



TOOL: Creativity Lab

Introduction

Most people know the old saying that “a problem shared is a problem halved”, but for many it can be hard to open up and share challenges, especially around business ideas. One may feel silly or inadequate, but sharing business problems (and indeed other problems as well), can be a great way to access other’s skills, knowledge and creative thinking.

This session uses the concept of a creative lab, where groups explore a business problem or creative challenge.

Working in groups learners engage in creative problem solving, where no idea is considered stupid! Through discussion and a range of creative exercise’s, learners increase their capacity to find solutions to problem and understand to power of being able to network.

These are key skills for survival in our complex modern society.

Through the Creative Lab, learners are able to share business ideas and benefit from the ‘collective mind’ of their group. This process allows the learner to see their idea or problem from many differing viewpoints and the process facilitates the generation of many new and exciting ideas.





Creativity Lab Trainers delivery plan

Session Aim(s):	Learning materials:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To encourage group members to share their creative or business problems/challenges with the group -To engage the group in creative problem solving through discussion and practical exercises -To work out potential solutions to the problems/challenges raised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A board for writing -Multi-coloured drawing tools; -A4 format white sheets of paper.

Expected learning outcomes:	Differentiated Learning Outcomes:	Differentiation achieved through:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Participants increase their abilities to generate the ideas -Participants know how to overcome obstacles to creative thinking and problem solving -Participants increase their capacity to develop solutions -Participants realise the benefits of networking for developing potential solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A critical and reflective attitude towards available information -Team working -Curiosity, openness to change -Awareness of the networking for developing potential solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creative thinking -Team work -Discussion/debate





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Timings	Key Content	Trainer Activity	Learner Activity	Resources
10 minutes	Introductions	<p>Trainer introduction</p> <p>Session outline</p> <p>The trainer of the group begins the session by stating its name/title, goal and expected duration. The trainer emphasises that the session is aimed at stimulating a creative approach to problems one is faced with when attempting to join the labour market (e.g. finding a job, starting a business, etc.) after one's sentence has been served.</p>	Learners sign register	Register
20 minutes	Defining the problem	<p>The group is asked a question that must be answered by each group member: <i>"What is your passion? What do you feel like doing in the future (after you are released from the penitentiary institution)?"</i>.</p> <p>The participants are given a few minutes to think of answers and present them. If the group members come up with ideas on the spot, there is no need for the trainer to stop them talking. The trainer then writes down each idea on the board.</p> <p>A decision is made in consensus with the members of the group as to which of the problems (ideas, passions, goals, ambitions) raised will be addressed during the session.</p> <p>Once a decision has been reached on whose proposed problem will be addressed, the trainer asks the author of the idea to define the problem in detail:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) define the current undesirable situation; b) define the goal or more desirable situation; c) define the obstacles in your way. 	<p>Learners in the group discussion present their answers to questions <i>"What is your passion? What do you feel like doing in the future (after you are released from the penitentiary institution)?"</i>.</p> <p>Learners made a decision to which of the problem (ideas, passions, goals, and ambitions) raised will be addressed during the session.</p> <p>Author of the idea define the problem in detail.</p>	<p>A board for writing</p> <p>Multi-coloured drawing tools</p>





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30 minutes	Analysing the problem and generating possible solutions	<p>The trainer introduces questions aimed at analysing the problem and exploring its possible solutions.</p> <p>During this step, the group should analyse the problem, discuss the potential causes of difficulties and generate possible solutions to the problem. It is desirable that each group member should give answers to the questions posed. However, if no answer is given, it is recommended not to push the participant or insist on an answer being given. The trainer should guide the group as it generates possible solutions.</p> <p>The group is asked questions until ideas are generated on ways to address the problem. The trainer of the group must bear in mind that the solutions should not be evaluated at this stage, only proposed and clarified. By working along with the group, the answers given to each question can be noted down on separate sheets of paper, so that at the end of the session the most realistic, successful and efficient solution to the problem being addressed can be “crafted”.</p> <p>If the group faces difficulties coming up with answers to questions asked, practical exercises can be availed of.</p>	Learners in the group discussion present their thoughts	A board for writing Multi-coloured drawing tools
30 minutes	Practical exercise	<p><i>E.g.: Let us assume that the group have decided to devote the session to solving the problem of integrating into the labour market upon the end of one's sentence.</i></p> <p><u>Practical exercise No. 1</u></p> <p>The trainer asks the group members to do an exercise that will help the group take a fresh look at the problem raised and approach it from the point of view of another person: “Imagine that you are running a successful business or are in charge of a</p>	Learners in the group express their ideas and try to see a problem from different points of view.	Multi-coloured drawing tools A4 format white sheets of paper





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		<p>prosperous company. You are approached by an individual who has just been released from a penitentiary institution and who is desperate to find a job. What questions would you ask this person? What would you suggest to him/her?”</p> <p>This exercise allows the group members to assume the stance of a person whom they could expect to approach if they decided to seek employment. It is important for the group members to identify with their role(s) as deeply as possible and try to take a practical look at the problem. It is expected that by asking questions as successful executives or businessmen, the group members will come to the realisation of what questions they may themselves expect as they rejoin the labour market, what difficulties they can expect and what issues they should consider prior to looking for a job or starting a business. In drawing generalisations on the exercise, it is important to emphasise that one should not be afraid to appeal to other people: even if one has been unsuccessful the first time, one will have gained some important practical experience.</p> <p><u>Practical exercise No. 2</u></p> <p>The trainer encourages the group to perform another exercise aimed at helping the participants take a fresh look at a problem (<i>in this case, the problem of an ex-prisoner's engagement in the labour market</i>):</p> <p>“Imagine that each of you represents some profession that is unrelated to the problem discussed. For instance, imagine that you are teachers. How would you approach the problem of an ex-</p>		
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		<p>prisoner engaging in the labour market from the point of view of a teacher? In your view, what are the possible solutions?”</p> <p>OR</p> <p>“Imagine that each of you is a representative of a different profession—for instance, a teacher, a fire fighter, a forester, a farmer, etc. As you identify with your role, think and state what you could advise as representatives of the different professions to an ex-prisoner who is looking to rejoin to the labour market.”</p> <p>Having heard all group members, the trainer thanks the participants for their ideas and compliments them on the ability to approach a problem from different points of view. It is important for the trainer to emphasise that, no matter what the different people’s professions, education or abilities may be, people often face similar problems. It is important not to be afraid to appeal for help to people in one’s immediate environment, as by virtue of their different educational backgrounds, skills and experience, people can offer a greater variety of solutions to problems or suggest alternative opportunities of engagement.</p> <p><u>Practical exercise No. 3</u></p> <p>The group are asked to think what abilities or skills the members of the group have (or have gained at the penitentiary institution) that could be useful when attempting to rejoin the labour market. When conducting this exercise, it is important that the participants should carefully consider all the activities they have performed at the penitentiary institution and think whether they have learned anything new, and that they should assess the skills they have gained. All the skills mentioned are to be written down on</p>		
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the board. Then the participants are encouraged to imagine that, having finished serving his/her sentence and been released, an ex-prisoner wants to find a job that matches the qualifications he/she gained while at the penitentiary institution (the group are asked to choose a profession for discussion), e.g. a hairdresser.

The group are asked to note down their associations, with one column dedicated to the profession of the hairdresser, and the other column dedicated to the customers of a hair salon.

E.g.

<i>Hairdresser</i>	<i>Customers of a hair salon</i>
<i>Polite</i>	<i>Want to look good</i>
<i>Pleasant</i>	<i>Are going to a festive event</i>
<i>Has a business certificate</i>	<i>Wealthy</i>
.....
.....

It is important that all the ideas that have come to mind in association with the above-mentioned things are noted down.

It is likewise possible to choose another profession and/or skill one has had or acquired. It can then be analysed following the same principle, with any associations on the skilled person being noted down in the first column, and associations on other people or objects that benefit from the skill noted down in the other column.

Once all the proposed ideas have been noted down, the trainer suggests that the members of the group should assess them.





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		<p>The trainer asks the following questions: “What do you think...”, “How do you find...”, “In your estimation, if...”. At this stage, the members of the group are encouraged to generate diverse ideas on ways to use the skills or qualifications acquired in pursuing one’s goal (<i>in the present context, joining the labour market</i>). With the problem analysed in this way, the participants are able not only to assess what particular skills or abilities one must have when attempting to join the labour market, but they are also stimulated to think what direct benefits their activities may offer to other people or the society as a whole. It is expected that this will enable the group members to view the problem from the standpoint of future customers and to assess their own advantages and shortcomings as future employees, as well as evaluate their own skills and limitations, and understand the possible benefits of trying to acquire new skills that might be sought after on the labour market.</p>		
20 minutes	Evaluating solutions	<p>The trainer generalises by saying that the group has already analysed the problem raised from different perspectives and tried to approach it from the point of view of the employer, a friend or close relative, a representative of a different profession, or even a future customer. During this step, solutions can be assessed critically based on their credibility, completeness and value. The group should analyse each solution based on its potential consequences—especially negative consequences.</p> <p>It would be worthwhile making a set list of criteria for evaluating each solution. A group can use different decision-making techniques to evaluate the solutions. For example, in narrowing down the list of proposed solutions, group members can make decisions by</p>	Learners in the group present their thoughts	A board for writing Multi-coloured drawing tools





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		<p>majority vote, by weighing the pros and cons, or by discussing them until consensus has been reached.</p> <p>In an effort to evaluate the ideas, practical exercises can be availed of.</p> <p><u>Practical exercise No. 4</u></p> <p>The trainer suggests evaluating a problem by asking a “What if...” question. For the sake of a smooth start, the trainer asks the first question. After that, the trainer asks the participants to continue asking questions in an effort to evaluate both the positive and negative eventualities that an ex-prisoner can be faced with when attempting to secure a position on the labour market:</p> <p>“Let us begin with the positives of the plan being executed. What if you succeed in securing a position on the labour market?”</p> <p>Further in the session, it is important to encourage the participants to ask questions themselves in an effort to carry out as thorough an assessment of the problem being discussed as possible. When the group runs out of the positive questions, the trainer suggests looking at the problem from a less positive point of view: “What if the labour market does not require specialists of your kind when you attempt to rejoin the market—i.e. there is no work offered to specialists with your qualifications?”</p> <p>As the group formulates questions and answers them, the trainer must write down all of the answers generated. When the group runs out of questions, the participants are asked to return to reality and evaluate each statement written down by saying:</p>		
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		<p>“Well, this is something we cannot realise, but perhaps we can...”</p> <p>It is important that the ideas communicated at this stage are as practical as possible.</p> <p><i>E.g. – What if I do not find the kind of job I want? – I may not be able to find the kind of job I want. However, I can try and browse job advertisements on the Internet, or I can relocate to another area, where such jobs are in higher supply, etc.</i></p> <p>Once the group have evaluated all the statements that have been written down by applying the method of “Well, this is something we cannot realise, but perhaps we can...”, then the trainer takes over by complimenting the group on the answers generated, stating that they are practically applicable. The trainer also emphasises that, no matter what the different difficulties and complications one can face when attempting to solve a problem, it is always possible to approach a situation from a different perspective by asking oneself questions and pushing oneself to assess any planned actions in attempting to realise a plan.</p> <p>It is also important to emphasise that, whenever faced with difficulties, one should not be afraid to appeal for help to other people with a different set of competences and a richer work and life experience.</p>		
15 minutes	Session evaluation	At the end of the session, the trainer thanks everyone for active participation, as well as the ideas and points generated. The trainer generalises over the results of the session by reprising the problem	Learners session complete form	Evaluation forms





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		analysed by the group and outlining the methods that were used to analyse the problem, and generate and assess solutions to it. Trainer hands out and collects evaluation forms for the session		
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Trainers notes:

Delivery time for the sessions is 2 hours 30 minutes

The trainer of the group begins the session by stating its name/title, goal and expected duration. The trainer emphasises that the session is aimed at stimulating a creative approach to problems one is faced with when attempting to join the labour market (e.g. finding a job, starting a business, etc.) after one's sentence has been served. The trainer encourages the participants to be active, overcome shyness when voicing their ideas, discuss, communicate and be cooperative with other group members. The participants are assured that they can feel safe while in the group and can voice even the most daring ideas. The participants are also encouraged to listen to the ideas expressed by others that can be beneficial to them.

1. Defining the problem

The group is asked a question that must be answered by each group member: "What is your passion? What do you feel like doing in the future (after you are released from the penitentiary institution)?" The participants are given a few minutes to think of answers and present them. If the group members come up with ideas on the spot, there is no need for the trainer to stop them talking. The trainer then writes down each idea on the board.

A decision is made in consensus with the members of the group as to which of the problems (ideas, passions, goals, ambitions) raised will be addressed during the session. It is very important that each member of the group should accept the general problem raised and that all group members should understand it in the same way.





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Once a decision has been reached on whose proposed problem will be addressed, the trainer asks the author of the idea to define the problem in detail:

- d) define the current undesirable situation;
- e) define the goal or more desirable situation;
- f) define the obstacles in your way.

2. Analysing the problem and generating possible solutions

Once the problem has been defined, the trainer introduces questions aimed at analysing the problem and exploring its possible solutions. During this step, the group should analyse the problem, discuss the potential causes of difficulties and generate possible solutions to the problem. It is desirable that each group member should give answers to the questions posed. However, if no answer is given, it is recommended not to push the participant or insist on an answer being given. The trainer should guide the group as it generates possible solutions. It is not necessary to ask all of the questions listed below; questions can be asked selectively in accordance with the progress of the discussion.

Questions to analyse the problem and generate possible solutions:

1. What could we do to address this problem?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this plan?
3. Imagine that now is the time to realise the plan—what would you do first? If you had everything you might need to realise the plan, what would you do first?
4. What would be the possible consequences if one or another stage in the implementation of the plan were to fall through? What could be done differently if something were to fail?
5. Where could you seek advice on realising your goals?
6. In your opinion, would there be another way to realise your plans?
7. What other problem bears a resemblance to the problem at hand?
8. How can the problem be changed (modified)?
9. How can the problem be aggravated?
10. What aspect of the problem can be eliminated in order to ease the problem?
11. What alternative could you choose if you failed to solve this problem (what could you substitute the problem with)?
12. In your opinion, what would a friend say about our idea?
13. Let us try and view the problem from a different perspective (turn the problem around).





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14. Let us think how we could have solved the same problem 10 years ago? How could we solve it 10 years from now?

The group is asked questions until ideas are generated on ways to address the problem. The trainer of the group must bear in mind that the solutions should not be evaluated at this stage, only proposed and clarified. By working along with the group, the answers given to each question can be noted down on separate sheets of paper, so that at the end of the session the most realistic, successful and efficient solution to the problem being addressed can be “crafted”.

If the group faces difficulties coming up with answers to questions asked, practical exercises can be availed of.

E.g.: Let us assume that the group have decided to devote the session to solving the problem of integrating into the labour market upon the end of one's sentence.

Practical exercise No. 1

The trainer asks the group members to do an exercise that will help the group take a fresh look at the problem raised and approach it from the point of view of another person: “Imagine that you are running a successful business or are in charge of a prosperous company. You are approached by an individual who has just been released from a penitentiary institution and who is desperate to find a job. What questions would you ask this person? What would you suggest to him/her?”

This exercise allows the group members to assume the stance of a person whom they could expect to approach if they decided to seek employment. It is important for the group members to identify with their role(s) as deeply as possible and try to take a practical look at the problem. It is expected that by asking questions as successful executives or businessmen, the group members will come to the realisation of what questions they may themselves expect as they rejoin the labour market, what difficulties they can expect and what issues they should consider prior to looking for a job or starting a business. In drawing generalisations on the exercise, it is important to emphasise that one should not be afraid to appeal to other people: even if one has been unsuccessful the first time, one will have gained some important practical experience.

Practical exercise No. 2

The trainer encourages the group to perform another exercise aimed at helping the participants take a fresh look at a problem (*in this case, the problem of an ex-prisoner's engagement in the labour market*):

“Imagine that each of you represents some profession that is unrelated to the problem discussed. For instance, imagine that you are teachers. How would you approach the problem of an ex-prisoner engaging in the labour market from the point of view of a teacher? In your view, what are the possible solutions?”

OR





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“Imagine that each of you is a representative of a different profession—for instance, a teacher, a fire fighter, a forester, a farmer, etc. As you identify with your role, think and state what you could advise as representatives of the different professions to an ex-prisoner who is looking to rejoin to the labour market.”

Having heard all group members, the trainer thanks the participants for their ideas and compliments them on the ability to approach a problem from different points of view. It is important for the trainer to emphasise that, no matter what the different people’s professions, education or abilities may be, people often face similar problems. It is important not to be afraid to appeal for help to people in one’s immediate environment, as by virtue of their different educational backgrounds, skills and experience, people can offer a greater variety of solutions to problems or suggest alternative opportunities of engagement.

Practical exercise No. 3

The group are asked to think what abilities or skills the members of the group have (or have gained at the penitentiary institution) that could be useful when attempting to rejoin the labour market. When conducting this exercise, it is important that the participants should carefully consider all the activities they have performed at the penitentiary institution and think whether they have learned anything new, and that they should assess the skills they have gained. All the skills mentioned are to be written down on the board. Then the participants are encouraged to imagine that, having finished serving his/her sentence and been released, an ex-prisoner wants to find a job that matches the qualifications he/she gained while at the penitentiary institution (the group are asked to choose a profession for discussion), e.g. a hairdresser.

The group are asked to note down their associations, with one column dedicated to the profession of the hairdresser, and the other column dedicated to the customers of a hair salon.

E.g.

<i>Hairdresser</i>	<i>Customers of a hair salon</i>
<i>Polite</i>	<i>Want to look good</i>
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It is important that all the ideas that have come to mind in association with the above-mentioned things are noted down.

It is likewise possible to choose another profession and/or skill one has had or acquired. It can then be analysed following the same principle, with any associations on the skilled person being noted down in the first column, and associations on other people or objects that benefit from the skill noted down in the other column.

Once all the proposed ideas have been noted down, the trainer suggests that the members of the group should assess them. The trainer asks the following questions: “What do you think...”, “How do you find...”, “In your estimation, if...”. At this stage, the members of the group are encouraged to generate diverse ideas on ways to use the skills or qualifications acquired in pursuing one’s goal (*in the present context, joining the labour market*). With the problem analysed in this way, the participants are able not only to assess what particular skills or abilities one must have when attempting to join the labour market, but they are also stimulated to think what direct benefits their activities may offer to other people or the society as a whole. It is expected that this will enable the group members to view the problem from the standpoint of future customers and to assess their own advantages and shortcomings as future employees, as well as evaluate their own skills and limitations, and understand the possible benefits of trying to acquire new skills that might be sought after on the labour market.

3. Evaluating solutions

- The trainer generalises by saying that the group has already analysed the problem raised from different perspectives and tried to approach it from the point of view of the employer, a friend or close relative, a representative of a different profession, or even a future customer. During this step, solutions can be assessed critically based on their credibility, completeness and value. The group should analyse each solution based on its potential consequences—especially negative consequences.
- It would be worthwhile making a set list of criteria for evaluating each solution. A group can use different decision-making techniques to evaluate the solutions. For example, in narrowing down the list of proposed solutions, group members can make decisions by majority vote, by weighing the pros and cons, or by discussing them until consensus has been reached.
- In an effort to evaluate the ideas, practical exercises can be availed of.

Practical exercise No. 4

The trainer suggests evaluating a problem by asking a “What if...” question. For the sake of a smooth start, the trainer asks the first question. After that, the trainer asks the participants to continue asking questions in an effort to evaluate both the positive and negative eventualities that an ex-prisoner can be faced with when attempting to secure a position on the labour market:





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“Let us begin with the positives of the plan being executed. What if you succeed in securing a position on the labour market?”

Further in the session, it is important to encourage the participants to ask questions themselves in an effort to carry out as thorough an assessment of the problem being discussed as possible. When the group runs out of the positive questions, the trainer suggests looking at the problem from a less positive point of view: “What if the labour market does not require specialists of your kind when you attempt to rejoin the market—i.e. there is no work offered to specialists with your qualifications?”

As the group formulates questions and answers them, the trainer must write down all of the answers generated. When the group runs out of questions, the participants are asked to return to reality and evaluate each statement written down by saying:

“Well, this is something we cannot realise, but perhaps we can...”

It is important that the ideas communicated at this stage are as practical as possible.

E.g. – What if I do not find the kind of job I want?

– I may not be able to find the kind of job I want. However, I can try and browse job advertisements on the Internet, or I can relocate to another area, where such jobs are in higher supply, etc.

Once the group have evaluated all the statements that have been written down by applying the method of “Well, this is something we cannot realise, but perhaps we can...”, then the trainer takes over by complimenting the group on the answers generated, stating that they are practically applicable. The trainer also emphasises that, no matter what the different difficulties and complications one can face when attempting to solve a problem, it is always possible to approach a situation from a different perspective by asking oneself questions and pushing oneself to assess any planned actions in attempting to realise a plan.

It is also important to emphasise that, whenever faced with difficulties, one should not be afraid to appeal for help to other people with a different set of competences and a richer work and life experience.

At the end of the session, the trainer thanks everyone for active participation, as well as the ideas and points generated. The trainer generalises over the results of the session by reprising the problem analysed by the group and outlining the methods that were used to analyse the problem, and generate and assess solutions to it. The trainer stresses that any problem can be addressed by using the methods of creative thought applied during the session. The trainer also emphasises that, whenever faced with either minor or major difficulties, one should put one’s social environment to one’s own advantage by appealing to relatives, friends, acquaintances or competent representatives of one’s profession, who may offer entirely fresh and unconventional ways or methods of addressing the problem.

