

THE TRAVEL MARKETER'S TOOLKIT

CREATING CONNECTION THAT FUELS RESULTS

Pangaea—the singular landmass of interconnected beings—may no longer exist physically, but the concept is still alive and well in travel. We can still bring people together with shared experiences, shared values, and shared messages that fuel brand value propositions and earn the loyalty of fickle customers by providing deep and meaningful experiences.

The goal of this toolkit is to help travel marketers like you achieve a fresh perspective on your marketing. We've included documents and exercises designed to challenge your understanding and characterization of your audience, your offerings, and the industry.

It's based on WHITE64's experience working with marketing leaders across all aspects of travel for over 50 years—resorts and hotels, DMOs, transit authorities, TAs and OTAs, commercial attractions, events, and cultural institutions.

But of course, no marketing plan is universal. So take these tools and adapt them. Remix them. Share them. Make them your own.

Just like with travel itself, it's an opportunity for you to see your world with new eyes.



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SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

*“THE JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND
MILES BEGINS WITH ONE STEP.”*
LAO TZU



Ask any marketer or agency that's ever executed an iconic, effective marketing campaign in any category and they will tell you that greatness didn't come from creative idea. It started with a rock solid strategy. And rock solid strategy begins with insight and collaboration.

In travel marketing in particular, we know that consumers make decisions that may seem arbitrary or imperfect, but make complete sense in their own heads and hearts. It's an opportunity for you to dive in and really start to understand the unexpected and seemingly random factors that influence their preferences and behavior.

These documents are intended to help ensure that all of your stakeholders and partners are aligned on what needs to be accomplished, with whom, and how. Chances are you may already use similar documents, but the structure and form of these may inspire new thinking.

THE BUSINESS BRIEF TEMPLATE

This document is created by the marketer, with input from internal stakeholders and partners. It's distributed to in-house creative partners or external agency partners. Unlike the creative brief, the business brief is not intended to inspire solutions; it's intended to define challenges. It's not a place for political correctness. No jargon allowed. The better you can tell it like it is, the easier it will be for your partners to fall in line behind you.

[MARKETER] BUSINESS BRIEF
PROJECT NAME
DATE/VERSION
AUTHOR(S)/CONTACT(S)

What is the background?

Start with the 30,000 foot view: what does your organization do? What industry does it compete in? How is it structured? What is its history, or better yet, what has been its evolution? How does it make money? What does it stand for? Even if your audience knows this by heart, starting with this affirmation grounds every project, like a north star.

What's the current business situation?

Now let's bring it down to earth by talking about the business challenge you're facing. Is it a problem that must be addressed? An opportunity that must be pursued? Be specific. Provide facts. How does this challenge play into your business operations beyond marketing? Why is it so important to solve?

How did we get here?

Time to do some soul searching. There are any number of factors that lead to this business situation. New leadership. The economy. Increased competition. Found budget. Mercury is out of alignment. It's okay to speculate in this section, but including substantiated truths will paint a clearer picture of the situation and focus the emerging strategy.

What is the challenge that marketing needs to solve?

Now we are laser-focused on you and your team. Marketing can't do everything, so point to the one specific thing that it needs to do to keep all the gears in the machine turning. Resist the urge to start bullet pointing: if you can't get it into one sentence, it's too complicated. You'll have the chance to elaborate later.

What will success look like?

Paint a utopian vision of the future, playing off the challenge you just outlined. What is the ripple effect of marketing success in your organization? What does success here allow you and your company to do?

What happens if we don't achieve this?

Opposite question: how will the system break down if these goals are not met? Looking at the future from both a glass-half-full and glass-half-empty perspective helps your teams understand how to be most impactful.

THE BUSINESS BRIEF TEMPLATE

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CONTINUED

Who do we need to reach?

Here's where you define your target audience based on the data that you have: demographics, psychographics, segmentation, etc. Don't worry about fleshing out their wants and needs too thoroughly. You identify them as statistics; your agency should bring them to life as people. But anything you can provide as to why these consumers are your target is helpful context. Are they high value? More qualified to convert?

Who is the enemy?

There's a few ways to interpret this question—and that's the point. You need to point a finger at the main force that is standing between your current situation and your objective. The enemy may be a competitor. The enemy may be an operational barrier. Sometimes in travel, the enemy may even be apathy. Indicate as many "enemies" as you think are realistic.

How are we going to do this?

This is where you get specific about deliverables. What executions or marketing tasks are your creative partners on the hook for?

What are our key performance metrics?

These metrics should correlate with the deliverables above. What should we be tracking, measuring, and optimizing? Consider both qualitative and quantitative KPIs, as well as any existing benchmarks or goals.

Who are the decision makers?

Who ultimately has the final say in marketing decisions? Is there a board of directors or a review committee? This could affect how and when your agency shares concepts.

What is the budget and timing?

These variables will help lend a sense of realism to the agency's creative development. Specifically in travel, it's good to understand not only the key milestones in the schedule, but any seasonality that could affect operations or consumer behavior.

What else should we be aware of?

This is sometimes where the juiciest info lives: existing research, learnings from previous efforts, political considerations, upcoming announcements, etc.

BRAND ARCHITECTURE

Your brand architecture is sometimes confused with your product portfolio or brand family. But this document is intended to organize all the emotional, rational, and logical components of what your masterbrand stands for into a clear strategic roadmap. Your architecture should be a collaboration between your team and your most strategic agency partners. It should also be approved by any other marketing decision makers in your organization. It's an authoritative document and shouldn't change with different projects. Instead, it serves as a helpful back up document for your creative teams to make sure that project concepts are staying true to your brand identity and collectively helping to build what you stand for in the minds of travelers.

Brand Purpose	<p>What does your organization exist to do in the world? This is one sentence and can come directly from your company's mission statement.</p>
Brand Essence	<p>What is the singular idea that captures what your brand stands for in the minds of travelers? What do you believe in? What's the thing that inspires your employees, partners, and customers?</p> <p>This is often expressed in a short thought—almost like a tagline—followed by a few sentences that elaborate.</p>
Brand Value Proposition	<p>What is the pledge that you make to your core audience? What can they reliably expect when they interact with your brand?</p> <p>This is expressed as a single, declarative sentence.</p>
Brand Pillars	<p>What are the real things your company offers—whether operational, experiential, or emotional—that make your value proposition true.</p> <p>These are usually multiple themes or areas, with supporting points for each.</p>
Campaign Challenge	<p>This is the one section that can change from project to project. What is the one message that needs to be communicated to tackle the marketing challenge in your business brief. If it clashes with anything above, you may need to revisit the business brief.</p>
Brand Voice	<p>What is the tone that your brand uses to speak to your audience?</p> <p>This can be a description, a series of relevant adjectives, or even a celebrity reference.</p>
Brand Behavior	<p>What values dictate the way your brand interacts with your audience?</p> <p>This is usually a series of nouns or even a manifesto.</p>

THE CREATIVE BRIEF TEMPLATE

Ah, the glorious creative brief. So crucial. Yet, so often dismissed. Well, here's your opportunity to realize it's true potential. For starters, the best creative briefs are just that—brief. Writing them is an act of informational reduction, summarizing as succinctly as possible, the very essence of a product's most desirable attributes. That process of reduction, you will find, takes you from merely informational to truly inspirational.

Before we dive into *what* a brief should contain, here a few thoughts on *why* it's important, *who* its intended to help and *how* they can be structured.

Why it's important:

The brief provides information, inspiration and focus. All three of these are crucial to your creative teams. Focus, however, is crucial to the creative teams *and* the client. This focus helps to take subjectivity out of the room. This focus eliminates needless rounds of revisions by clarifying things up front. This saves everyone time, money and frustration.

Who it's intended to help:

Ultimately, the Creative Brief is written for your creative teams. They crave insight, something unique and specific to hang their hat upon. Every creative brief should ultimately have ONE single thing that needs to be communicated, and communicated exceptionally well. A tight, engaging brief will usher in inspired creative executions. A brief that was written 15 minutes before it's presented to the creative teams will yield a concoction of bland gulag at best.

Who's accountable for it:

Creative briefs are generally done by an agency's strategic planner and/or account manager, who's job it is to translate the business brief into an actionable roadmap. Some agencies develop the creative brief and share it with creative teams without engaging the client, but we like to get our clients' input on the creative brief before we kick off with teams. This helps ensure that we interpreted the client's business challenge correctly and ultimately helps us align on creative concepts down the road.

How they can be structured:

There's no hard and fast rule regarding the structure of a creative brief. In fact, the structure is far less important than its content. Far too many people try to get creative with the structure of their briefs and neglect the actual information and inspiration they're providing.

Having said that, here are the basic questions every creative brief should ask and answer.

THE CREATIVE BRIEF TEMPLATE

[MARKETER] CREATIVE BRIEF
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WHAT PROBLEM ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?

This is our transition from Business Brief into Creative Brief. We have to understand the business problem before we can find marketing solutions. Be clear: “Sales are down and we need to reach out to new customers.” “Our existing customer base is on the decline and we need to shore up the base/do something to hold onto them.” “We’re launching a new product and need to get the word out – awareness!”

WHY ARE WE COMMUNICATING?

What are the two or three objectives you want to make clear to your target audience? Describe what the advertising campaign has to say. Be specific and use verbs to convey the desired action to be taken: “Inspire consumer to visit website.” “Re-engage consumers who have fallen off the radar.” “Excite the consumer about a new product launch.”

WHAT IS THE KEY EMOTIONAL BENEFIT?

Rational arguments are plentiful and fairly easy to ignore. Emotional resonance, however, pierces your audience deep down to the core of what matters most in life. Try this simple exercise to uncover an emotional benefit:

***The feature talks to your head.
The benefit speaks to your heart.***

*Say you’re selling a tour. A three-day package across exotic wine country.
Feature: the vineyards and attractions you’ll stop at.
Benefit: the ease and simplicity of a curated experience.*

Now repetitively ask the question, “Why is that important to me?”

*I like exploring new places and new wines.
Why is that important to me?*

*It helps me experience new varieties and meet new people in a beautiful setting.
Why is that important to me?*

New interactions make me discover more about myself.

Just keep going until you feel it stop you in your tracks. That’s what the right emotional benefit will do – provide immense stopping power.

THE CREATIVE BRIEF TEMPLATE

[MARKETER] CREATIVE BRIEF
PROJECT NAME
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CONT.

WHO ARE WE TALKING TO?

Not the demographics. Not the psychographics. Those are quite helpful and you already got them in the business brief. But now it's time to paint a picture. Bring this person to life. What's their name? What kind of music do they listen to? What keeps them up at night? What inspires them to pop out of bed in the morning?

*Also, answer a few questions that pertain directly to your product or service:
What do we know about their current beliefs/attitudes toward the brand?
What objections do they have to our product or service?
How can we overcome these objections?
Can you paint a picture of the current product user?
How about the typical non-user?*

WHAT IS THE SINGLE-MINDED PROPOSITION (SMP)?

What's the one (single, solo, uno, ONE, ONLY ONE) most important thing you want to say about your product or service? Your audience is bombarded with messages every day. They only have the attention span to receive ONE message from you. Fire one arrow at the target and you have a pretty good chance of hitting it. Try shooting three arrows at the same time and you might end up in the ER.

WHAT ARE THE PROOF POINTS THAT YOUR SMP IS TRUE?

The proof is in the pudding. If your product is pudding, that is. This is where you list out the spectacular benefits that align with your SMP. This is your opportunity to tangibly demonstrate how your product or service is better than the competitions.

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND?

Those who do not learn their history are doomed to repeat it. In travel marketing, that leads to wasted money, missed goals lost customers, and most likely, someone looking for a new job. So do some digging. Here are a few questions to consider answering:

*What did we do in previous ad campaigns?
How well did (or didn't) they perform?
What's happening in the category that could affect us?
Who is our primary competition and what are they doing?
Is it working?
How do their products, services, claims differ from ours?
Do they differ?*

THE CREATIVE BRIEF TEMPLATE

[MARKETER] CREATIVE BRIEF
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CONT.

WHAT'S THE APPROPRIATE TONE, MOOD, EMOTION?

Think about your audience. Picture them using your product or service. Now go back to your key emotional benefit. How does that benefit make them feel? Are they having fun using your product or service? There may be a slight range to convey here. But please, no more than three.

Mandatories:

Everything that absolutely has to be included in the creative content: logo, tagline, URLs, brand standards, etc.

Timeline:

Deadlines. Real deadlines. ASAP is not a real date. Look on any calendar: M/T/W/TH/F. No ASAP.

Budget:

Know this right out of the gate because it should be included in the business brief. It prevents wasted time coming up with concepts that simply can't be produced due to cost restrictions. Shopping for a new car? Looking to buy a new house? You always know how much you have to spend. This is no different.

KPIs/Success metrics:

What's the measurement for success? Open/read/click rate? Time spent on a site? Brand awareness? Brand health metrics? Specific percentage increase of units sold? Spell it out so you know what's a win and what isn't. Another thing you can pull from the business brief.

Call to action:

Don't leave it to chance. If there's something you want your audience to do ... just say it. Be clear. Be concise. But please, don't shout. No one listens when you shout.

Brief approvals:

Ensure all key decision makers on the agency side and the client side have signed off on the brief before work begins. Everybody needs to be on the same page before billable hours are put against the work. Also, agencies present briefs to the creative teams and to the client. Sending a brief via email is NOT acceptable. Give the brief, your creative teams and your client the time and attention they all deserve.

THE CREATIVE BRIEF EXAMPLE

As mentioned previously, briefs come in many shapes and sizes. To illustrate that point, here's a brief that takes the content from another agency, *hhcl red cell* in the UK, and has been reformatted to fit the structure of our (WHITE64) creative brief. Again, the structure is far less important than the content.



BELIEF BRIEF

Client: Iceland Groceries UK
Title: Iceland Range

Submitted: 1/19/2016
W64 Job #: xx-xxxx

What do people believe now? *Iceland is a predictable supermarket that appeals to deal-hunting moms on a budget.*

What do we want them to believe? *Iceland has hidden gems all over the store. In fact, there are many fantastic reasons to shop there.*

Whose beliefs are we changing? Think of the typical, hard-working, under-appreciated mom trying to feed a demanding family on a tight budget. Iceland is a godsend to them with its amazing deals and the advertising draws them in on a regular basis. However, they either go straight for the deals or look for favorites, rarely taking the time to browse and find all the new things Iceland are introducing.

They are family and house proud, live vicariously through celebrity gossip magazines and soaps, have a wide network of sassy mom-friends, and are always looking for something new to make life just a little bit easier. Their family is everything, kids especially, and it's the needs of the latter that often inform and dictate their needs.

What's the strategic insight that'll motivate their beliefs or behaviors? *Iceland is more than just deals, but you'd never know it with all the deal advertising it does. There is, in fact, a huge level of product innovation that moms don't know about because they haven't been told. Whenever we have researched ideas around their ranges of new products, moms have always asked (in a rather frustrated way) "why don't they tell us about these brilliant things?"*

Based on that insight, what's the one thing we should say? ***There's more to Iceland than anyone ever knew.***

What supports the belief in that one thing? *For starters, the innovative product ranges at Iceland:*
Kids Crew:
A revamped range of kids food, the hero products of which conform to or exceed Government guidelines on nutrition – making it easier for mom to provide good and tasty food to their kids

THE CREATIVE BRIEF EXAMPLE

WHITE64

Pizza Range:

Iceland has the largest pizza selection in town. Everything from basic pizzas to a new premium pizza line produced in Italy and hand-topped with premium ingredients.

Christmas Range:

Iceland leads the market when it comes to Christmas food with an extraordinary selection across the Party Faire line and the Christmas Made Easy line – guaranteed to make this Christmas the easiest ever!

What's the emotion that will compel their beliefs? *Enthusiastic, straight-forward and fun.*

What do we have to include or avoid?

- TAGLINE: Because moms are heroes.

Where might this message appear? **Deliverables:**

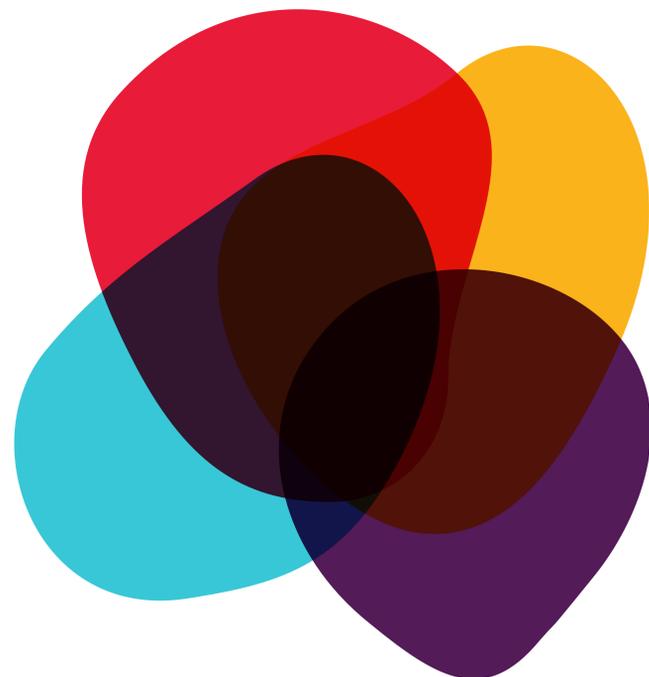
- :30 TVC
- Full page 4C Print

Key dates
Brief Creative: 00/00/0000
Internal Review: 00/00/0000
First creative draft to client: 00/00/0000
Feedback: 00/00/0000
Materials-due date: 00/00/0000

Approvals
Creative: John Snow _____ Date: 00/00/0000 ____
Account: Tyrion Lanister _____ Date: 00/00/0000 ____
Strategy: Daenerys Targaryen _____ Date: 00/00/0000 ____
Client: Sansa Stark _____ Date: 00/00/0000 ____

FINDING INSPIRATION

*“TRAVEL LEAVES YOU
SPEECHLESS AND THEN TURNS
YOU INTO A STORYTELLER.”
IBN BATTUTA*



Once you've aligned internally and with your partners on objectives, brand, and strategy, many agencies tend to tackle creative development in a vacuum. At WHITE64 we invite clients to join us in concepting because we believe that collaboration can inspire directions with a lot of potential. It is our job to then hone those directions to make sure we're creating a genuine connection with consumers, and craft the executions to tell provocative and compelling stories.

These brainstorming exercises are designed to be plugged in throughout the creative development process. Share them with your agency partners to help inspire new thinking. Or better yet, join them in the process. Invite colleagues beyond marketing. Invite stakeholders. Invite customers. Go off-site. You'll be stunned how new stimulus and structured critical thinking can cast a new light on your challenge.

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #1

BARNBURNER

Objective: Rapidly generate rough ideas with a large group with a structured and iterative round robin brainstorm

Try this when:

- you want to inject new thinking into your communications
- you want to get to idea territories quickly
- you have a large group of stakeholders that would appreciate being involved

You've filled out the business brief, taken a stab at the creative brief, come to understand your customer on a more intimate level ... What's next? Well, let's try to tackle the almighty *creative concept!* We'll use a structured brainstorming technique to get the wheels turning, and turning quickly.

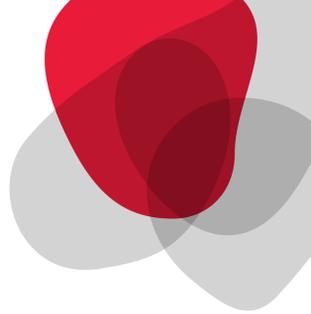
A quick note on brainstorming: they can be petrifying, unproductive, and a giant waste of time ... when there's no structure to how they work. Fortunately, that won't be the case here. Just a few things to keep in mind however:

- Michael Jordan missed more shots than the players he faced. That's because he took more shots. A lot more. Brainstorming is all about quantity. A ton of ideas. Most of them bad. But they all lead to new avenues of exploration and eventually the one shot that wins the game.
- Speaking of games, that's how this should be treated – fun, energized, stimulating game play. It should be loud. You should feel the energy of the room. It must be kept positive. There will be disagreements. Ideas will die. But at the end of this game, everyone wins.
- Judge not, lest ye be judged. During the ideating phase of this process, keep judgment squarely on the sidelines. That includes judging your own ideas. Remember, this is about quantity, not quality. So take those shots!

Ok, let's get this brainstorming party started:

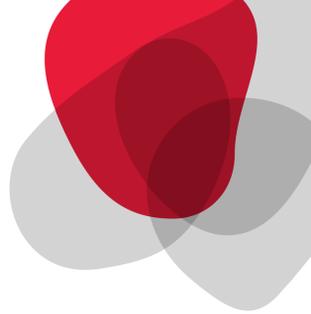
Tools Needed:

- Pens, pencils, markers, crayons
- Sticky notes – lots of 'em
- A big room with a big wall and a big table (or lots of little tables)
- About two hours of dedicated time
- A varied music selection
- Coffee, water, brain food
- An open mind



BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #1

BARNBURNER (CONT.)



Rules of Engagement:

Start by inviting 20 to 30 people to the session. More people. More ideas. (More than 30 can get a bit unwieldy, however.) Also, ensure you invite a wide array of people to participate in your brainstorming session. The broader the cross section of players, the wider the variety of ideas. (Quite often, people who are most closely associated with the brainstorming topic aren't the most freethinking bunch. The further away the participants are from the realities of marketing, the less encumbered the players are by what can and can't be done.) Once you're all in the room, here are the rules:

1. Before you jump right into the brainstorming, consider a mental warm-up that isn't related to the brainstorming topic at all. Keep it light and fun. Bring in social thinking games like Pictionary.
2. Now, use the creative brief as your guide. This will inform your ideation topic for the session.
3. Split up the folks in the room into teams of four to six players. No more than that.
4. Set a time limit and an ambitious goal: 50 ideas per team in 30 minutes, 100 ideas per team in one hour, or somewhere in the middle.
5. Once the clock starts, have each team member begin writing ideas down on those sticky notes. As they write the idea down, have them say the idea out loud then slam it down on the table. Hearing ideas throughout the room ups the energy level and cross-pollinates thinking. Slamming sticky notes on the table ... that's just fun.
6. Once you've reached your goal or the clock stops, have each team select their top five ideas. Stick them up on a wall. Each team stands up and shares their ideas. In fact, have everyone in the room stand up. (People actually think better when they are standing. Energy rises. Discussion ensues. More doors open.
7. Now maybe, just maybe, you've struck gold right out of the gate. Chances are, however, that's not the case. So here's what happens next:
 - a. If there are identical ideas posted on the wall, trash 'em. Contrary to popular belief, great minds *do not* think alike.
 - b. Have each team pick their favorite idea from another team to expand upon in the next round of brainstorming. This keeps the thinking fresh, eliminates ownership of ideas, and weeds out weak ideas without bringing negative judgment into the room.
 - c. From there, reset the timer for a shorter burst: 30 ideas per team in 10 minutes. This is all about the expansion of a new idea: What if we did this? Tried that? Had a spokesdog instead of a spokesperson? Threw the idea in a time machine and brought it to life in 1974? Whatever. The idea they picked is just the seed. Now they have to make it grow in all kinds of crazy directions.
 - d. Write the ideas down. Shout 'em out. Slam 'em down.
 - e. Time's up. Pick the top five. Stick 'em on the wall with the "seed" idea at the top. All rise. All share. All discuss.

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #1

BARNBURNER (CONT.)



8. Everyone has jammed on ideas, shared them, discussed them, expanded on them. Now, one more round. Again, have each team pick an idea from the last round. It can be one of their ideas or an idea from another team. Again, this will be the seed to grown in different directions. Have the teams get ready to storm out some thinking. BUT WAIT! Before you do that, instruct the teams to take the ideas they've selected and give it to another team to flesh out.

Ah yes, the element of surprise. It keeps people on their toes. The confusion actually reignites the neurons. And hey, unexpected circumstances can lead to unexpected results.

9. Set the timer - 30 ideas per team in 10 minutes. Write the ideas down. Shout 'em out. Slam 'em down. Times up. Pick the top five. Stick em on the wall with the "seed" idea at the top. All rise. All share. All discuss. (You know the drill by now.)

10. Your teams might be getting a tad spent by this time. Brainstorming done. Have a postmortem on all of the ideas on the wall. Give people the opportunity to kill off a few ideas. Allow others to defend them. Start to whittle down the thinking with the teams.

11. Thank everyone for participating and send them on their merry way. Keep or invite the core team on this specific project in the room. Discuss the merits of the remaining ideas on the wall. Perhaps have a Barnburner Brainstorm amongst yourselves using ideas on the wall as thoughts to expand upon. By the end of this session, you may very well have an idea or two that has clearly risen to the top. You may not. But you will most certainly walk away with engaged and energized employees and a handful of good ideas that could blossom into great ones.

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #2

THE NEW CEO GAME

Objective: Stimulate new holistic thinking, or elevate an existing vision

Try this when:

- you want to break the rut of “how things have always been done”
- your marketing challenge is one symptom of a broader issue
- when your team is mentally roadblocked

No, we’re not condoning a C-suite coup in your organization. This exercise is designed to create productive tension by forcing you to challenge accepted norms.

It’s not only a valuable tool for rethinking positioning and messaging, but can also lead to new service offerings or even revenue streams. And since it looks beyond marketing, it’s an ideal exercise to do with a small team of internal stakeholders. (But maybe avoid inviting your CEO.)

Tools Needed:

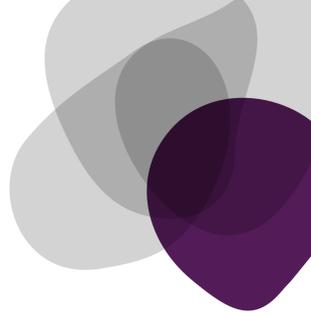
- Pens, pencils, markers, crayons
- Blank paper
- Extra large sticky notes
- A central meeting room with a handful of breakout spaces
- About an hour of dedicated time
- Coffee, water, brain food

Rules of Engagement

- 1) Ask everyone on your team to write the name of a well-known company they admire at the top of a blank piece of paper—but it cannot be a travel organization.
- 2) Then ask everyone to write three things beneath the name of their chosen company:
 - a. What they would guess that company’s credo would be to sum up what it believes in. Ideally this is a saying or a statement—not a single word.
 - b. How they would sum up the way that that company behaves as it interacts with consumers, competitors, and stakeholders.
 - c. What is the one thing that this company does better than anyone else in the world?
- 3) Underneath each of these three things, ask them to list the reasons why: specific actions or initiatives that this company does.
- 4) Gather everyone’s pages, shuffle them up, and redistribute them so everyone has a different company.

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #2

THE NEW CEO GAME (CONT.)



5) Surprise! That CEO is now in charge of *your* organization, and s/he is bringing with them their core attitudes, behaviors, and vision.

6) This can sometimes be a tough idea to wrap one's head around, so start with some hypothetical questions to get the creative juices flowing:

If the CEO of [respected company] was the CEO of [your organization]:

- What would our offices look like?
- What would the dress code be?
- What kind of people would we hire?
- How would we change our pricing model?
- Who would be on our board (if you have one)?

7) These questions are warm-ups for the big ask: what would your new CEO do now? Ask everyone to write a vision statement for your organization from the new CEO:

*We should _____
and the three things we need do to accomplish
that are _____, _____, and _____.*

Refer to the existing programs and initiatives from the company sheets to help inform the "three things."

(If your group is big enough, you can also ask everyone to pair off and choose one of their two companies to collaborate on a vision statement.)

8) Then ask everyone to write an obstacles statement from the new CEO:

*Three things that are preventing us
from realizing this vision are _____, _____, and _____.*

9) Ask everyone to share their results from the top: the credo, behavior, and core competency of the admired company, and then the vision statement and obstacles statement that the CEOs would bring to your organization.

10) After everyone has shared, use the remaining time to discuss observations or commonalities. Are there things that came up frequently as obstacles that need to be addressed? Are there opportunities that you can take advantage of in the short-term to behave more like an admired company? Are there programs that can be developed to shift your brand perception? Can your messaging and delivery be crafted in a new and unique way?

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #3

SQUARES

Objective: Use non-verbal brainstorming techniques to generate and prioritize new ideas around specific asks

Try this when:

- you have a very focused problem to solve for but don't know where to start
- your team struggles with "on the spot" brainstorming

This drawing exercise is adopted from user experience planning in digital and mobile applications. It's a great way to trigger new ideas because visual thinking activates different thought processes than spoken word.

And don't worry if someone claims they're not a great artist: people naturally simplify their ideas when they are trying to communicate visually, so not being able to draw may actually help them get to better thinking.

In Squares, there's a lot of interpretation to help identify patterns and commonalities, so you might want to play the role of the moderator in this one.

Tools Needed:

- Pens, pencils, markers, crayons
- Blank paper
- A central meeting room
- About an hour of dedicated time
- A kitchen timer
- Tape or push pins
- Coffee, water, brain food

Rules of Engagement

- 1) Ground everyone in the group by quickly recapping the marketing challenge. You can use the business brief or the creative brief to make sure everyone is on the same page.
- 2) Align on one specific question that sums up what you want to ideate around. "How do we use content to get more people to plan group trips to our destination?" "How do we get visitors to leave reviews when they've had a good experience?" "How do we improve our experience for VIP guests?" Write this question somewhere big and bold for everyone to see.
- 3) Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to fold it once lengthwise and twice endwise to create six squares.

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #3

SQUARES (CONT.)



- 4) Inform everyone that they will have 15 minutes exactly to draw a picture in each square that addresses the question—no words allowed. Set the timer somewhere central, near the question. The strict time limit adds a sense of urgency that helps push through mental blocks.
- 5) At the end of 15 minutes, ask everyone to “caption” their squares by writing the key elements to that solution.
- 6) Have everyone hang their squares on the wall, and then ask the artists to discuss them with the group one by one.
- 7) As squares are being presented, you can watch out for emerging patterns to discuss with the group:
 - It’s not unusual for several people in a group to draw the same “obvious” idea, but have a discussion about *why* it’s the obvious idea and what is preventing it from being done?
 - Look for ideas that focus on a common point in a customer’s journey. Even if none of the specific ideas are actionable, it could at least help focus on a part of the customer experience to prioritize.
 - Draw attention to the details that people use to visualize their ideas: how they depicted the customer, what parts of a property were depicted, the action being taken, etc. These are often subconscious decisions that can represent intriguing insights.
 - Look for ideas that complement each other. Several “half baked” ideas could build to a complete solution.
- 8) Depending on your goals and the results, you can also ask people to vote on their favorites to get a sense of what directions will energize and rally internal stakeholders.

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #4

BRAND ON FIRE

Objective: Force consensus and alignment on variables that need to be prioritized

Try this when:

- multiple stakeholders push for too many competing messages or elements
- the business brief or creative brief is getting too long
- you don't have the luxury of time

Travel is a complicated, emotionally-driven category. So whether we're talking about brand attributes, proof points to include in communications, destination features, loyalty program benefits, audience segments, whatever—it's easy for a list to get out of control.

But we know that more isn't always better, especially in travel. Simple messages stand a greater chance of breaking through to travelers. Whittling these lists down to the most crucial elements isn't easy, especially when multiple stakeholders are involved.

This exercise is quick and productive—but relies on the element of surprise. Don't even tell people in advance what this exercise is called. It creates a high-pressure situation, so the conversation may be intense but this friction often leads to alignment.

Tools Needed:

- Pens, pencils, markers, crayons
- Lots of sticky notes
- A central meeting room
- About a 30 minutes of dedicated time
- A kitchen timer
- Coffee, water, brain food

Rules of Engagement

- 1) Tell the group that this exercise is about thoroughness and organization. Using the sticky notes, spend 10 minutes exhausting the list of variables around the topic at hand, putting each variable on its own sticky note. Make sure everyone gets involved, and get as many sticky notes on the wall as possible.
- 2) After the first 10 minutes announce the twist: your brand's "house" is on fire! The group can only save three variables from the fire. Everything else will be burned up and lost forever. They have 10 more minutes to decide what to save.
- 3) Set the timer and let the group dive in to pick the three that they will save. As they do, take note of the group dynamic:
 - One or two people will likely take the lead but don't let them overrule everyone else.
 - After a few minutes, they will likely try to start to try and organize variables into clusters by a common theme. This is the start of prioritization happening.
 - The group may ask if they can add a new sticky note with a broader variable that encompasses several of the original ones. Yes! This is a good thing!

BRAINSTORM EXERCISE #4

BRAND ON FIRE (CONT.)



- Pay attention to which variables are eliminated and why. There may be common themes.
- 4) After 10 minutes, stop the group and take all the sticky notes off the wall except the ones that they “saved” from the fire.
- 5) Use the remaining 10 minutes to reflect and discuss, making sure that all of the group participants are satisfied with the selected variables. Discuss some of the observations from the questions above and how this newly prioritized list affects current projects and initiatives.

ABOUT WHITE64

WHITE64 is a full-service, independent, creative agency based in Tysons, Virginia, across the Potomac from Washington, D.C.

For over 50 years, we've delivered creative and impactful solutions across a range of clients, including local and regional tourism authorities, destination marketing organizations, tourism attractions, and leading travel/hospitality brands.

We believe in a different kind of travel marketing: one focused on the transformative power of connecting people and experiences to achieve business goals.

The logo consists of a white square with the text "WHITE64" centered inside in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

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If you have questions about how to apply these exercises in your organization, or would like these documents as standalone files, drop us a line at info@white64.com