

When is enough, enough?

One person working alone is more productive than a group?!

This is a really bad thing for a specialist in group process to admit! But here it is for the entire world to see. Now comes the rationalization part:

- This appears to be true only for the short run. Individuals tend to run out of mental steam after a while. Managed groups can go on and on. I have yet to experience a group that runs dry.
- Ideas are only a part of what happens at any innovation session. We frequently start the relationships which make for successful implementation, exchange other vital information, and create a history of success for the team.

The results on the next page are typical for sessions that I run. A completed product at this stage is usually a concept sheet which has been presented to the group for reaction. A major assumption is that quality can emerge from quantity in a creative exercise (remember the formula for creativity).

$$\text{Quality Of Thinking} = \text{Function (Quantity) x Climate}$$

Understanding this formula is a key factor in understanding the difference between serial thinking (what we usually do) and parallel thinking. Parallel thinking is what should be occurring in this exercise.

These session results may help you to see the extent to which you can carry idea generation. Keep in mind that I have spent as much as three days on a redesign for what I had previously considered to be a "simple" household appliance.

Note: It will also make the old boring!

	Group Size	Time (Hours)	Facilitators	Concepts Developed	Concepts Selected
Commercial Consumable	19	18	4	103	35
Technology Push	9	20	2	39	10
Packaged Goods	11	24	2	64	30
Technology Push	7	24	2	43	12
Naming Session	9	17	2	24	5
Naming Session	6	1	1	32	7
Organizational Issues	32	4	2	9	3
Positioning Lab	9	8	1	6	4
Naming	1	9	*	5	1
Line Extension Electronics	1	4	*	6	2

*Workbook Only

Several points can be made about this data.

1. There is no perceived difference in the value of the first concept created when compared with the last concept created. Sessions do not reach a point of absurdity because of running out of ideas; rather, sessions stale at the point when people are tired or run out of budgeted time.
2. Adding more people can reduce the cost effectiveness of a session. Nineteen people took about 3.7 personal hours to produce a screened and selected concept. One person working alone produced one concept every 40 minutes.
3. People tend to find value worth pursuing in 25% to 35% of ideas developed. By value I mean that a significant portion of the group felt that the concept should at least be looked at further. Interestingly, about the same percentage are outright rejected, with the rest being loved or understood by somebody.

Summary

Numbers are interesting but can only explain a portion of what happens during an innovation session. Clearly, one person working alone is more productive over the short term. My experience suggests that working alone is frequently a good first step. You may find what you want in the way of ideas by taking only this step, you may not. If you do, you will be in a good position to save your resources for other parts of the new product development cycle. If you need to go further, exploration will have had the value of clarifying your thinking and perhaps of helping you to the decision that you need a group session.

Sort Criteria

You should now be looking at a list of five or six name concepts. You should have a beginning set of criteria. If not, you will need to go back to the section on criteria setting and create a set. While you are doing that, the rest of us are going to talk a bit about innovation and creativity and getting new ideas (of which new names are a special type) accepted by an organization.

Up until this point, I have carefully tried to steer you away from thinking too much about what a "good" name might be. Part of the reason is that, for many types of innovation issues and for many of us that get involved with innovation issues, implementation is an all too critical concern. We might fail to look outside of our initial concept once we have started to set boundaries. Therefore, I suggest (and many others in my field would agree) that you start with a limited amount of information and then become more rigorous as you approach implementation.

Based on the creativity formula, I have encouraged you to generate a large quantity of names on several levels of specificity (parallel thinking). I believe that quality will emerge from quantity.

I was presenting to a group of graduate students at the **Sloan School of Management** at MIT a few years back and was challenged by a young doctoral candidate on the accuracy of the mathematical relationships represented by the formula. He was both right and overly anxious to fit a loose concept in with his current effort to tighten up the world.

I find the formula to be true enough and, more importantly, useful. I have also come to the inescapable conclusion that there is a second equation at work as we move toward implementation.

Formula for Innovation

As we move toward the final screen and next steps, keep in mind the limits of what we have done here. We have attempted to increase the odds of generating new names through both quantity of thinking and through some exercises designed to assist.

This formula is still open to revision. My friends, Bob Walsh and Wally Brown at Westinghouse Electronics, have a positive variation:

$$\text{Innovation} = \frac{\text{Creativity} \times \text{High Cover (Management Support)}}{\text{Expected Effort}^2}$$

$$\text{Innovation} = \text{Facilitation} [(C \times HC/EE)^2]$$

Creativity is just one essential aspect of innovation. **High cover**, or management and organizational support, is equally important. I will go into this in much more detail in the Developing New Product Concepts Workbook. **Expected Effort**, the third component, comes from painful experience. The greater the expected effort the more creativity and high cover you will need as you move through the project toward implementation.

The “squared” comes right out of my days in systems design and development... admittedly, from the earlier days of data processing. The truly new (new systems, new products, new techniques-issues, and concepts that challenge the status quo) seem to take longer than experience would suggest that they should. Their very newness adds a tremendous burden of proof to the new product concept. Implementation for a “new” concept always seems to take longer and more resources than you think they should.

And, the process is enhanced if **Facilitated**. My perception is that the need for facilitation will vary dramatically as the other equation elements shift.

Another friend and rigorous thinker in this field is Bill Souder of the University of Pittsburgh. Bill’s book, *Managing New Product Innovations*, should be on your desk. In case it isn’t, the ISBN is 0-669-10809-X. Of his many findings, one critical factor that we individual contributors must face is that projects driven to market by a one-man band are likely to meet or exceed expectations about one out of four times. Our odds get worse as our projects move into unknown territory. Teams succeed more often in both innovative and ordinary projects.

It is critical that you be aware of the limits of your effectiveness and stay within them. Now there is a restrictive sort of statement... did I say that? Let’s rephrase: it is critical that you realize when you are moving to a point when you are exceeding your authority or knowledge base. At that point, you need the help of the proper resources.

Get it.

MOVING FROM CREATIVITY TOWARD INNOVATION

Leonardo Da Vinci was creative; Edison was innovative. As much as I am an admirer of both men, we are about the business of getting things done now. That means making one of these names happen. And in many cases, that may mean setting aside some of the more creative names until a later time. This is one of the most difficult judgments to make—chasing a wisp of newness or going after a good old name that you know you can use or sell.

This is where courage comes into play.

I think the following points made by Bright and Rogers are remarkable for their perception and simplicity on a very complex subject. They are targeted at the broader field of new product development. However, they apply quite nicely to naming situations.

Innovation Tactics

(Adapted from the work of J.R. Bright, 1968)

Basic Assumptions

1. Individuals and organizations tend to settle into relationships and procedures to achieve social equilibrium. "Let's not waste energy."
2. Equilibrium is achieved by adjustments to work and management technology, daily practices, habits, values, and prevailing structures.
3. Any innovation alters those adjustments and creates disequilibrium.
4. The amount of disequilibrium caused is proportionate to the **perceived** change the innovation creates, not necessarily the real change that it creates.
5. In times of crisis, innovations will be sought out instead of resisted.
6. Acceptance of innovation can be dramatically influenced by the social climate of the moment.
7. And, most importantly, you must look at the innovation and its evaluation, **always from the user's perspective**. The innovator's perspective is irrelevant and even counterproductive.

Tactics for Resistance to Innovation

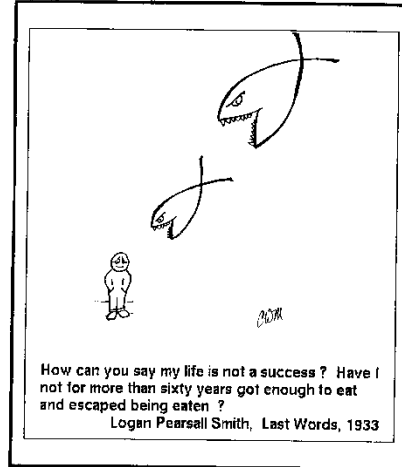
(Adapted from the work of E. Rogers)

1. Perceived Advantage: The user should be able to easily see an advantage over what he is doing now.
2. Failure Consequences: The user must understand the consequences of failure of the innovation; obviously, the less potential injury from failure, the more interested the user will be.
3. Compatibility: The better the new idea is perceived to fit with what is already being done, the more likely it is that it will be accepted.
4. Simplicity: Keep the supporting activity needed for the successful use of innovation as simple as possible. This does not mean that the mechanism should not be complex. It merely means that the user's perception of the innovation should be simple.
5. Divisibility: The more the innovation can be tried one piece at a time, the easier it will be to accept.
6. Communicability: If you use old vocabulary to describe the new idea, you make it easier to accept.
7. Reversibility: It must be easy for the user to withdraw from the innovation.
8. Relative Costliness: The degree to which the innovation absorbs the user's resources (time, money, person-power, emotional commitment, etc.) should be less than what it is replacing.
9. Reputation of the Innovator: The more the innovation can be associated with a trusted reputation, the easier it will be to accept.
10. Timeliness: Timing can be everything. It must be neither too soon or too late. Items one through nine can change over time.

REMEMBER: THE KEY IS HOW THE USER PERCEIVES THE INNOVATION, NOT HOW YOU, THE INNOVATOR, PERCEIVE IT!

I might add that our names are all on paper and infinitely modifiable. As we become more rigorous, don't hesitate to go back and explore with new thoughts around a name that you like but fails to meet the criteria you are about to revisit.

With that, let's look at our original list of criteria for our own naming project



... AND I HAVE NOT EATEN ANY OTHERS.
- VICTOR DI MEO

Sort Criteria

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

Now go back to your original list of possible criteria. Are there others that should be considered

- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

Sometimes the act of discovery can shift criteria. A name that may not have been a candidate may become one simply because you like it so much. Nobody is watching... you can change the rules midway through this game.

**All of your criteria are important,
but...**

Select no more than five criteria, and I strongly recommend that gut or intuition is on your short list.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

**This is a very good time to take a break.
Go smell the roses.**

The Final Grid

I have included one sample and three blanks in case you want to redo your work or in the event that you are working with a partner at this stage.

- You may wish to rewrite your criteria at the bottom of the grid as a reminder.
- I prefer this type of rating; however, it is not sacred and you may wish to go so far as to weigh your criteria.

1 = Bad or Low
2 = Don't Know
3 = Great or High

Note: If you are working with someone, discuss your differences carefully. I often find that differences are not only due to different judgment on the criteria, but are also caused by truly different perspectives on what the name means.

If this happens to you, split the name—write up the new one and add it to your list.

Example Final Grid

Concept Name	Criteria					Rating	
	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Rank
Modified Nominal Group Technique	1	1	1	3	1	7	5
Mind Dancing	2	3	1	3	1	10	2
Ideation	3	3	3	1	3	13	1
Creative Management	2	1	3	2	2	10	2
Creativity Mentor	1	1	3	2	2	9	4

1. Meaningful to myself and others
2. Image of fun and sophistication
3. Robust/could be used with other names
4. Open for trademark
5. Gut

Leading Names

List your leading names in order of priority. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Often there is a natural break or separation in the total point count. Just take all that fall above that point.
- List the top two or three in the ranking.
- Toss the ranking out and go on your gut feeling. This is far from the worst option. If your personal reaction to these names is significantly different from the ranking, we should reconsider the ranking first.

Leading Names

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____

Only the brave should proceed beyond this point.

Skip the next steps if you have a weak heart.

Columns and Rows Should Balance

You have invested a great deal in this process if you have gotten to this point. Now it is time to test your leading names with some vigor.

I was always taught to add to check my subtraction and to multiply to check my division. Perhaps these steps have atrophied a bit with the advent of the calculator, but the principal still has value. We are going to check our work.

1. List the top competitive names. Include in this list companion products from your own company.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

2. Fill out the grid on the next page using several of these names in conjunction with the names you have selected as leading the leading concepts.

Again, I have provided two grids for you and a partner. Make copies if you need more.

Evaluation Grid

Concept Name	Criteria					Rating	
	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Rank

Your Criteria

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What do you like about what you see?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

What are the problems/gaps/missing pieces?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Your leading name should not be perfect. No name ever is. However, be cautious of tossing it out too early. You may find that it improves with age. For example, you may have a name that is new and unique to the category. This is a nice plus. However, at the same time, you may have a concern—you wish it didn't sound like a shampoo, or software, or whatever.

Give the name a chance to associate with the product in your own mind. Use it and play with it for a few days.

If you came out even or ahead on the evaluation grid, consider yourself to be a hero. If you're distressed by what you have discovered, you may need to repeat all or some of this process with a new set of names or seek help.

Sources of Help:

There are a number of companies that you may wish to consider if you feel you need help. The following is a beginning list. Being on this list is not an endorsement on my part.

Creative Realities Inc. – Boston, MA
Innovation Focus Inc. – Lancaster, PA
Interbrand – New York, New York
Namelab Inc. – San Francisco, CA
Salinon Corporation(software) – Dallas, TX
Synectics Inc. – Cambridge, MA

And, I would suggest that you call a few ad agencies in your area and see if they might recommend someone local.

Individuals tend to be less expensive than the large companies. Talented individuals also tend to be of equal quality to their large counter part. This is because, in some cases, they were the naming operation with the larger firm before they split off. They leave their reputation behind but take their inspiration along.

Appendix C is a rather detailed format for the proposals I write. My hope is that it can be helpful to you as you talk to others.

Keep in mind this is my approach. That means we will emphasize using your internal resources where we can and attempt to leave some ability to replicate the process behind. It is not a yard stick by which all others can or should be measured. Other approaches may be very different. Part of their strength may be in that difference.

If you are thinking of going to the outside, call (717) 394-2500. I will keep the sales pitch low and the information content high.

