

Assumption-busting

When to use it

Assumption-busting can be used in most creative situations. It is particularly effective when you are stuck in current thinking paradigms or have run out of ideas. It is thus good for re-booting a flagging session.

<i>Quick</i>		X				<i>Long</i>
<i>Logical</i>		X				<i>Psychological</i>
<i>Individual</i>		X				<i>Group</i>

Duration:

Short. Can be instantaneous (thinking method).

Can also be used

Style:

Logical. You don't have to be a fluffy bunny to use this one. Good for engineers and accountants.

Individual or group: You can use it as a one-person thinking tool or the basis for a brainstorm-style session.

How to use it

Definition: Assumption = 'Assumed truth that is not questioned'

1. List assumptions

Look at the situation you are in with a close eye. What are the assumptions you are making about it? What seems so obvious that you would not normally think about challenging it?

List out the assumptions. Once you get going, you'll find you can't stop. And when you do, find the assumptions that are stopping you and challenge these.

Typical assumptions include:

- That it is impossible to do something--particularly within constraints such as time and cost.
- That something works because of certain rules or conditions.
- That people believe, think or need certain things.

For example I might assume that deliveries take a minimum of three days and that this is no problem for my customers.

Remember that *everything* is a belief. Even this statement. Even your interpretation of this statement. If you cannot find assumptions then you are assuming that they do not exist.

2. Challenge assumptions

Change your assumptive base. Assume that all assumptions can be challenged and overcome.

Ask 'How could this be not true?'

Ask 'What if we could do this twice as well in in half the time?'

Of course you will get assumptions about the challenge, so keep responding with new challenges to these assumptions too.

3. Find ways of making the challenge reality

This is, of course, just another assumptive challenge. It is easy in a creative session to play games of challenging assumptions. The real challenge is to make it happen in reality. So just use the same principle again.

It has very wisely been said that: 'It is better to get forgiveness than permission.'

Example

Situation: We cannot sell these new widgets over the internet.

Assumption: We do not have the technology.

Busting: We can learn. We can buy it in.

Assumption: Buying it in would be expensive.

Busting: You don't know until you ask. Get my teenage son to do it.

Assumption: Your teenage son would not do it professionally.

Busting: Look at these sites he did. He can at least do a trial site to prove the principle.

Assumption: It won't work.

Busting: A trial site would help prove this.

How it works

In our everyday lives, we make an enormous number of assumptions about how the world around us works. Normally, this works just fine, but in creative situations it can blind us to many possibilities.

Assumption-busting works by deliberately seeking out and addressing these previously-unquestioned assumptions.