



Dear Publishing Professional,

The world is changing faster all the time. You can be left behind, or you can ride the wave. This issue focuses on creativity to help you stay ahead.

Make “brainstorming” work

Forward to:

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Brainstorming is often unproductive for some very well-known reasons, including ...

- Participants don't prepare their thoughts.
- Dominant personalities hog the discussion.
- Groupthink predominates.
- Nobody believes they won't be judged for what they say.
- The first ideas spoken anchor the conversation and set the agenda.
- A lack of structure and goals makes it hard to evaluate success.

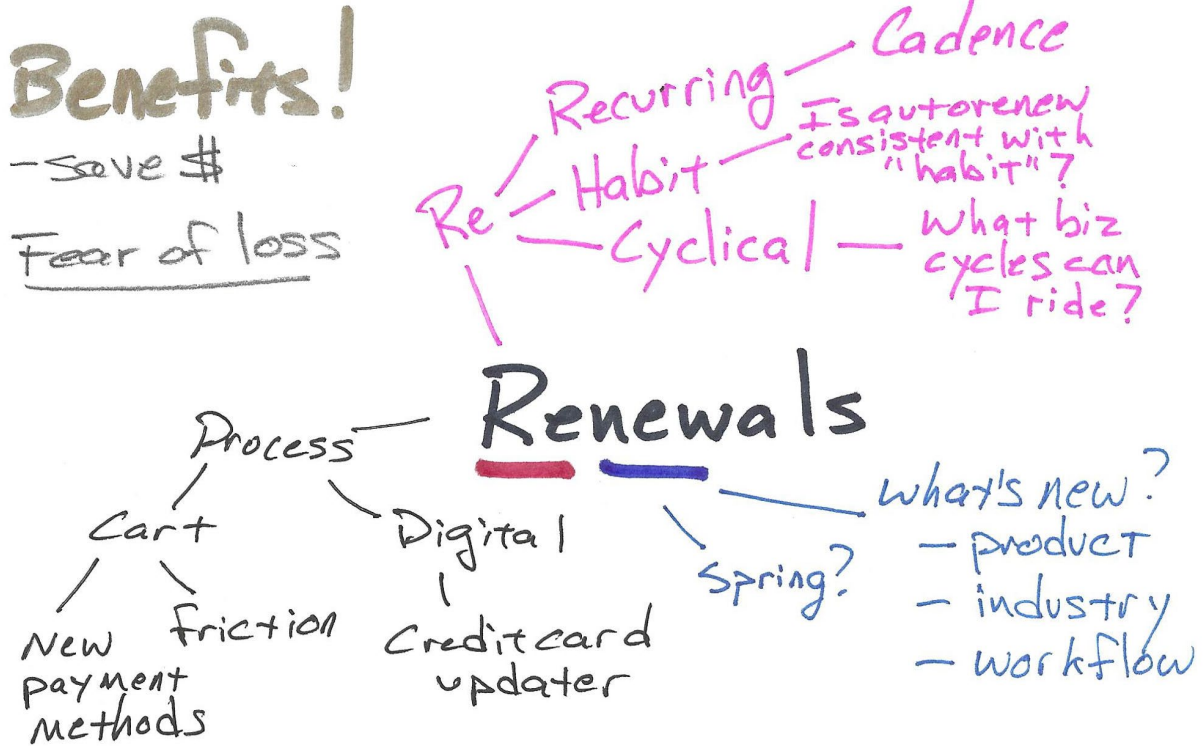
Try this model instead.

- Outline the broad objectives of the effort – e.g., increase renewals, create a new product for nurses.
- Appoint a creative person to spend a day or two thinking about the topic individually. Make sure they think about the idea, then sleep on it, then think about it again.
- Have that person record his ideas and distribute them to the larger group anonymously.
- Require everyone to read the ideas.
- On the following day, give each person in the group at least one brainstorming tool (see below) and ask them to write their own ideas and submit them anonymously.
- Organize all the suggestions in one list and distribute them to the group.
- Have a group meeting to discuss the suggestions.

One source for brainstorming tools is “52 Brainstorming Tools” by schoolofthought.org. Here are a few examples that I like.

- **Mind map** – put the objective in the middle and branch out nested and associated ideas to discover new perspectives. See page 2 for an example.
- **Ask why** – take any suggestion and continually ask “why?” to see where it leads you.
- **Change of scene** – take the list of ideas to a coffee shop, or better yet, to a bar. The change of perspective can stimulate ideas.
- **Imagine you're the devil** – what would someone ruthless do?

I can organize and run an effective brainstorming session with you and your staff. Call me if you're interested.



A simple example of a mind map

How “yes, and” can spur creativity

There's an improv exercise called “Remember that time we went to Mexico” that can help with creativity in the office. That sounds silly, but hear me out.

Here's how you do it. People pair up. The first person says “Remember that time we went to Mexico?” and the second person has to reply with “Yes, and ...” and then provide some additional detail about the trip, like, “Yes, and you wore that fabulous red dress.”

Each partner has to affirm everything the other person says, and in the process, they build a story about a trip to Mexico.

The exercise forces each person to listen to the other and to keep in mind all the growing details about the trip — because you're not allowed to contradict any part of the story.

You can't dismiss the other person or his ideas. You have to incorporate them into the story you're both working on.

How does this apply to publishers?

Imagine imposing a “yes, and” rule on a conversation about a new website design. Someone says “we should make the whole site red,” which is a stupid idea. But you're not allowed to say that it's a stupid idea. You have to think of a “yes, and” reply.

You might say, “Yes, and think of all the shades, tones, and textures that are all red.”

Now you’ve moved from thinking about color to thinking about shades, tones, and textures, which might not have come up at all. People are thinking, “Oh yeah, there are lots of ways to distinguish things visually even when you use the same color.” It might get you thinking about design for the color-blind, or ... who knows what?

An all-red site is still a dumb idea, but the “yes, and” mindset forced the people in the meeting to be creative, which brought up a new and useful concept.

It’s so easy to say no and shut something down, which is the opposite of creative. It takes work to say “yes, and.” You have to try to find the jewel hidden in the garbage.

“Yes, and” also makes it easier to remember what was said in the meeting because you’re forced to remember all the details -- because you’re not allowed to contradict them.

This is not the right method to reach a final decision on an idea. Sometimes you do have to say no. But it is a useful method to get new ideas, and as an added benefit, it’s fun, and people feel that their views have been heard.

Hire weird people and grizzled old skeptics

Weird people ...

- Aren’t shackled by a need to fit in
- Don’t join in groupthink
- Break from conventional norms
- See the world through a different set of filters

Weird people can be a source of creative, out-of-the-box ideas.

Think about your staff for a minute and ask who’s challenging the narrative. Who’s coming up with new ideas?

Aim for a workforce that brings different strengths and perspectives. Think about ...

- Personality differences, like extroverts vs. introverts
- People who were raised with money vs. people who grew up poor.
- Country folk vs. city folk.
- Natives vs. foreigners.
- Young and old.
- Different levels and types of education.
- Different professional backgrounds.
- Religious and non-religious people.
- Different political views.

If you want new ideas, you need new thinking. But sometimes the new idea is unrealistic, which is why you also need a grizzled old skeptic to keep things in check. Ideas are great, but ideas are useless until they become operational, and that requires hard questions and real-world analysis.

Quick tips for short videos

- Capture the viewer's attention in the first few seconds with a cold open.
- On some services, like TikTok or Instagram, you should stay below 60 seconds.
- Ask questions and try to get engagement from listeners.
- Explicitly ask people to subscribe, like, share, and leave a review.
- Be clear and direct.
- Include captions so people can read the text and keep the volume off. (I use FlexClip to add captions.)

Gall's Law and the MVP concept

MVP = minimal viable product. It's something simple that works and solves a real problem, which fits in well with Gall's Law.

"A complex system that works is invariably found to have evolved from a simple system that worked. A complex system designed from scratch never works and cannot be patched up to make it work. You have to start over with a working simple system." – Gall's Law

There are several reasons for this.

- We don't completely understand our own desires and motivations – let alone the desires and motivations of other people.
- Complex systems have emergent properties that evolve from the real-world interactions of actual users. They're not always predictable.
- Many success factors are simply unknowable. They're too complex to predict.
- Feedback and iterative development is essential. Real world usage is better than somebody's great idea.
- Practical constraints might limit scope, and you'll only discover this from actual use.
- Building to address a real need and then modifying the product based on feedback is going to beat making guesses.

The lesson is clear: start with something simple that works in the real world with real customers, and not something that only works in some genius's mind.

Sincerely,



Greg Krehbiel



P.S. -I'm available for consultation. If you need an extra hand, a jump-start, a project manager, a kick in the pants, a second opinion, or someone to lead your next brainstorming session, or new product development initiative, give me a call.



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Publish straight to mobile - immediately available to your audience.

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New issues sit on top of back issues, search all archives.

Added value content, anytime

Update anytime, create added value content and use messaging to keep your audience engaged.

No need for PDF or Print Artwork

Magazzn is a new way to publish - there's no need to create artwork or PDF (we do support converting existing PDFs!).

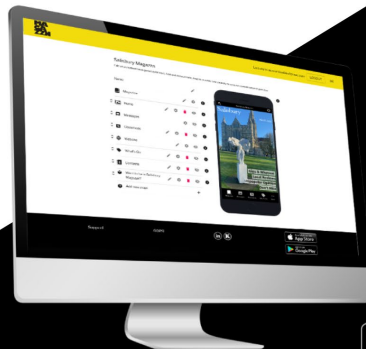
No 'coding' or special software required

Use our really simple Content Management System (CMS) to publish straight to app.

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Easily notify updates via in app messaging and push notifications.

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