

# The Perfect Brainstorm

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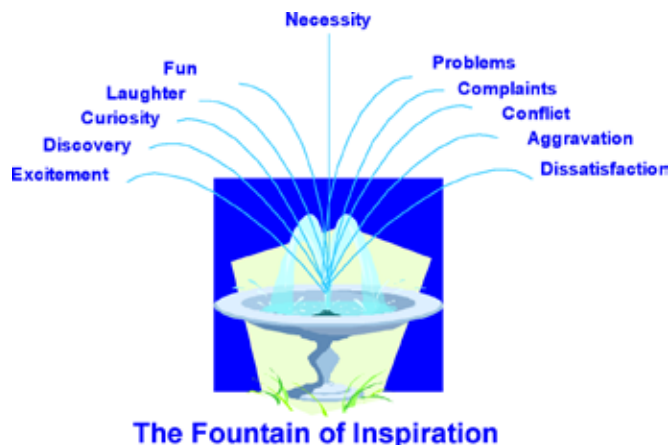
The Perfect Storm takes place when all the right conditions for a devastating mega-storm come together at the same time in the same place.

*The Perfect Brainstorm takes place when a leader brings together all the right conditions for creating a highly successful mega-innovation at the right time in the right place.*

Before you even begin to look for the perfect innovation, you need to have an idea of what it should do. You need to think about what customers like and dislike, what would bring delight, and what might be inconvenient. Knowing what customers would like, want, need, aspire to, and would be willing to pay for, is the key to targeted innovation.

## The Fountain of Inspiration

The following illustration of The Fountain of Inspiration focuses on customer, end-user, sources of pleasure and pain. Necessity, at the top of the illustration, is almost in a category by itself. Often more pain than pleasure, it nevertheless is one of the greatest sources of innovation. *Nothing generates more pressure to create new solutions and develop wonderful innovations and inventions than necessity; that's why they say, "Necessity is the mother of invention."* So, the first question we must ask regarding innovation is, "Who needs it, and why do they need it?" If we can't answer that, we're off to a bad start.



## Know the pleasure and the pain.

A successful innovation makes life better in ways that customers (and/or end users) appreciate and reward. It has both a practical and an emotional impact. In the end, however, it is what the customer feels about the innovation rather than what it may actually do that counts.

That said, it makes sense to find out how customers feel about the product, service, experience, process, and the supplier (presumably, you). So, how do you find that out?

You could ask customers directly through surveys, interviews, and focus panels what they feel, and what they would like. That is a common approach, but, unfortunately, customers often don't relate so much to the product, service, etc. as they do to the experience they have with it. The problem is that most of the time they can't describe their feelings and their wishes.

You may ask, "If those don't work, what does?" How about walking in the customer's shoes?

When you live the experience, you know the pleasure and the pain.

## The Pain

Let's start with the pain. You need to discover if it (the product/service, etc.):

- Wastes too much time
- Requires too much study
- Is too hard to work
- Is too boring
- Costs too much
- Is too complex
- Is just plain tiring

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- Is too dry
- Is monotonous
- Is ponderous
- Is too one-sided
- Is too narrow
- Is confusing
- Requires too much maintenance
- Just isn't good enough

Now, go back over the list and in the column to the right write down a specific suggested solution without using the same words that are in the left column.

### The Pleasures

Let's move on to the pleasures.

- Speed. How can we make it faster?
- Versatility. Can it do more than one thing?
- Learning. Can we make it easier to use?
- Enjoyment. How can we make it more fun?
- Discovery. What other things will it help us discover?
- Applicable. Can it meet our needs and can we make it work?
- Valuable. How can we increase the benefits to the customer?
- Productive. How can we get more out of it?
- Portable. Will customers want it to be mobile?
- Shareable. Can it be used by others?
- Saleable. How can we make it more attractive to customers?
- Memorable. How can we make the experi-

ence unforgettable?

- Understandable. Will customers see its value?
- Simple. How can we reduce it to the most elemental level?

### What will it change?

Further, will it eliminate or reduce problems, time, effort, cost, and tasks?

- What can we eliminate?
- What can we simplify?
- What can we combine?
- What can we reduce?
- What can we make less costly?
- What can we improve?
- What can we add?
- If we had a magic wand, what would we change?
- What would make us smile?
- What would make it exciting?
- What would make us want to share the experience?

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