

FEATURED IN: The 2013 Health & Wellness Issue



A Proactive APPROACH

Ignite Your Competitive Edge with SCAMPER

As the recession drags on, do you feel like your business is playing on the reality show "Survivor?" The tagline for the show states participants need to "Outwit, Outplay, Outlast" their opponents. Businesses can no longer be passive or reactive to their competition. Instead, a proactive approach is necessary to gain the competitive edge.

A tried and true method called SCAMPER was created in the 70s by Bob Eberle to provide a platform to develop new ideas or to solve a problem. Many businesses get stuck because they either think they don't have any new ideas or are not able to think creatively. Businesses can use the SCAMPER method to spark creativity and help solve problems. Even more so, businesses need to look for ways to differentiate themselves from their competition, create new opportunities, and stay relevant in the marketplace.

The SCAMPER technique is based on the notion that everything new is a modification of something that already exists. Instead of trying to reinvent the wheel, modify the wheel to serve the new purpose. SCAMPER provides a methodological approach to the brainstorming process whether you use it as an individual or in a group setting. Each letter in the acronym represents a checklist followed with idea spurring questions. S - Substitute, C - Combine, A - Adapt, M - Magnify, P - Put to other uses, E - Eliminate (or Minify), R - Rearrange (or reverse).

To use SCAMPER, first identify the challenge, problem, or idea that you want to develop. For example, think about a product, service or process you want to improve. Next, you will ask questions using the SCAMPER checklist to guide you. If referrals are a way that you generate new business, you might ask, "How can I increase the number of referrals to my business?"

- S (Substitute)** - What can I substitute in my referral approach?
- C (Combine)** - How can I combine getting referrals with another activity?
- A (Adapt)** - How can I adapt, modify or copy someone else's referral process?
- M (Magnify)** - What can I magnify or put more emphasis on when asking for referrals?
- P (Put others to use)** - How can I put referrals to other uses?
- E (Eliminate)** - What can I eliminate or simplify in the referral process?
- R (Rearrange)** - How can I change, reorder or reverse the referral process?

Remember that this is a creativity exercise to help ignite new ideas and a proactive approach. In that case, if you can't think of anything in response to the SCAMPER question, force a response, no matter how ridiculous it may seem. Then think of ways to make the non-logical response to work. The purpose is not to judge or critique your responses, but to allow as many outcomes as possible to emerge.

In the referral example, here are some of the possible outcomes using SCAMPER.

- S** - Instead of asking for referrals in an e-mail or letter, call a client or source to ask for the referral.
- C** - During the sales call, ask the prospect for possible referral sources.
- A** - Ask a successful noncompetitive colleague to share their methods of getting referrals and adapt your process to their model.
- M** - When asking for referrals, emphasize benefits and results.
- P** - Before asking for a referral, give a referral to a potential customer.
- E** - Make a list of five potential referral sources to approach per week.
- R** - Ask for referrals while working with the client and not wait until the end of the engagement.

Once you have the creative process going with as many ideas as possible, then you can look at your list of options and decide steps to implement the best solutions. Don't be afraid to ask for the help of a facilitator who can guide this process.

Use this method to stimulate brainstorming activities to find innovative solutions to problems and processes. Spark your creativity by not limiting the possibilities or judging the new approaches you may discover. It's time to generate new ideas and ignite your competitive edge. How can you use SCAMPER to make a difference in your business? **W**

For additional resources on using SCAMPER, visit:
<http://bit.ly/scampermindtools>
<http://bit.ly/scamperitemind>



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