Expanding Forms of Collaboration
Strategies for Increasing Equity of Voice in Design Offices

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An Opportunity for Change

The most widely adopted process for generating creative ideas within organizations is brainstorming (Sutton & Wages, 1996). This approach to group collaboration is the standard process utilized in many companies. Research shows that there are significant limitations associated with brainstorming. Primarily, brainstorming collaboration is often dominated by only a few participants leaving multiple voices unheard and leaving multiple ideas unexplored. Collaboration in a design office needs to maximize innovation and creativity through a variety of ideas. This requires expanding our current understanding of collaboration through a new set of tools and strategies that maintain equity of voice.

The Process

My methodology will look at tools in more detail over the course of a three-month period for reporting as this phase I preliminary study is beginning. I will show that new tools of collaboration are needed across my company and that staff will be nourished about the new process. Phase 2 will expand the preliminary research and extend the schedule of analysis for another three to six months. Phase 2 will include a roll out of the collaboration tools across the firm and will include training of key facilitators in each office through our legacy design process. The two primary models of study for this research will be brainstorming, or group think, and brainstorming, individual design expression in a group setting. Traditional models of brainstorming will be studied as tools for collaboration through structured and unstructured brainstorming and brainwriting. Rolestorming, 1K (succession integration of problem elements) and picture stimulation are additional tools of collaboration that will be studied. Each are variations of the brainstorming and brainwriting models and each can be adapted to either model.

Observations

I personally found this process to be very refreshing. I felt that most design reviews are dominated by a few people talking during the conversation on more technical and small aspects of the design. I think a design review should be about creating a space for all people to give their perspective on the design. By giving everyone a role in the conversation, I found my design review to be more engaging and productive. I think this process holds a bit of opportunity where our design and create a sense of ownership to the process. I hope this helps. Good luck!

Methodology:
1. Assemble as a group of five to twelve. This is also used often in smaller impromptu collaborations.
2. Allow everyone to prepare design solutions and ideas. The rolestorming strategy encourages participants to think of ideas.
3. The SIL Method
4. Structured Brainstorming
5. Allow the team to take 15-20 minutes on their own to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
6. The other group members verbally think of ways to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
7. If time allows initiate group discussion regarding ideas.
8. The process of making and integrating ideas continues for up to 15 to 20 minutes until and then the process repeats with two additional ideas.

Tools of Collaboration

1. Unstructured Brainstorming
   - The standard process of collaboration at the firm in the field is through unstructured brainstorming. This type of collaboration does not follow a set list of rules.
   - Methodology:
     1. Assemble as a group of five to twelve. This is also used often in smaller impromptu collaborations.
     2. Allow everyone to prepare design solutions and ideas. The rolestorming strategy encourages participants to think of ideas.
     3. The SIL Method
     4. Structured Brainstorming
     5. Allow the team to take 15-20 minutes on their own to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
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     8. The process of making and integrating ideas continues for up to 15 to 20 minutes until and then the process repeats with two additional ideas.

2. Brainwriting for Landscape Architecture
   - The process of brainstorming gives everyone a voice in the creative process and subsequent discussions
   - Methodology:
     1. 1K method
     2. Allow everyone to prepare design solutions and ideas. The rolestorming strategy encourages participants to think of ideas.
     3. The SIL Method
     4. Structured Brainstorming
     5. Allow the team to take 15-20 minutes on their own to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
     6. The other group members verbally think of ways to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
     7. If time allows initiate group discussion regarding ideas.

3. The SIL Method
   - The SIL method according to Osborn, gives participants a chance to iterate each other's ideas.
   - Methodology:
     1. Project leader to assemble design review team prior to the design session.
     2. Present project context within a brief 15 to 30-minute conversation. Answer any specific questions. Limit the conversation.
     3. Assemble group for initial 1 hour design session.
     4. Ask everyone to prepare design solutions and ideas.
     5. Each participant silently generates ideas for 10 to 15 minutes.
     6. Two group members work out the ideas and read it aloud.
     7. The other group members verbally think of ways to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
     8. The process of making and integrating ideas continues for up to 15 to 20 minutes until and then the process repeats with two additional ideas.

4. Structured Brainstorming
   - Structured brainstorming generally should follow a set list of rules that focus on generating design thinking and open ideation. Following the principles set forth by Osborn, the session should be structured to elicit many ideas and should avoid critical discourse of individual ideas.
   - Methodology:
     1. Assemble a group of five to twelve.
     2. Clarify the purpose and frame of the design session.
     3. Present project context and project challenges. The overall frame of the discussion can remain vague to elicit ideas that are more diverse and outside of the critical question framework.
     4. Ask everyone to prepare design solutions and ideas.
     5. Each participant silently generates ideas for 10 to 15 minutes.
     6. Two group members work out the ideas and read it aloud.
     7. The other group members verbally think of ways to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
     8. The process of making and integrating ideas continues for up to 15 to 20 minutes until and then the process repeats with two additional ideas.

5. Rolestorming
   - The rolestorming strategy encourages participants to think about the problems of a project from a specific viewpoint.
   - Methodology:
     1. Participants need to be determined prior to design session. Each participant needs to be given characters. Participants cannot operate at 80 minutes considering and reasoning their character prior to design discussion.
     2. Assemble in a group of five to twelve. The smaller the group the better.
     3. Each participant silently generates ideas for 10 to 15 minutes.
     4. Allow the team to take 15-20 minutes on their own to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
     5. The other group members verbally think of ways to combine these two ideas into one idea and to expand these ideas.
     6. The process of making and integrating ideas continues for up to 15 to 20 minutes until and then the process repeats with two additional ideas.

6. Picture Stimulation
   - The aim is to stimulate the generation of ideas through imagery.
   - Methodology:
     1. Project leader to assemble design review team prior to the design session.
     2. Take 10 minutes for each staff member to review their imagery individually.
     3. Have each participant provide ideas based on the image to the group.
     4. Ask everyone to prepare design solutions and ideas.
     5. Each participant silently generates ideas for 10 to 15 minutes based on the content of their images.

Literature Cited