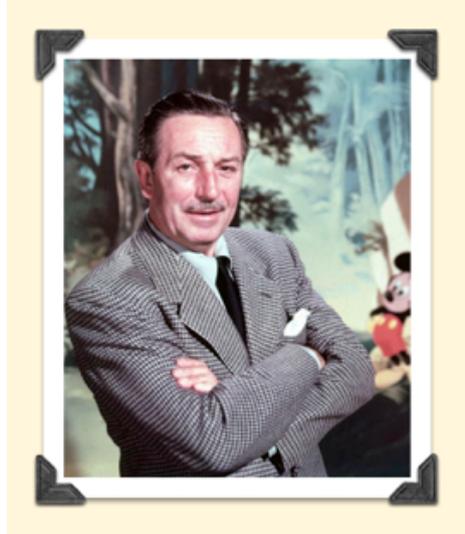


Disney Brainstorming Method: Dreamer, Realist, and Spoiler

Crafted by paul on 7 January 2009



It is said, that film producer and innovator, Walt Disney used to think-up and refine ideas by breaking the process into three distinct chunks. The dreamer, the realist, and the spoiler (or critic).

The Dreamer

This stage was for fantasizing. Creating the most fantastic and absurd ideas as possible. No filter. Just wonderful, raw ideas. This stage was about "why not?"

The Realist

As the Realist, the Dreamer ideas would be re-examined, and re-worked into something more practical. It wasn't about the reasons it could not be achieved, but only about it could be done. This stage is about "how?"

The Spoiler

The third stage he would become the critic... shooting holes in the ideas he had come up with.

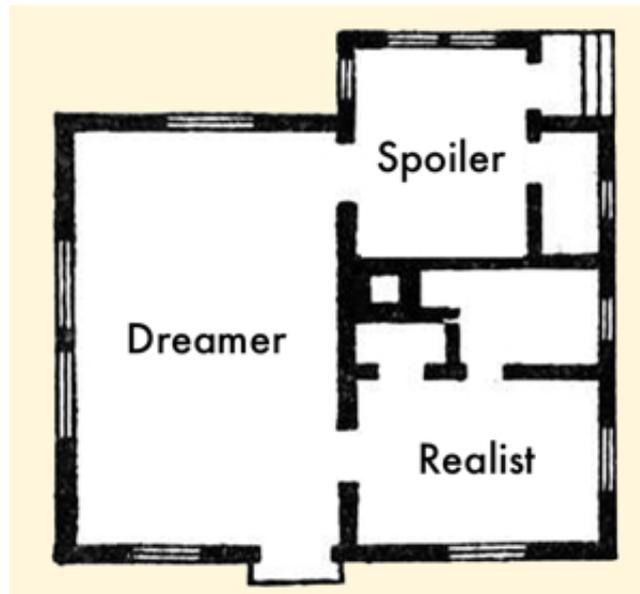
It is said, the ideas that survived this process were the ones Walt would work on.

By compartmentalizing the stages, Walt didn't let reality get in the way of the dream step. The realist was allowed to work without the harsh filter of a spoiler. And, the spoiler spends time examining a well-thought idea... something with a bit more structure.

When we brainstorm alone and in groups - too often - we tend to fill the room with a dreamer or two, a few realists, and a bunch of spoilers. In these conditions dream ideas don't stand a chance.

Different Rooms for Different Stages

There is additional information that Walt went further, moving from one room to another as he shifted thinking. Using spaces specifically for each stage.



Imagine how powerful it would be if...

Conference Room A in your office could ONLY be used for dreaming? For coming up with the broadest ideas possible. No filtering. No realist or spoiler.

Conference Room B was ONLY for the Realist. Only finding ways to convert dreams to reality.

And, Conference Room C... for the spoiler and critic to help find any additional weak spots to be fixed before an idea goes live.

So many more ideas would get the chance to be refined and further examined for merit.

The risk? A few additional ideas that end up as bad ideas have a chance to be re-examined. The benefit... a few additional ideas that would have been tossed out as losers, are re-examined and end up as winners.

Try these three different roles next time you're drumming up new ideas. Do your best to ONLY be in one frame of mind at a time. Ease the mind of your spoilers that they'll have their chance with their chainsaws soon enough... If your team lacks the discipline to focus on only one stage

at a time... break it up into different room.

Let us know how it works for you!

Thanks to [Michael Michalko](#) (author of "[Thinkertoys](#)" and "[Cracking Creativity](#)") for sparking this topic.

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