

OBJECTIVE

Harness collective energy when groups are trying to come up with a core creative concept. This exercise alleviates some of the “be creative now!” pressure from the group brainstorm and encourages strategic thinking and dialogue in the creative process.

USE IT WHEN...

a group needs to do some concepting such as developing a meme for their campaign, a name or a specific messaging frame.

SET UP THE ROOM...

so that participants can see the wall where the facilitator will “live sort” their responses on flipchart paper.

MATERIALS

- Tape, markers
- Flipchart paper, one piece with each category name written on it: **Functions, Sentiments, Elements**

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

This activity relies on the facilitator having a crystal clear understanding of three categories, or it will be challenging to keep the mandate of the group.

FUNCTION tracks ideas about goals.

What does the concept do? (ex. mobilize X constituency, name the problem, offer vision...)

SENTIMENTS allows for a conversation about tone/brand.

What are the core sentiments the concept has to communicate? (ex. threat, inspiration, hip...)

ELEMENTS allows for a conversation about the actual content of the concept.

What are some elements of the name? (Ex: the issue, group's core concern... “I know the name has got to have the word justice in it”)



Write the three categories up on three different pieces of flipchart paper and display all three simultaneously.

Now we're going to explore **What's In A Meme**. This activity is designed to start the process of developing a creative concept and is intended to produce a range of ideas, not one definitive answer. Can we support each other in that?



I'd like to present three categories we can use to organize our brainstorm session, and give you an example of each. {Present definitions.}

Let's start with function and get clear on what our concept will actually do? What is the goal? How will we know if the concept has been successful?

Briefly go through brainstorming within each category to get the creative juices flowing and test that the categories are really understood and working for everyone. This is an opportunity for the facilitator to model the exercise with clarifying questions where needed. (“You said that was a function but that sounds more like a sentiment to me. What do other people think?”)

If the group has gotten fairly comfortable with the categories and the process, then open up the brainstorm to all 3 categories simultaneously. The facilitator should push the conversation where appropriate with elicitive questions. (“Okay if that is one of the elements what is the function that is serving?”)



As people are generating ideas, use a “live sorting” method. That means not writing down just anything, but asking probing questions until it is clear which category the idea fits in.



Pay attention to group energy and participation. People have very different approaches and stamina regarding group brainstorming. Is there someone who hasn't participated much? Do some folks look 'left behind' while others are excited about a direction?

The process can end by identifying a short list of the group's favorites. Perhaps a concept will have emerged or merely a creative direction. After the session, a summary of the creative work should be written up and distributed to participants for further thought or deferred to a smaller group for more creative work and decision-making.

TIPS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

- If energy is low, offer the group a chance to work either in pairs or individually to do a bit of quiet time and individual brainstorming and then come back and share it with the group.
- Although the importance of a core meme or name is usually self-evident, it's helpful if participants have some familiarity with story-based strategy since that provides some working terms and strategic concepts to explore the different political dimensions of a creative concept.
- Be consistent in categorization.