

Microscope

Field of application	#Ideation #Idea improvement #Product design #Service design #Process design #Creativity skills development
Resume / Brief description	<p>Microscope is part of the 6xi set of WakeUpBrain creativity techniques. It takes the focus of the innovation team to one small part or component of the situation to create new concepts. It's a good technique to find ways to differentiate a product or service with original and surprising changes.</p> <p>The technique starts by doing a "zoom" into several parts of the product, service or situation we are trying to solve or improve. Then the participants try to change that part in different ways. Finally, the participants analyse if they can change the "whole" in accordance with that new version of the part changed.</p> <p>For example, a restaurant owner can focus just on the forks (Being the forks a small component of this complex business) to find ways to differentiate his business from competitors. Maybe one idea can lead to make the forks funny, more sustainable or bigger. Then he can ask himself if all the other components of the restaurant can be made funnier, more sustainable or really big.</p> <p>Category: Idea optimization</p>
Target group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Entrepreneurs ● Innovation teams ● Students ● Community
Group size	Teams from 1 to 8 participants. 1 to 5 teams can play simultaneously
Objectives	To find ways to improve a traditional concept or an idea
Requirements	<p>Material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prints of pictures of the product or service to be improved. ● Pens and colors ● Paper <p>Digital version:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pictures of the product or service to be improved placed on a digital board (Google Jamboard, Microsoft board or other) <p>Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 40 to 120 minutes
Implementation - Overview	<p>Sometimes a business owner or product or service designer needs to re-invent her product or service. Even if the actual concept is working well there is always space to make it more surprising and create differentiators for the possible clients to notice and buy it. This logic also applies to the entrepreneurs looking for a concept to be used in a new business. These entrepreneurs can start by taking an actual solution present in the market and re-inventing it. But how to do this?</p> <p>The Microscope tool can be a fast and powerful way to build new concepts starting from actual ones.</p> <p>The technique invites the innovator to focus on a particular element of the solution and re-think it. Then ask the innovator to re-design the entire concept from the ideas generated for that little element. The result is a renewed concept with surprising differentiators than can be a successful innovation.</p>



Implementation - Guidelines

1. Preparation. Print one or several images of the actual product or service. When printing a service you can print the place where the service is delivered or print the moment the user is receiving it.

2. Circle some points of the image. These points can be both essential or accessory elements of the product or service. This means that some points, parts or characteristics selected can be a "must have" in the concept and others can be just a "good to have". For example if you are trying to improve a car washing business, you can print a picture of the place where some cars are being washed and circle the water (essential), a car (essential), a waiting table (accessory) and a plant in the corridor (accessory). You can even ask someone external to the session to circle random points in the pictures.

3. Select just one of those elements and focus on it. If the session has more than one team, you can assign different elements to each team.

4. Instruct each team to ask themselves the "How to be more" questions. This question is intended to find a way to chance that element to make it more exciting or useful. Examples of "How to be more" questions are

- How can this element become more crazy?
- How can this element be more creative?
- How can this element be more surprising?
- How can this element be more unique?
- How can this element be more funny?
- How can this element be more productive?
- How can this element be more profitable?
- Etc.

Ask each team to describe in detail all the new versions they have imagined of that element. To include drawing on each description is always a good idea.

5. Let each team present the more surprising re-design of the element.

6. Ask all teams to re-design the entire product or service using as a guide the re-designed small element. Tell them to imagine that the style of this renewed element goes viral and spread to all the other elements on the product or service. Remember them to be very detailed and include drawings to communicate their ideas.

7. Now you have one or more renewed versions of the product or service. Let each team present them to the group.

8. You can repeat the process of assigning a new element to each team.

9. At the end of the session, you will have some exciting and really new alternatives for your product or service.

Example of application:

A school was trying to find ways to improve the learning experience of its students. One of the teachers offered to facilitate an ideation session and used the Microscope as the main tool to work with. A group of teachers and parents were taking part in the session. The facilitator divided them into 4 teams of 6 people each.

Previously, the facilitators printed pictures of children in real classes as well as other spaces and moments in the school life. The pictures were printed in letter size. The pictures were placed on the walls all around the room.

As the first action, the facilitator gave markers to the participants and invited them to circle from 3 to 5 random elements or points on each picture. No one was permitted to add more than one circle on the same picture.

Then the facilitator assigned a picture to each team and invited it to re-design one of the elements circled. A sheet with 6 "How to be more" questions and a six sided dice were given to each team. By throwing the dice, the team found the question they must answer regarding the element in the circle. All the teams were asked to imagine at least two new versions of that element.

Each team presented its two better ideas and, by votation, the best were selected.

The facilitator dissolved the teams and re-distribute the participants into 6 teams of 4 people each and assigned them one of the selected renewed elements.

Then, each team worked in inventing a whole new school inspired by the re-designed element.

In the final phase all the new concepts of school were presented. Everybody was really surprised on how easily they could find ways to build exciting new concepts for a school.

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