



# THINKING TOOLS

The words “divergent” and “convergent” are more than buzzwords (or dystopian book and film franchises). They represent oppositional modes of thinking that can collectively lead you to innovative, strategic solutions for your business. And the first rule of divergent and convergent club is that we define what exactly these two oppositional modes of thinking mean.

## **Divergent thinking**

[dih-**vur**-juh nt • **thing**-king]:

A thought process or method used to generate creative ideas by exploring many possible solutions.

## **Convergent thinking**

[kuh n-**vur**-juh nt • **thing**-king]:

The ability to give the “correct” answer to standard questions that do not require significant creativity.

Mildly intrigued? (Or just wishing this course involved a screening of a *Divergent* movie?) Let’s put the smartphones away and plug into the present tense, which involves zero PowerPoint slides but loads of ideas for tangible innovation...and at least one reference to cat videos.

**Let’s get unboring already.**

# DIVERGENT THINKING TOOLS

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Bust a Mold  
Customer Creeping  
Quirky Questioning

# Divergent Thinking

## BUST A MOLD

Valuable and disruptive innovations result from identifying, challenging, and overcoming the restrictive pattern of how-we-do-things-around-here. This tool enables you to set aside your organization's usual orthodoxy in favor of different approaches from which new ideas, products, systems, and other innovations can be created. BONUS: Shaking up the usual format means fewer yawns and more all-around participation.

### MOLDS OF TRAINING COURSES

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- ✗ PowerPoint presentations
- ✗ Led by a CEO
- ✗ 8 hours long
- ✗ Held in a conference room

### IDEAS FOR BUSTING THE MOLDS

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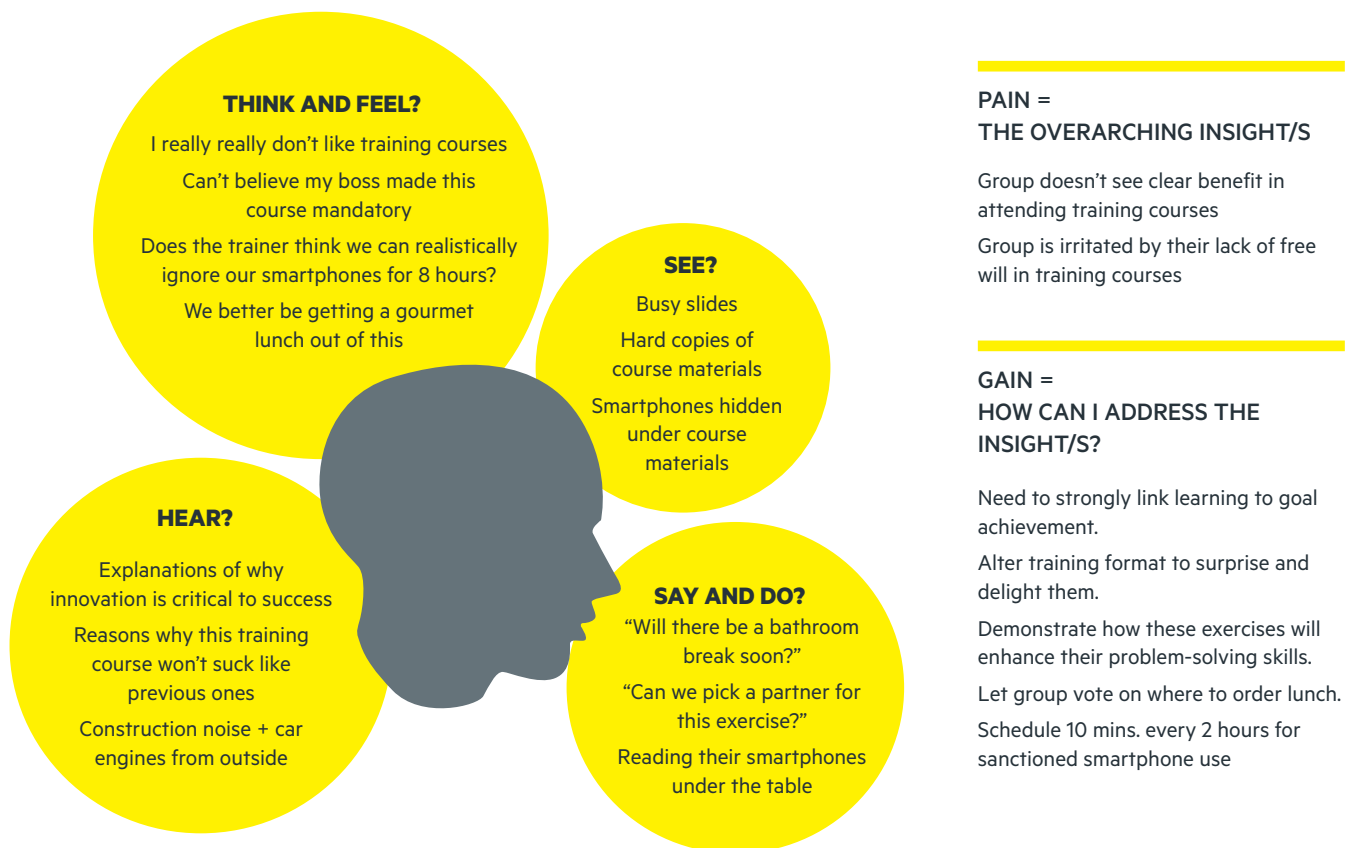
- ✓ No slides allowed, all activity-based
- ✓ Led by kids or a participant
- ✓ 4 hours long or 8 x 1hr segments
- ✓ Held at a microbrewery, airport or comedy club

DEFER JUDGEMENT  
SEEK WILD IDEAS  
STRIVE FOR QUANTITY  
BUILD ON POSSIBILITIES

# Divergent Thinking

## CUSTOMER CREEPING

From the Swiffer to the smartphone, many innovations can be traced to customers' previously unarticulated needs. While the insights are often the result of ethnographic study methods, Customer Creeping is an effective, inexpensive way to consider consumers and begin identifying relevant insights. The goal is to provide participants with increased understanding of and empathy for their customers/users. To illustrate, review the Customer Creeping graph below, which expresses the common mindset of a participant in a typical training course.



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# Divergent Thinking

## QUIRKY QUESTIONING

Our answers are informed by the question being asked... so let's ignore the rules about what constitutes the "right" kind of question. In the spirit of *SNL*'s "Quirky" skits, we're trying a less conventional approach to questions. Instead of using senior leadership-ese, craft a question that's designed to force yourself (and others) out of auto-pilot. The quirkier the question, the more creative the answers. In the example below, I exchanged the standard "how can training be a more engaging experience?" for a quirkier line of questioning.

### HOW COULD MY TRAINING CLASSES RESEMBLE A ROCK CONCERT?

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- ✓ Book a live band or a DJ
- ✓ Hire groupies
- ✓ Sell merchandise
- ✓ Serve alcohol and nachos
- ✓ Take the show on tour
- ✓ Reward attendee participation with backstage passes
- ✓ Release a live album/DVD
- ✓ Sell a limited number of tickets
- ✓ Include an opening act

DEFER JUDGEMENT  
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# CONVERGENT THINKING TOOLS

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Hmmm, How, Now...Wow.

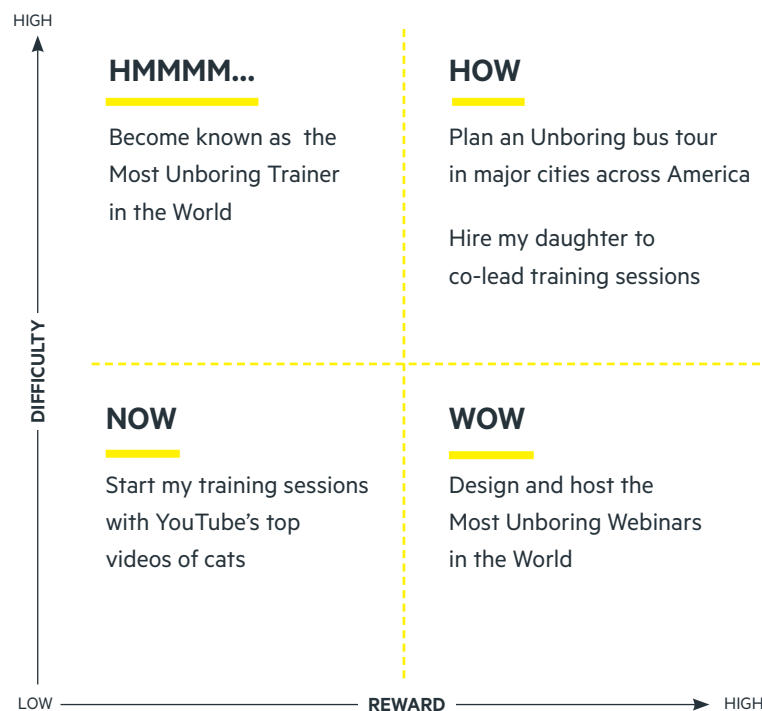
Criteria Crunch

Innovation SnapStat

# Convergent Thinking

## HMMM, HOW, NOW...WOW.

Simplify your organization's approach to decision-making around innovation projects. As a group, decide where to plot each of your top 5 prospective innovations. Now, evaluate and discuss how each project stacks up against other ideas under consideration. If most of your prospects are Difficult with a low degree of Reward, consider replacing a few with pursuits that offer more Reward and/or less Difficulty. (And feel free to change the axis labels [i.e. "Difficulty" and "Reward"] according to your evaluation needs. To illustrate, here's how I plotted 5 prospective innovations for my own business.
























SEEK NOVELTY  
EXERCISE WISDOM  
BE DECISIVE  
IMPROVE IDEAS

# Convergent Thinking

## CRITERIA CRUNCH

Criteria Crunch enables you to measure innovation ideas against objective criteria. Determining your criteria in advance encourages pragmatic decision-making and builds group consensus. The most promising ideas usually have across-the-board smileys, but if a promising idea scores a frown, discuss how the idea can be strengthened. In the table below, I've evaluated the 5 ideas included in the How/Wow matrix (and attempted to turn one frown upside down).

	<b>Criteria 01</b> Gives me a competitive edge	<b>Criteria 02</b> Enables participants to apply their learnings	<b>Criteria 03</b> Builds credibility for my brand	<b>Criteria 04</b> Significantly increases value of my offerings
				
<b>Idea 01</b> Become known as the Most Unboring Trainer in the World				
<b>Idea 02</b> Plan an Unboring bus tour in major cities across America		 *		
<b>Idea 03</b> Hire my daughter to co-lead training sessions				
<b>Idea 04</b> Start my training sessions with YouTube's top cat videos				
<b>Idea 05</b> Design and host the Most Unboring Webinars in the World				

### HOW COULD IDEAS BE TWEAKED FOR MAXIMUM SMILE QUOTIENT?

\* The curriculum for my cross-country tour could contain collaboration techniques that would be valuable to participants who spend a great deal of time on the road.

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# Convergent Thinking INNOVATION SNAPSTAT

Like a financial portfolio, Innovation SnapStat summarizes the odds of success for your investments according to ingenuity and their impact on the status quo. Higher risk projects like breakthrough and disruptive innovations offer greater potential for significant return on investment as well as a higher risk of failure. Lower risk innovations, such as incremental and sustaining, offer more safety but less opportunity for significant ROI. As you'll see in the example below, this exercise helps you quantify prospective projects in order to make informed decisions about what to pursue (and what to shelve).

PROSPECTIVE PROJECT	Incremental, Revolutionary, or Breakthrough?	Sustaining or Disruptive?	Chance of Success
1. Become known as the Most Unboring Trainer in the World	Breakthrough	Disruptive	5%
2. Plan an Unboring bus tour in major cities across America	Revolutionary	Disruptive	25%
3. Hire my daughter to co-lead training sessions	Revolutionary	Disruptive	25%
4. Start my training sessions with YouTube's top cat videos	Incremental	Sustainable	75%
5. Design and host the Most Unboring Webinars in the World	Incremental	Disruptive	40%

Chance of Success*	Sustaining	Disruptive
Incremental	75%	40%
Revolutionary	60%	25%
Breakthrough	55%	5%

\* From James Gardner, *Innovation and the Future Proof Bank*

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