



**Get Smart**

# The People Part of Ideation

AN INTRODUCTION TO QUARTET

White Paper



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RESEARCH WITH A POINT OF VIEW

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When it comes to ideation, the stakes are high to develop quality ideas that can lead to profitable innovation. But, as with any creative process, things can quickly become disorganized and unproductive if proper steps are not taken. Managing engagement and the quality of contributions is a critical success factor for ideation. There are two key tools to achieve this: a highly skilled facilitator and a plan for leveraging the natural skills and abilities of each person in the assignment.

Our Quartet method of ideation draws from the principles of Jungian psychology as expressed in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®). Our methodology derives from a deep understanding of four innovation archetypes and the way each archetype contributes to the ideation process: the Implementers, the Storytellers, the Creatives, and the Problem Solvers.



Research and experience show that the Creatives and the Problem Solvers are best equipped to generate innovative ideas and solutions critical to ideation success. These two archetypes are also in the shortest supply, making up only a quarter of the adult population. Furthermore, it's not always practical to limit participation to those who are only the "ideal archetype."

Fortunately, the Quartet process solves these issues. Our approach involves **all four archetypes** in ideation, and it creates the right circumstances for every participant to express creativity and generate ideas.

The Quartet approach begins by archotyping each participant on the ideation team. The goal is to harness each person's natural gifts and tailor each session to maximize the outcomes based on those involved.

We've also found that profiling and explaining how each person can contribute to ideation yields multiple benefits:

1. It keeps counterproductive behaviors in check.
2. It reassures everyone that they will have something to contribute.
3. It empowers people to use their natural gifts and abilities.

The challenge in orchestrating this kind of ideation session is that each archetype demonstrates a competing set of needs and abilities in a group setting. For example:

- One of the most counterproductive behaviors we see in ideation is certain archetypes "shutting down" during typical ideation. Storytellers will not engage fully in the process unless they immediately see the "human side" of the exercise: how it will help others, what their problems might be, and why they themselves are essential to the process.
- By the same token (and somewhat ironically), because Creatives are often quietly processing during a noisy ideation, sometimes their voices don't get heard! We make sure to engage them throughout the group's work to maximize the value of their input

- Implementers are highly sensory people, and they are grounded in their immediate sensory input. They often have a tough time disengaging from current reality to imagine something they cannot see, hear, smell, or feel. They are most likely to see the reasons why something won't work and voicing those concerns can dampen the creative process. By keeping their impulses in check and refocusing them on task completion, their overall experience and input improve.
- Finally, the Problem Solver's natural critical bent must also be kept in check, focused on possibilities rather than on potential fallbacks in seeking a solution too quickly.

Quartet's 4-step framework systematically addresses the needs and gifts of each archetype in a manner that optimizes each archetype's input and engagement to maximize the collective output of breakthrough ideas.

The four-steps of Quartet's sequence--**Empathize, Generate, Catalogue, and Solve**—ignite the four archetypes in the following order: Storyteller, Creative, Implementer, and Problem Solver.

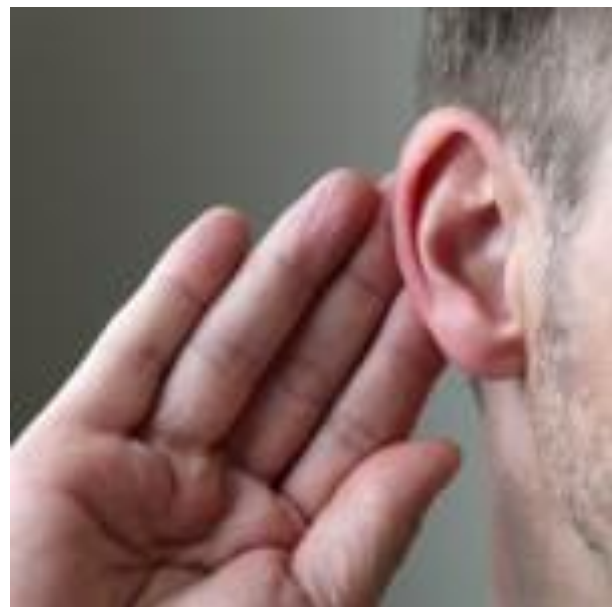
Within each step, both divergent and convergent exercises are utilized to mirror the necessary and natural balance between open-ended thinking and analysis.

Once participants arrive, and before we begin the first step of the Quartet sequence, we provide an overview of the Quartet model, briefly discuss the four archetypes, and explain in general the roles each archetype has throughout the ideation process. Some archetypes find ideation uncomfortable, and we take this opportunity to explain why this might be so. We also assign familiar roles for each archetype so that they feel part of the process from the beginning, and we discuss general expectations for participants, thereby alleviating the pressure some may feel to “perform” in ways unfamiliar to them.

After this overview, the Quartet sequence works as follows:

## Empathize

We purposefully engage the Storytellers first since they can help build momentum for the entire session by focusing on the human side of the ideation. This archetype is hard-wired to focus on emotion and empathy – necessary components for developing meaningful innovation. The empathy transfer at the beginning of ideation is essential to their successful participation. The Empathize step opens the ideation process with a structured overview of the key insights, beliefs, and conditions that frame up the problem or opportunity. After breakout groups discuss the benefits an innovation can bring to the end user (diverge), high-level benefits are reported back to the larger group to be organized (converge). We then ask Storytellers to take on the role as “voices of the end user” throughout the entire sequence, keeping them and the entire team anchored in the human purpose of the ideation.



## Generate

At the Generate phase, we push teams to produce novel ideas based on the high-level benefits generated in the first step. Advance identification of archetypes ensures that we identify the Creatives in the room so that we can cultivate their contributions throughout this process. Creatives are just that – highly creative. By this phase, Creatives have likely already begun to think of possibilities without prompting, and we use several activities specifically designed to engage others in accessing their own creative energy as well. Teams may go through several rounds of idea generation (diverge), pausing between rounds to briefly take stock of what has been generated thus far (converge) before pushing on to another round of divergent thinking.

## Catalogue

Led by Implementers, who naturally group ideas by their purpose or goal, participants pause during the Catalogue step to organize ideas into logical buckets (converge). We then follow the cataloguing of ideas with an open discussion of those ideas most likely to succeed (diverge). There are several tools at our disposal to aid this process.



## Solve

The Solve step is the point during the ideation session at which participants move from idea capture to concept generation. Breakout groups generate preliminary concepts (diverge). Then they report back their first pass ideas for group discussion (converge), repeating the process as time allows. Problem Solvers, with their natural gift for conceptual thinking, shine during this phase of ideation, and we try to ensure each breakout group has at least one Problem Solver. If the facilitator thinks additional ideas can be generated, the 4-step process can be repeated.

## Achieving a Successful Outcome

Done right, the Quartet framework can result in many ideas (50-100 is common) and a handful of solid preliminary concepts (10-25). Yet we also know that without proper guardrails in place, the ideation process can “go into left field” quickly.

The Quartet process addresses this challenge directly: first, by initially defining a set of insights and opportunity areas as the basis for the session; second, by consistently balancing the divergent, creative nature of the process with a convergent, analytical element; and third, by making sure that the session concludes by honing preliminary ideas and groups of possibilities into firmer concepts.

From beginning to end, [Quartet](#) is a highly effective alternative to the traditional ideation sessions. We have several case studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach. By using the right people and the right process, we can ensure that your ideation team will perform at maximum potential. For more information about best practices in ideation, we recommend our [white paper: Ideation Done Right](#).



# About TeamBuilder

[TeamBuilder](#) is a proprietary tool used to categorize ideation participants within the four innovation archetypes based on how they receive and process information. Each archetype has specific needs to function well within a group setting and excels at different tasks. Knowing the innovation archetype for each participant gives us additional insight on how to better manage the activities in the ideation session.

The assessment can be completed online in less than 10 minutes. Each person privately receives an archetype classification and a profile identifying his or her primary strengths and preferences. In many respects, this opportunity for self-discovery is an effective way to encourage the most productive behaviors and thought processes for ideation.



- Does your organization need a responsive helping hand when conducting do-it-yourself research? Our consultants are available to assist with problem definition, project scoping, reviewing discussion guides, reviewing questionnaires, interview coaching, and more. This is the best way to offer your team the training and support they need to elevate customer understanding across the organization. Blocks of time can be booked according to your needs. [Contact us](#) for more details.
- Check out our [event schedule](#) for upcoming workshops.



You can [Kickstart](#) the concept development process with a workshop focused on your own specific goals. It is an excellent way to align the cross-functional team, enhance skills, roll up internal ideas, and identify gaps in your knowledge.

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