



# Creative Solutioning Techniques

GUIDE

# The Case for Creative Solutioning

**Embracing creative solutioning isn't merely about generating ideas; it's about fundamentally transforming your problem-solving approach.**

As an HR professional, tackling organizational challenges often demands creativity. While some solutions may surface effortlessly, there are instances where, despite rigorous analysis, solutions remain elusive. In such moments, employing certain techniques that foster the exploration of fresh perspectives and approaches can be invaluable.

## BENEFITS

Leveraging creative solutioning unlocks substantial advantages:



### Unleashing innovation

Creative solutioning techniques can liberate you from traditional methods, encouraging you to explore novel ideas and approaches. By fostering an environment where unconventional thinking thrives, you can overcome new challenges when familiar strategies fall short.



### Tailoring solutions

When consulting, challenges rarely come with one-size-fits-all solutions. Solutioning techniques equip consultants with ways to approach problems from multiple angles. This versatility enhances your ability to devise tailored solutions.



### Adapting to a changing landscape

The business landscape is constantly evolving, driven by new technology, socio-economic shifts, and changing workforce expectations. Ideation enables you to adapt by generating flexible solutions that can accommodate these changes.

## The role of facilitation

Most solutioning techniques are collaborative, making facilitation indispensable. A skilled facilitator guides the process, ensuring all participants feel empowered to contribute fully. To excel in this role, it's essential to adeptly manage time, maintain neutrality, and foster active listening. These skills help navigate challenges and steer the group towards actionable outcomes.

## FACILITATION TIPS

- **Establish clear objectives.**

Begin each solutioning session by clearly outlining the goals and expected outcomes. This sets a focused direction for the discussion and helps participants understand the purpose of the session.

- **Create a safe space.**

Encourage open communication and assure participants that all ideas are valued.

- **Manage time.**

Allocate sufficient time for idea generation while maintaining energy and focus.

- **Embrace diversity of perspectives.**

Encourage participants from diverse backgrounds, disciplines, or levels of experience to contribute. Embracing diversity enriches the pool of ideas and promotes innovative thinking.

- **Build on ideas.**

Use each idea as a springboard for generating new concepts or refining existing ones.

# Effective Solutioning Techniques

**Discover eight solutioning techniques designed to spark innovation and solve challenges in HR and organizational settings.** From open, free-flowing practices like brainstorming and mind mapping to more structured approaches like SCAMPER and Six Thinking Hats, each technique offers unique ways to foster collaboration, unleash creativity, and achieve transformative results.

## Tip

These techniques are versatile tools that may each shine in different situations—sometimes, one is more effective than another, depending on the problem at hand. You should strategically choose and even combine these methods to maximize creativity, problem-solving, and innovation within your team and organization.



## Brainstorming

Generate innovative ideas through uninhibited discussion.



## Mind mapping

Explore relationships between ideas and uncover new possibilities.



## Benchmarking

Evaluate practices by comparing them with industry standards.



## Storyboarding

Visualize an experience or process flow.



## Empathy mapping

Map out people's thoughts and emotions.



## Provocations

Challenge assumptions and spark unconventional thinking.



## SCAMPER

Systematically generate ideas through rethinking and alteration.



## Six Thinking Hats

Consider six diverse perspectives for innovative solutions.

# Brainstorming

**Brainstorming** is a widely used technique in creative problem-solving that emphasizes quantity over quality in the initial stages. By encouraging participants to share ideas freely without fear of criticism, it creates an open and inclusive environment where creativity can flourish. The absence of judgment helps individuals think outside the box and suggest even the wildest ideas, which can later be refined and evaluated for feasibility.

This method is particularly effective in identifying multiple solutions to complex problems. It leverages the diverse perspectives and expertise of the group, which can lead to innovative and unexpected solutions. The collective energy and enthusiasm in a brainstorming session can also boost team morale and foster a collaborative spirit.



## PROS

- Encourages free and open idea generation
- Promotes a collaborative and inclusive environment
- Can produce a large volume of ideas quickly

## CONS

- Can lead to groupthink, where dominant voices overshadow others
- If poorly facilitated, may result in unstructured and chaotic sessions
- Ideas generated may lack depth and require further refinement

## EXAMPLE

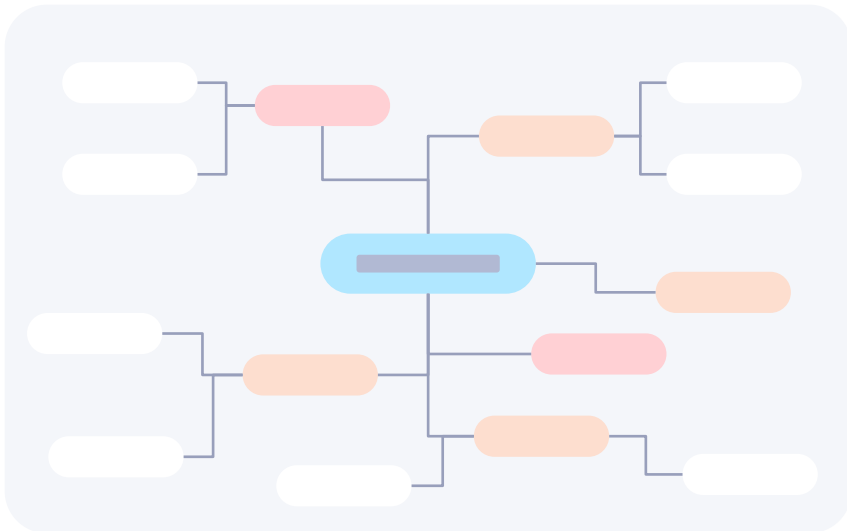
An HRBP leads a brainstorming session aimed at reducing employee turnover in the customer service department. Participants from HR, customer service, and management propose ideas such as offering targeted professional development opportunities, creating a recognition program for high performers, and implementing a mentorship program for new hires.

By collecting these ideas without judgment, the team builds a diverse set of potential strategies to decrease turnover and improve employee retention in this critical department.

# Mind Mapping

**Mind mapping** involves creating a diagram to visually organize information around a central concept. This technique helps explore the connections between different ideas, making it easier to identify patterns and generate new solutions. By visually mapping out components and their relationships, participants can gain a clearer understanding of complex issues and discover areas for improvement.

Mind mapping involves starting with a central idea or problem and branching out to capture related thoughts and connections in a visual format, aiding in brainstorming and organizing complex information. This allows participants to see the bigger picture and how different elements are interrelated. This can lead to more comprehensive and innovative solutions, as it encourages a holistic view of the problem.



## PROS

- Visually organizes complex ideas and relationships
- Helps identify patterns and connections between concepts
- Facilitates comprehensive exploration of a central theme

## CONS

- Can become cluttered with too much information
- May be time consuming to create detailed maps

## EXAMPLE

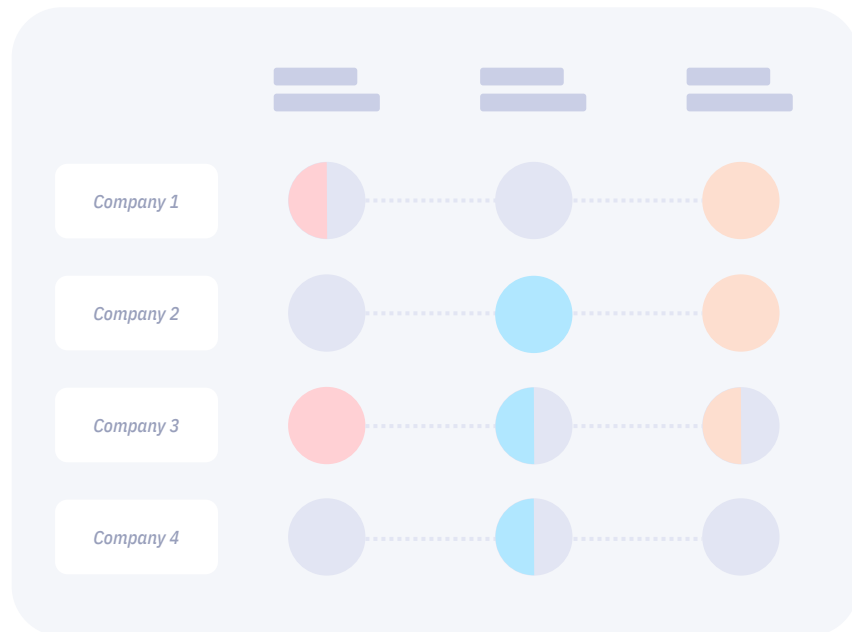
A talent management specialist uses mind mapping to design a successful onboarding process. Starting with the central concept, the map branches out into areas such as orientation sessions, personalized training modules, and cultural integration.

By visualizing these elements, the HR team identifies opportunities for improvement, such as enhancing training modules and creating a buddy system for new hires. This structured approach not only clarifies the process but also encourages collaboration among team members to refine and implement innovative solutions that enhance the new hire experience.

# Benchmarking

**Benchmarking** is the practice of comparing an organization's processes, practices, and performance metrics to those of industry leaders or best-in-class companies. This technique helps identify gaps in performance and areas for improvement by learning from the successes of others. By understanding how top performers achieve their results, organizations can adopt proven strategies and practices to enhance their own performance.

Benchmarking provides a clear, objective basis for setting goals and measuring progress. It encourages continuous improvement and helps organizations stay competitive by keeping abreast of industry trends and innovations.



## PROS

- Provides clear, objective comparisons with industry leaders
- Identifies best practices and areas for improvement
- Encourages continuous improvement and competitiveness

## CONS

- Can lead to imitation rather than innovation
- Requires access to detailed and accurate benchmarking data
- May not account for unique organizational contexts and needs

## EXAMPLE

A learning and development specialist strengthens employee training programs through benchmarking by studying top-performing organizations in the same industry, focusing on those with renowned training and development frameworks.

Through this process, the L&D specialist identifies effective practices, such as implementing extensive asynchronous training resources to cater to diverse learning styles and schedules. They also recognize the value of personalized learning paths, which tailor training content and progression to meet the individual needs and career goals of each employee.

# Storyboarding

**Storyboarding** is a technique used to visualize a process or experience through a sequence of illustrations or images. It helps in identifying the steps involved, potential issues, and areas for enhancement. By breaking down the process into individual scenes, storyboarding provides a clear and detailed view of a person's journey, making it easier to spot pain points and opportunities for improvement.

This technique enables HR professionals to empathize with employees and identify areas where the user experience can be enhanced. Storyboarding also facilitates communication and collaboration among team members, as it provides a visual representation of the process that everyone can understand and contribute to.



## PROS

- Provides a visual representation of processes and experiences
- Helps identify pain points and areas for improvement
- Enhances communication and collaboration among team members

## CONS

- Can be time consuming to create detailed storyboards
- May require artistic skills or tools for effective visualization
- Not all team members may fully engage with visual techniques

## EXAMPLE

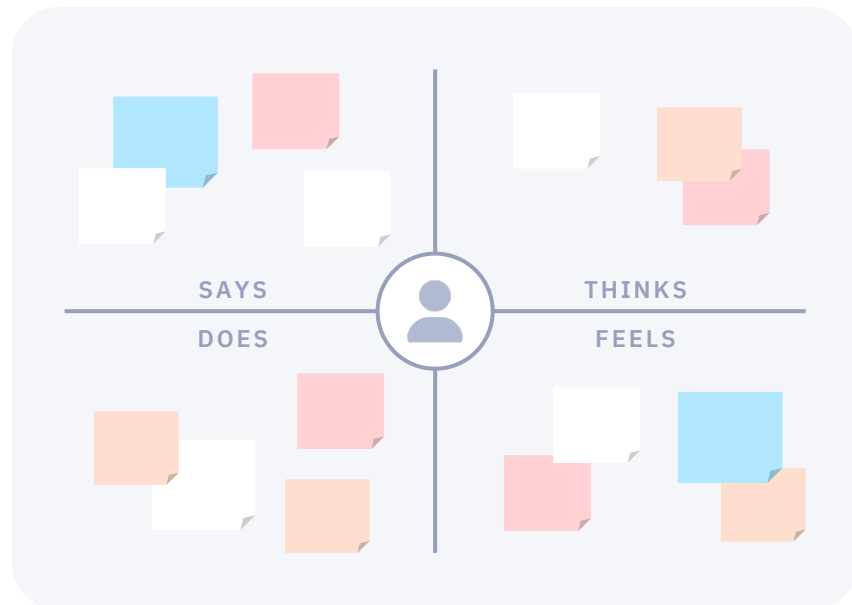
An HR manager uses storyboarding to improve the offboarding process. The storyboard highlights each step, from the initial resignation notice to the employee's final day and beyond.

This visual representation helps identify pain points such as unclear exit procedures and insufficient knowledge transfer, leading to enhancements like streamlining the paperwork process and improving exit interviews. This approach ensures a smoother transition and more effective knowledge retention.

# Empathy Mapping

**Empathy mapping** involves exploring different stakeholder perspectives, including what they see, hear, say, and do, as well as their pains and gains. This method helps HR professionals step into the shoes of stakeholders, gaining a deeper understanding of their experiences and emotions. By capturing these insights, organizations can design more tailored HR strategies and initiatives that resonate on a personal level.

This technique is particularly effective in human resources for improving employee engagement, retention strategies, and organizational culture. It encourages HR professionals to consider the holistic employee experience, leading to solutions that address underlying motivations and enhance overall satisfaction.



## PROS

- Fosters understanding of diverse perspectives
- Helps uncover unmet needs and challenges that people may not articulate directly
- Encourages collaboration and alignment among team members in developing solutions

## CONS

- Risk of stereotyping people's experiences, leading to inaccurate assumptions
- May not fully capture complex emotions and motivations.
- Can be time consuming, especially when involving multiple stakeholders

## EXAMPLE

An HRBP conducts an empathy mapping session to better understand employee frustrations with the performance review process. They map out what employees hear from managers, what they say during feedback sessions, and the emotions they feel throughout the process.

This exercise reveals pain points such as unclear expectations and anxiety about career progression. Armed with these insights, the HRBP develops a revised feedback framework that emphasizes clarity, continuous dialogue, and supportive career development discussions.

# Provocations

**Provocation** involves challenging assumptions and thinking outside the box by asking provocative "What if...?" questions. This technique stimulates unconventional ideas and encourages participants to consider possibilities that might otherwise be overlooked. By breaking free from traditional thinking patterns, provocation can lead to breakthrough innovations.

This method is particularly effective in environments where creativity is stifled by rigid thinking or existing constraints. It helps HRBPs and teams break out of their comfort zones and explore new and radical ideas. By embracing provocation, organizations can discover innovative solutions that drive growth and improvement.

What if...

What if...

What if...

## PROS

- Stimulates unconventional thinking and innovative ideas
- Breaks free from traditional assumptions and constraints
- Encourages radical and transformative solutions

## CONS

- Can lead to unrealistic or impractical ideas
- May be difficult to implement provocative concepts
- Requires careful management to avoid excessive disruption

## EXAMPLE

An HR manager uses provocation to rethink flexible work arrangements by proposing two questions: "What would happen if employees had complete autonomy over their work locations?" and "What if we allowed employees to set their own work hours based on their personal peak productivity times?"

These questions spark discussions on adopting a culture of flexibility and trust, aiming to replace rigid schedules with a dynamic approach that supports work-life balance and enhances productivity. This initiative fosters a more adaptable and employee-centric work environment throughout the organization.

# SCAMPER

The **SCAMPER** technique is a structured approach to creative thinking that involves exploring seven different strategies:

**Substitute:** What can we substitute to improve this process?

**Combine:** How can we combine elements to create something new or more effective?

**Adapt:** How can we adapt this idea to fit a different context or purpose?

**Modify:** In what ways can we modify or tweak this to enhance its performance?

**Put to another use:** How else can we use this idea or process in a different application?

**Eliminate:** What can be removed or simplified without sacrificing effectiveness?

**Reverse:** How can we reverse the process or perspective to achieve a different outcome?

SCAMPER encourages out-of-the-box thinking and helps break down mental barriers, making it easier to come up with fresh ideas.

S	
C	
A	
M	
P	
E	
R	

## PROS

- Provides a structured approach to generating creative ideas
- Encourages thinking outside the box by altering existing concepts
- Can be applied to various processes and products

## CONS

- May be difficult to apply all seven strategies for every problem
- Requires training and practice to use effectively
- Can be overwhelming if overused or applied too rigidly

## EXAMPLE

A talent acquisition specialist applies SCAMPER to enhance the recruitment process. They start by substituting manual resume reviews with AI screening and combine video and in-person interviews for a more thorough assessment. Additionally, they adapt marketing techniques to craft compelling job postings that attract top talent.

This approach leads to streamlined recruitment procedures and improved candidate selection, leveraging technology and creative strategies to align candidate skills with organizational needs effectively.

# Six Thinking Hats

The **Six Thinking Hats** method, developed by Edward de Bono, involves looking at a problem from six different perspectives.

**White hat:** Data and facts

**Yellow hat:** Optimism and positivity

**Red hat:** Feelings and reactions

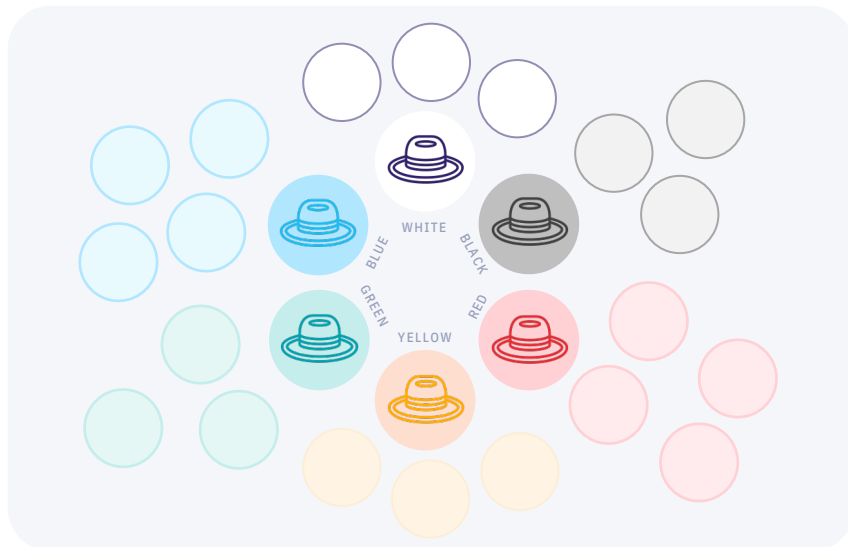
**Green hat:** Creativity and surprise

**Black hat:** Skepticism and negativity

**Blue hat:** Process and planning

This structured approach helps in exploring all aspects of a problem, ensuring a comprehensive and balanced analysis. By systematically considering each perspective, HRBPs can gain a deeper understanding of the problem and generate well-rounded solutions.

This method encourages diverse thinking and helps avoid biases, leading to more effective and inclusive decision-making. It is particularly useful for complex problems that require input from multiple stakeholders.



## PROS

- Encourages wide-ranging exploration of a problem from multiple angles
- Reduces biases by considering diverse viewpoints
- Facilitates balanced and well-rounded decision-making

## CONS

- Can be time-consuming to cover all six perspectives
- Requires participants to fully understand and engage with each hat
- May be challenging to switch between different thinking modes

## EXAMPLE

An HRBP uses the Six Thinking Hats technique to evaluate a new employee recognition program. They: analyze factual data on current recognition practices (white hat), gather employee feedback through surveys and interviews (red hat), anticipate potential pitfalls such as budget constraints or cultural resistance (black hat), highlight anticipated improvements in employee morale and productivity (yellow hat), brainstorm creative ways to personalize recognition efforts (green hat), and develop a detailed implementation timeline and strategy (blue hat).