the brainstorm. *Clients do not attend the brainstorm. Keep Clients and their fear far away!*
- 👉 **Facilitator** defines the specific challenge and the intended outcome. Facilitator establishes YES! Space. Facilitator keeps the conversation rolling in intentional, positive and curious directions. Facilitator smiles a lot, saying "yes" and "great." Facilitator is a warm soul, encouraging and positive — not a slave to the agenda. Facilitator ejects bullies. Facilitator does not defend ideas. Facilitator does not teach.
- 👉 **Scribe** writes everything in plain view. If Scribe writes something differently from the expressed idea, let Scribe know. Scribe maintains a Parking Lot for ideas that should be discussed later. Scribe is detail conscious, writing down everything exactly as stated. Scribe says, "Wait! Stop! I missed something. What was just said?" Scribe has ultimate power.

### Brainstorm

- 👉 **Have fun.** Be playful. Play nice. *This is essential.*
- 👉 **Engage your brain.** Go for lots of ideas. Trust that quantity will take care of quality.
- 👉 **Think out loud.** Jump into the stream of consciousness. Speak without the usual filter.
- 👉 **Speak plainly.** No jargon.
- 👉 **Suspend judgment.** Ignore the outside reality. Separate idea generation from idea assessment.
- 👉 **Welcome ideas.** All ideas are worth sharing. Create and maintain YES! Space.
- 👉 **Listen.** Springboard and tailgate, finding new ideas from each idea — "yes, and..."
- 👉 **Keep moving.** Please, no long stories. Just the headline version. And don't interrupt.
- 👉 **Everyone is creative.** Every once in a while, to ensure that everyone is participating, try taking turns around the table.
- 👉 **Encourage.** Ignore personal authorship. Be an idea team.
- 👉 **Conclude without resolution.** Decisions and completion are a job for Client later. *Don't struggle. Call me.*

Artie Isaac

**Artie Isaac** accelerates your  
**collaboration and creativity** with  
proven methods, humor, insight,  
and old-fashioned encouragement.  
**Visit [Artie Isaac.com](http://ArtieIsaac.com) for brainstorm  
facilitation and corporate training.**

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