INNOVATION

Five Things I Know About Creative Idea Development: *From Twenty Ideas to One Better One*

B. Kim Barnes
THE INFLUENCE GURU

The best ideas rarely arrive fully formed. Five steps for generating many ideas, then making the best of them stronger.

1 **Choose a diverse group and frame the issue.**

What kinds of backgrounds or thinking styles might contribute interesting and unusual ideas? How can you present the problem, issue, or opportunity in a broad and open, yet clear way?

2 **Challenge each of them to bring at least twenty ideas to the table (actually or virtually).**

How can you encourage them to move beyond previous boundaries? What kind of meeting format will work best for the group you've invited?

3 **"Notestorm" by posting the ideas and giving people time to look at them, then generate new ideas based on association or bisociation.**

How can you arrange the room or virtual space so that the ideas can be seen by everyone? What ideas can they generate after viewing others' thoughts – through continuing the line of thought further (association) or bringing two contexts together to see what emerges (bisociation)? Defer discussion and evaluation, either negative or positive, until there are many different ideas to consider.

4 **Select the most promising ideas based on a previously agreed-upon set of criteria.**

Before the meeting, ask yourself or others: What criteria make the most sense, given the issue you have framed – (without limiting thinking too much)? What "down-selection" technique will you use?

5 Use "Constructive Debate" techniques to improve, build on, or critique selected ideas.

Research shows that the best and most creative ideas emerge after individuals' ideas are debated, improved, and developed in a group. How can you help the group to express the selected ideas clearly, ask for and listen to feedback, build on and improve ideas and challenge assumptions and rationale in a constructive way?

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Founder of **The Influence Guru**, Kim Barnes is a coach, facilitator, and author with more than forty years of experience in leadership, influence, and organization development. She was a founder and, for many years, CEO of Barnes & Conti Associates, and developed or co-developed programs including *Exercising Influence*, *Inspirational Leadership*, *Intelligent Risk-Taking*, *Consulting on the Inside*, and *Managing Innovation*. She is the author of six books, including *Exercising Influence* (Wiley) and *Building Better Ideas* (Berrett-Koehler). She works with enterprise companies, government agencies, small businesses, and individuals from the San Francisco Bay Area.

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