WORKSHEET + WORKED EXAMPLE

Find a Fresh Option With SCAMPER

A varied set of possibilities and one small, evidence-seeking test.

30 minutes | SCAMPER · Seven prompts for changing an idea

Use it in three moves

1. Choose a specific existing thing and its purpose. Generate privately first if that helps more people contribute.

2. Use the seven prompts to create distinct possibilities. You do not need an equal number under every letter.

3. Choose a useful option with the people affected. Test it before replacing the routine for everyone.

Choose something specific to change

Name a routine, product, service, or step and the need it serves. Invite the people who use it.

S · Substitute

What component, channel, sequence, or input could be replaced? Keep the underlying need visible.

C · Combine

What could be joined to remove a gap or make a useful connection? Check whether combining creates overload.

A · Adapt

What approach from another setting could fit here? What would need to change for this setting?

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YOUR WORKING NOTES / CONTINUED

M · Modify

What could be smaller, larger, slower, faster, or more visible? Test the effect, not novelty alone.

P · Put to another use

What existing material or capability could meet another need? Check consent and context before reusing information.

E · Eliminate

What could be removed without losing the purpose? Check who would inherit hidden work.

R · Reverse or rearrange

What changes if you invert the order, direction, or roles? Explore the consequence before adopting it.

Choose one useful possibility to test

Compare usefulness, effort, consequences, and uncertainty. Agree a small trial, owner, feedback, and review date.

A question for me

Which possibility improves the work for someone other than me?

See one way through

FICTIONAL WORKED EXAMPLE / NOT THE ANSWER TO YOUR SITUATION

Choose something specific to change

Our weekly status meeting should reveal dependencies and decisions. It currently spends most of its time reading updates aloud.

S · Substitute

Replace spoken status updates with a short written update before the meeting.

C · Combine

Combine related dependency questions into one discussion with the people who can resolve them.

A · Adapt

Borrow a service triage practice: sort requests by the help needed, not by team order.

M · Modify

Shorten the meeting to 20 minutes and enlarge the space for unresolved decisions in the shared record.

P · Put to another use

Use the agreed decision record to help absent colleagues catch up, omitting private discussion.

E · Eliminate

Remove the round-robin update. Keep an accessible route for someone who cannot write an update in advance.

R · Reverse or rearrange

Start with the decisions people need, then bring in only the context required to make them.

Choose one useful possibility to test

Trial decision-first meetings for two weeks. The facilitator asks whether dependencies surfaced earlier and whether anyone lost a way to contribute. Keep or revise the format together.

The thinking behind it

A fresh idea is useful when it changes the lived work for the better. Ask who gains room, who carries new effort, and whose contribution the new format could make harder.

SCAMPER is associated with Bob Eberle, building on earlier idea-generating questions from Alex Osborn. Its prompts are Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to another use, Eliminate, and Reverse or rearrange. This independently written activity uses a work-meeting example and adds a practical test.

Mind Tools · SCAMPER prompts

Read You Have a Culture Problem by Nic Payne