

HOW TO GENERATE THOUSANDS OF IDEAS IN MERE MINUTES; THE MORPHOLOGICAL MATRIX

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How to generate thousands of ideas in mere minutes; the Morphological Matrix



There are few techniques that will give you more ideas per minute than the Morphological Matrix. Read on and discover how a simple matrix will enable you to generate thousands, even tens of thousands, of possibilities in the time it takes to grab a cup of coffee.

Thousands of ideas in minutes

Like I've written before, creativity is all about quantity. **There is always a better idea** and the more ideas you generate, the bigger chances of stumbling upon something brilliant. In other words; **quantity leads to quality**.

Creative thinking techniques can help you to generate many ideas in a short period of time. For instance, **asking yourself what someone else would do** in your situation can help to quickly generate many alternative ideas.

Other tricks you can try are using a **random image**, a **random verb** or a list of **stimulating questions**.

There is one technique, however, that enables you to generate many more ideas than even with the powerful techniques above. It's called *the Morphological Matrix*. This technique, comparable to the **HIT grid**, allows you to generate thousands of possible ideas in mere minutes.

Sounds crazy, right? Here's how it works.

The Morphological Matrix

The Morphological Matrix is a simple technique to quickly generate many different possibilities to answer a 'how can we...' question.

Step 1. Pick attributes

Describe the key attributes that play a role in your challenge. Write them down next to each other, horizontally.

Step 2. List possible components per attribute

Make a list of possible components for each attribute and list these components beneath the attribute, thus creating columns.

Step 3. Combine components from each column, randomly

Take one random component from every list and combine them to generate a new idea. Use a dice to generate random numbers, or simply try every possible combination one-by-one (warning: if you want to try every possibility you might be busy for a while).

If you have three lists with 10 components each, you'll have 1,000 possible ideas. Have you generated one more list with 10 components? Then you already have 10,000 possible ideas!

Once you've generated many different ideas, pick the most promising ones to examine closer.

When do you use the Morphological Matrix?

You can use the Morphological Matrix to find creative ways to shape a new product, service, experience or story. Possible challenges that are perfectly suited for using the Morphological Matrix:

- Coming up with a story (for a game, book, film script etc.)
- Coming up with new ideas for a party, event, room- or space arrangement etc.
- Coming up with ideas for a new product (a new type of toothbrush, car, refrigerator etc.)
- Coming up with new ideas for gifts or day trips
- Coming up with new ideas for a tv format, escape room experience, primary school lesson etc.

Example: a new tv format

Imagine you want to create a new tv format for a big production agency.

Step 1. Pick attributes

You choose three attributes to list at the top of your matrix: 'target audience', 'type of show' and 'theme'.

Step 2. List possible components per attribute

You generate a list of 10 components for each attribute. For instance:

Attributes:	target audience	type of show	theme
1	children	game show	history
2	the elderly	quiz	humour
3	teenagers	reality tv	sports
4	adults	soap	animals
5	animal lovers	news show	science
6	business men	talent show	science fiction
7	intellectuals	animation	literature
8	sports lovers	puppet show	food
9	parents	talk show	movies
10	foodies	travel program	politics

Step 3. Combine components from each column, randomly

You try out different combinations, randomly. For instance:

Numbers 1, 2 and 10 (children, quiz, politics)

A program for children, aiming to make kids more interested in politics. A young energetic host (a children's idol) asks two teams of clever kids questions about politics. Each team has three opportunities to ask a famous politician (who is also in the studio) for help. This costs them 25% of their points each time (no reason to not also teach them a bit of math...).

Numbers 2, 8 and 1 (the elderly, puppet show, history)

Many old people love talking about their youth. So why not re-enact historical events that happened 60-80 years ago? We'll create a puppet show in which puppets who look like historical figures re-enact important events. The puppets also sing popular old songs with elderly people.

Numbers 8, 1 and 6 (sports lovers, game show, science fiction)

Let's create a hilarious new type of game show. Famous athletes (football players, darts players, snooker players etc.) pretend to be abducted by aliens and have to compete with each other in silly games. The 'alien' host (a puppet or host in futuristic clothes) explains the rules. Only the winner will be released back on Earth. The losers will be experimented on. The show ends with the losers 'disappearing' in a UFO (waving goodbye while standing in front of the window).

As you can see, making random combinations enables you to quickly generate original ideas. After generating many different ideas all you have to do is pick the most interesting ones. Elaborate and sharpen the ideas.

Try it yourself. What ideas can you come up with using this technique?

Looking for even more ways to generate creative ideas?

Take a look at our [workshop page](#) and join us for a workshop at our office in Rotterdam. Of course we can also come to you to help you out with an [incompany workshop](#).

See you soon!

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René de Ruijter

René is one of the founders of HatRabbits. His background in both law and photography enables him to shift smoothly between very different worlds and might explain his fascination with unusual combinations.



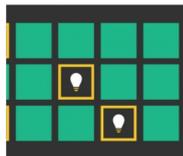
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