

SCAMPER



Introduction

SCAMPER is a creative, easy-to-use brainstorming technique that helps generate new ideas or improve existing ones. Based on an initial list from Brainstorming originator Alex Osborn, the SCAMPER technique was created by Bob Eberle in the early 1970s and consists in a general-purpose checklist with creativity-boosting questions.

SCAMPER is an acronym for:

S = Substitute

C = Combine

A = Adapt

M = Modify

P = Put to Another Use

E = Eliminate

R = Reverse

Credit: <https://ansusconsultingblog.wordpress.com/2013/08/06/scamper-the-easy-way-to-come-up-with-fresh-ideas/>

How to use SCAMPER?

State the problem you would like to solve or the idea you would like to develop. It can be anything: a challenge in your personal life or business; or a product, service or process you want to improve. After pinpointing the challenge, ask questions using the SCAMPER checklist to guide you. Brainstorm as many questions and answers as you can.

Finally, look at the answers that you came up with. Do any stand out as viable solutions? Could you use any of them to create a new product/process, or develop an existing one? If any of your ideas seem viable, then explore them further.

How to use SCAMPER? (cont)

One well-known example of the SCAMPER method is the case of MacDonald's founder Ray Kroc. You can easily identify many of the ideas he used based on this technique:

P = Put to Another Use: selling restaurants and real estate instead of simply hamburgers

R = Reverse: having customers pay before they eat

E = Eliminate: letting customers serve themselves, avoiding the use of waiters

Substitute

Think about substituting part of your problem/product/process for something else. Example: Vegetarian hot dogs

Helper questions:

- ☐ What materials or resources can you substitute to improve the product?
- ☐ What other product or process could you use?
- ☐ What rules could you substitute?
- ☐ What will happen if you change your feelings or attitude toward this product?
- ☐ Can you replace someone involved?
- ☐ Can you change its shape, roughness, color, sound or smell?
- ☐ Can you use this idea/product/service in a different place?

Combine

Think about combining two or more parts of your probortunity (= merging of the word "problem" and "opportunity") to achieve a different product/process or to enhance synergy. Example: Musical greeting cards

Helper questions:

- ☐ What ideas or parts can be combined?
- ☐ Can you combine or merge it with other objects?
- ☐ What would happen if you combined this product with another?
- ☐ What if you combined purposes or objectives?
- ☐ What could you combine to maximize the uses of this product?
- ☐ How could you combine skills and resources to improve it?

Adapt

Think about which parts of the problem/product/process could be adapted to remove the probortunity or think how you could change the nature of it. Example: Snow tires

Helper questions:

- ☐ How could you adapt or readjust the product to serve another purpose or use?
- ☐ What else is the product like?
- ☐ Who or what could you emulate to adapt this product?
- ☐ Is there something similar to it, maybe in a different context?
- ☐ What other context could you put your product into?
- ☐ What other products or ideas could you use for inspiration?
- ☐ Does the past offer any experience with similar ideas?

Modify

Think about changing part or all of the current situation, or to distort it in an unusual way. Example: All-you-can-eat restaurants

Helper questions:

- ☐ How could you change the shape, look, or feel of your product?
- ☐ What could you add to modify this product?
- ☐ What can be magnified, exaggerated, made bigger, higher, and stronger?
- ☐ What element of this product could you strengthen to create something new?

Put to Another Use

Think of how you might be able to put your current solution/ product/process to other purposes, or think of what you could reuse from somewhere else in order to solve your own probortunity. Example: De Beers put industrial diamonds to other uses when they launched engagement rings.

Helper questions:

- ☐ Can you use this product/service/idea somewhere else?
- ☐ Who else could use this product?
- ☐ How would this product behave differently in another setting?
- ☐ How would a child/older person use it?
- ☐ Could you recycle the waste from this product to make something new?

Eliminate

Think of what might happen if you eliminated various parts of the product/process/probortunity. Example: Cordless telephone

Helper questions:

- ☐ How could you simplify this product?
- ☐ What features, parts, or rules could you eliminate?
- ☐ What parts can be eliminated without altering its function?
- ☐ How could you make it smaller, faster, lighter, or more fun?
- ☐ What's non-essential or unnecessary?

Reverse

Think of what you would do if part of your probortunity/product/-process worked in reverse or done in a different order. Example:** MacDonald's rearranged the restaurant by getting customers to pay first and then eat.

Helper questions:

- ☐ What would happen if you reversed this process or sequenced things differently?
- ☐ What if you try to do the exact opposite of what you are trying to do now?
- ☐ What components could you substitute to change the order of this product?
- ☐ What if you consider it backwards/up instead of down?