

# **Creative DANCEA**™

**A New Way to Brainstorm by Gary Bertwistle** ©  
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## WHAT IS CREATIVE DANCEA?

Most people have heard of brainstorming and many have undertaken brainstorming sessions themselves, yet so few people fully understand the principles and brainstorm properly. People tend to use brainstorming to generate lots of ideas but once the session is over, the group disperses and the facilitator is left with pages of ideas and no way of deciding which ideas were good or otherwise, and no commitment to using any of those ideas. In order to make the full brainstorming process more memorable, I've taken each of the steps and devised an easy to remember acronym to ensure that the brainstorm is undertaken properly. Its called the **Creative DANCEA**.

Here is the process:

### **D – Determine the Issue**

The first step is to determine the issue at hand, and the easiest and quickest way to do this is to ask the group the following question – ‘Wouldn’t it be great if.....’ Throw it open for discussion and list all the different responses that you receive from the room. Once this has been achieved, you need to identify the person in the room who owns the issue and its up to them to select from the list the most appropriate statement, or the one most suited to the brainstorm about to take place. Rather than the broad topic initially brought to the table, you have now determined a more specific topic that addresses the real nuts and bolts of the problem.

### **A – Alternatives**

At this stage we want to generate as many alternatives as we can for our topic, which has to be reframed slightly for this stage of the discussion. Rather than ‘Wouldn’t it be great if.....’, we can write something like ‘In what ways could we....?’ With this at the top of our page, the aim here is to generate lots and lots of ideas to answer the question. We are looking for as many ideas as possible – hundreds if we can! The facilitator takes all those ideas and puts them up on a whiteboard or a flip chart. So ideally at the end of the brainstorm period (ideally about fifteen or twenty minutes), you will have all these ideas up on a board.

### **N- Narrow down the ideas**

Now that all the ideas are on the board or flipchart, we need to narrow them down to those ideas that people think are best. The way to do this is with sticky dots you buy from a stationery store, or if you don’t have any coloured dots handy, you can just ask the participants to tick the ideas that they like best. Each person is given one dot for each 15 ideas generated – ie if there were 60 ideas, each person gets 4 dots. The group is then allocated three or four minutes, during which time everyone is asked to place their dots next to the ideas on the boards/walls they think are the best to meet the required outcome. You can either put all your dots on the one idea, or spread them over a few ideas. Once that task has been completed, the facilitator goes back to the list and works out which three or four ideas received the most votes. At the end of this step you should have around two to four ideas that are possible solutions to the challenge presented at the beginning of the session.

### **C – Criteria**

In order to further identify the best idea from the ones you have just narrowed down, the idea must meet certain success criteria as decided by those in the room. Ie, there are certain criteria your idea must meet with in order for it to be the ideas that you choose to run with. To decide the success criteria, you’ll have to have another mini brainstorm session with the facilitator writing down as many suggestions as possible as to the criteria required to make these ideas successful. When we have once again come up with a list of ideas, we do the same thing as we did above – allocate dots or ticks and ask the group to mark those criteria that they think are most important. By the end of the criteria stage you should have narrowed down your long list of ideas to three or four of the best, and you also have three or four criteria by which to judge those ideas.

### **E – Evaluate**

In order to evaluate our ideas against our criteria we need to draw up a grid. Across the top of the grid we will list our criteria and down the side of the grid will be our three or four top ideas. At the point where the ideas meet the criteria we rank each idea from one to five. If you give it a five it means the idea is absolutely spot on and nails the brief perfectly, and if you give it a one the idea doesn’t meet the criteria at all. The idea that has scored the highest against your criteria may be the idea that you choose to move forward with. It’s important to note at this stage that just because a particular idea scores the highest ranking, doesn’t mean this is the idea that you have to run with. You identify which criteria are most important and look at which ideas are going to meet your criteria, but remember you may have four or five other good

ideas that you could choose to run with. Also, don't forget all those other ideas that you generated earlier in the session. If you wish you can still put those ideas through the evaluation process at a later stage.

### **A – Action Plan**

No brainstorm is truly complete without the action plan. The action plan moves the selected idea out of the realm of discussion and into reality. It is a plan outlining who is committing to do what and by when in order to put the idea into motion. The real value of any brainstorm session is in the outcome, and the real success comes when you do something with it. So please ensure that at the end of your brainstorm you commit to an action plan on paper and set it in motion, otherwise all that hard work can easily go to waste!

Should you have any queries when implementing the Creative DANCEA brainstorming process, please do not hesitate to call Gary Bertwistle in Sydney on 02 9356 4280. The process is also more thoroughly explained in Gary's book 'The Keys to Creativity'.