

Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers

By Dave Gray, Sunni Brown, James Macanufo

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Great things don't happen in a vacuum. But creating an environment for creative thinking and innovation can be a daunting challenge. How can you make it happen at your company? The answer may surprise you: gamestorming.

This book includes more than 80 games to help you break down barriers, communicate better, and generate new ideas, insights, and strategies. The authors have identified tools and techniques from some of the world's most innovative professionals, whose teams collaborate and make great things happen. This book is the result: a unique collection of games that encourage engagement and creativity while bringing more structure and clarity to the workplace. Find out why -- and how -- with *Gamestorming*.

- Overcome conflict and increase engagement with team-oriented games
- Improve collaboration and communication in cross-disciplinary teams with visual-thinking techniques
- Improve understanding by role-playing customer and user experiences
- Generate better ideas and more of them, faster than ever before
- Shorten meetings and make them more productive
- Simulate and explore complex systems, interactions, and dynamics
- Identify a problem's root cause, and find the paths that point toward a solution

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Play a Game from *Gamestorming*

We're hardwired to play games. We play them for fun. We play them in our social interactions. We play them at work. That last one is tricky. "Games" and "work" don't seem like a natural pairing. Their coupling in the workplace either implies goofing off (the fun variant) or office politics (the not-so-fun type).

The authors of *Gamestorming*, have a different perspective. They contend that an embrace and understanding of game mechanics can yield benefits in many work environments, particularly those where old hierarchical models are no longer applicable, like the creatively driven knowledge work of today’s cutting edge industries.

Here is one of the 83 games featured in *Gamestorming*:

The ELEVATOR PITCH Game

OBJECTIVE OF PLAY: What has been a time-proven exercise in product development applies equally well in developing any new idea: writing the elevator pitch. When developing and communicating a vision for something, whether it’s a new service, a company-wide initiative, or just a good idea that merits spreading, a group will benefit from going through the exercise of writing their elevator pitch.

Often this is the hardest thing to do in developing a new idea. An elevator pitch must be short enough to deliver in a fictional elevator ride but also contain a compelling description of the problem you’re solving, who you’ll solve it for, and one key benefit that distinguishes it from other ideas.

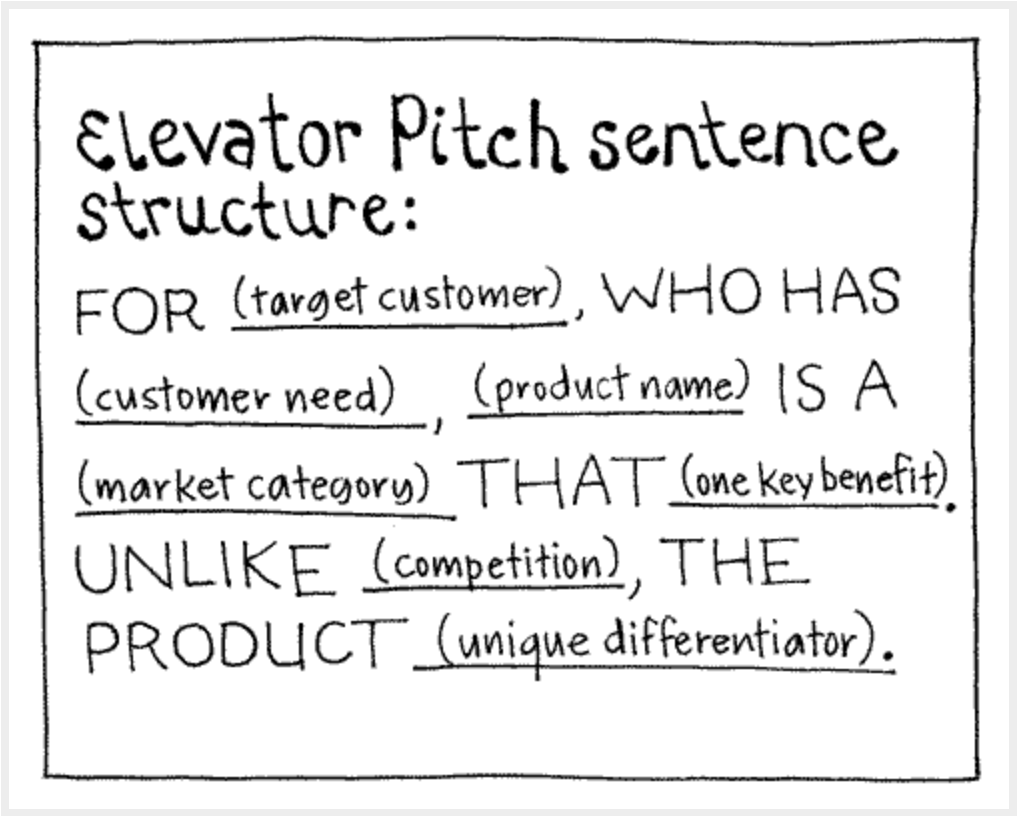
NUMBER OF PLAYERS: Can be done individually, or with a small working group

DURATION OF PLAY: Save at least 90 minutes for the entire exercise, and consider a short break after the initial idea generation is complete before prioritizing and shaping the pitch itself. Small working groups will have an easier time coming to a final pitch; in some cases it may be necessary to assign one person with follow-up accountability for the final wording after the large decisions have been made in the exercise.

HOW TO PLAY: Going through the exercise involves both a generating and a formative phase. To set up the generating phase, write these headers in sequence on flip charts:

- Who is the target customer?
- What is the customer need?
- What is the product name?
- What is its market category?
- What is its key benefit?
- Who or what is the competition?
- What is the product’s unique differentiator?

These will become the elements of the elevator pitch. They are in a sequence that adheres to the following formula.

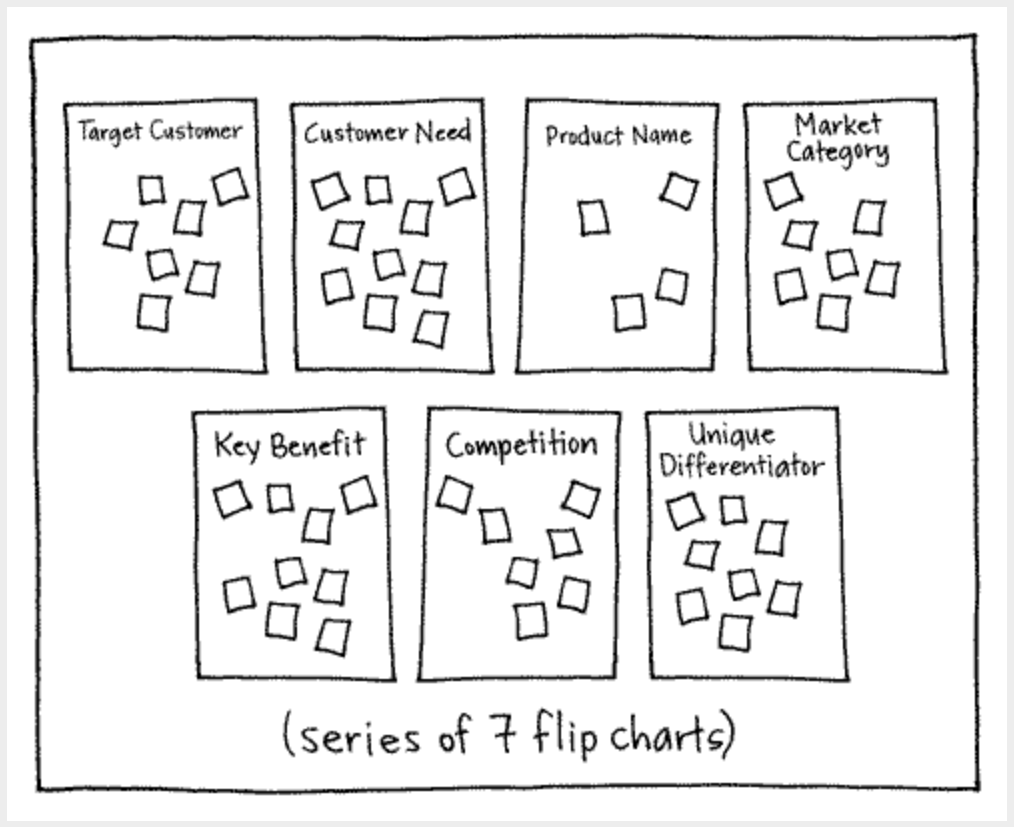


To finish the setup, explain the elements and their connection to each other:

- The target customer and customer need are deceptively simple: any relatively good idea or product will likely have many potential customers and address a greater number of needs. In the generative phase, all of these are welcome ideas.
- It is helpful to fix the product name in advance--this will help contain the scope of the conversation and focus the participants on “what” the pitch is about. It is not outside the realm of possibility, however, that useful ideas will be generated in the course of the exercise that relate to the product name, so it may be left open to interpretation.
- The market category should be an easily understood description of the type of idea or product. It may sound like “employee portal” or “training program” or “peer-to-peer community.” The category gives an important frame of reference for the target customer, from which they will base comparisons and perceive value.
- The key benefit will be one of the hardest areas for the group to shape in the final pitch. This is the single most compelling reason a target customer would buy into the idea. In an elevator pitch, there is no time to confuse the matter with multiple benefits--there can be only one memorable reason “why to buy.” However, in the generative phase, all ideas are welcome.
- The competition and unique differentiator put the final punctuation on the pitch. Who or what will the target customer compare this idea to, and what’s unique about this idea? In some cases, the competition may literally be another firm or product. In other cases, it may be “the existing training program” or “the last time we tried a big change initiative.” The unique differentiator should be just that: unique to this idea or approach, in a way that distinguishes it in comparison to the competition.

The Generating Phase

Once the elements are understood, participants brainstorm ideas on sticky notes that fit under each header. At first, they should generate freely, without discussion or analysis, any ideas that fit into any of the categories. Using the Post-Up technique, participants put their notes onto the flip charts and share their ideas.



Next, the group may discuss areas where they have the most trouble on their current pitch. Do we know enough about the competition to claim a unique differentiator? Do we agree on a target customer? Is our market category defined, or are we trying to define something new? Where do we need to focus?

Before stepping into the formative phase, the group may use dot voting, affinity mapping, or another method to prioritize and cull their ideas in each category.

The Formative Phase

Following a discussion and reflection on the possible elements of a pitch, the group then has the task of "trying out" some possibilities. This may be done by breaking into small groups, as pairs, or as individuals, depending on the size of the larger group. Each group is given the task of writing an elevator pitch, based on the ideas on the flip charts.

After a set amount of time (15 minutes may be sufficient), the groups reconvene and present their draft versions of the pitch. The group may choose to role-play as a target customer while listening to the pitch, and comment or ask questions of the presenters.

The exercise is complete when there is a strong direction among the group on what the pitch should and should not contain. One potential outcome is the crafting of distinct pitches for different target customers; you may direct the group to focus on this during the formative stage.

STRATEGY

Don't aim for final wording with a large group. It's an achievement if you can get to that level of completion, but it's not critical and can be shaped after the exercise. What is important is that the group decides what is and is not a part of the pitch.

Role play is the fastest way to test a pitch. Assuming the role of a customer (or getting some real customers to participate in the exercise) will help filter out the jargon and empty terms that may interfere with a clear

pitch. If the pitch is truly believable and compelling, participants should have no problem making it real with customers.

The elevator pitch, or elevator speech, is a traditional staple of the venture capital community, based on the idea that if you are pitching a business idea it should be simple enough to convey on a short elevator ride.

About the Author

Dave Gray is the Founder and Chairman of XPLANE, the visual thinking company. Founded in 1993, XPLANE has grown to be the world's leading consulting and design firm focused on information-driven communications. Dave's time is spent researching and writing on visual business, as well as speaking, coaching and delivering workshops to educators, corporate clients and the public. He is also a founding member of VizThink, an international community of Visual Thinkers.
Sunni Brown, M.P.A., is Owner of BrightSpot Info Design, a company specializing in visual thinking to support organizational and group success. Sunni was trained in graphic facilitation at The Grove Consultants International, a San Francisco-based company that pioneered the use of visuals in meetings and group processes. She is currently an Associate of The Grove, a freelance consultant for XPlane - the visual thinking company - and an Associate of Alphachimp Studios. She is also co-Founder of VizThink Austin, currently the largest visual thinking community in the United States. Sunni presents regularly on the topics of graphic facilitation, graphic recording and visual thinking. She is also a contributing researcher for Nancy Duarte's upcoming book on storytelling and presentations. Sunni holds Bachelor's degrees in Journalism and Linguistics and a Master's in Public Affairs from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs. She lives in Austin, TX.
James Macanufo: As a consultant at XPLANE, James helps large technology and government clients develop their vision, strategy and communication plans. He is actively obsessed with understanding what things are, the way they work, and why they matter. He is also an occasional inventor of card games.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kina Chatman:

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James Haney:

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you could have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition associated with. Even you love Gamestorming: A

Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers, you may enjoy both. It is excellent combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its referred to as reading friends.

Kathe Waller:

In this period globalization it is important to someone to get information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The health of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of personal references to get information example: internet, newspapers, book, and soon. You can observe that now, a lot of publisher that print many kinds of book. The book that recommended to you is Gamestorming: A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers this e-book consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This particular book was represented how can the world has grown up. The vocabulary styles that writer value to explain it is easy to understand. The particular writer made some exploration when he makes this book. That's why this book suitable all of you.

Jacqueline Thompson:

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