THE CASUAL CONSTRAINT CONTEST

The combination of team work, competition, and restrictions has a proven track record of being the winning mix to conjure up surprising ideas. That's why I developed the creative game 'The Casual Constraint Contest'.

The constraints in this game are of a miscellaneous nature and will present themselves very rarely. And that's exactly the point; in real life chances are small these restrictions will come your way and thus will force you to find creative solutions you would have never thought of before. The fact that it's a team process only intensifies your engagement and the urge to come up with surprising ideas, whereas the competition factor adds rhythm and fun to the game.

What you need is:
- a challenge (for instance: how can we improve our product or service? / how do we create a unique brand for our organization? / …)
- a team of at least 6 people
- the tools that come with this game, downlaoadable at www.whentheboxisthelimit.com/casualconstraintcontest
- preferably at least 1 to 1,5 hours of time
- a clear, unstressed, and open mindset of each team member

You can play the game independently from any other creativity stimulating technique, or you can make it part of a brainstorm session and add it as a technique in the divergent phase of your process. As the ideas coming out of The Casual Constraint Contest might be quite revolutionary, I recommend the latter so as to have a proper balance between incremental and disruptive ideas.

How it works:

STEP 1

- *Print the tools you downloaded previously, preferably on paper of at least 170 gr/m².*

- *Let the participants sit around a table. Preferably at least 6 people and when there are more, preferably a multiple of three (9, 12, 15, …).*

- *Cut the constraint cards (What If Cards.pdf), shuffle them and put them in the middle of the table, blank side up.**

- *Cut the sheet with the yellow, red and blue pawn cards (What if Colors.pdf) and let each participant pick one card blindly.* Ideally, the number of colors are equally distributed among the participants (that's why we need a multiple of three participants).*

- *Cut and assemble the color die (What If Dice.pdf).**

- *Provide pens and post-its. Foresee timers (for instance on a smartphone) for half of the total number of participants.*

STEP 2

- *Discuss the central question or challenge and ensure that everyone understands it clearly. Write the question on the heading of a flipchart and keep it visible during the entire process.*

STEP 3

- *Now we form teams of two participants each. Therefore, we roll the die.*

* You can also play with real pawns and a real color die if you prefer. You can order them from the website: www.whentheboxisthelimit.com

- Depending on the color thrown with the die, the teams will be formed:

  ORANGE
  - *Team(s) of yellow and red*
  - *Team(s) of blue and blue*

  GREEN
  - *Team(s) of yellow and blue*
  - *Team(s) of red and red*

  PURPLE
  - *Team(s) of blue and red*
  - *Team(s) of yellow and yellow*

  YELLOW, RED or BLUE
  - *Team(s) of yellow and yellow*
  - *Team(s) of red and red*
  - *Team(s) of blue and blue*

STEP 4

- *The purpose of the game is to come up with as many ideas as possible. Per idea, the team gets 1 point.*

- *Each team picks 3 constraint cards from the stack and checks the 'What if' question that is written on each card. Don't start conjuring up ideas yet., wait until the timer is set and starts running.*

- *Each team now gets a maximum of 10 minutes to come up with creative ideas to solve the central question or challenge (written on the flipchart) taking into account each 'What if' question on the constraint cards. Do not combine the three constraints, as it will be too difficult or may even be contradictory. Just treat them separately.*

- *Note that for each separate constraint, the team needs to come up with at least 3 valuable ideas. If not, they will lose 10 points. If the team thinks that they won't be able to think up at least 3 ideas for one or more of the constraint cards, they can put that card back and replace it with a new one from the pile. In that case, they lose 1 minute of time per card. So, for instance, if you replace 2 cards, you get only 8 minutes to come up with creative ideas.*

- *Set the timer to the right number of minutes for each team to start conjuring up ideas. Each idea is written separately on a post-it.*

STEP 5

- *When game time is over for everyone, each team sticks their ideas accompanied by a quick explanation on the flipchart.*

- *The number of ideas is counted, and the points (1 point per idea) are awarded per team. Again: fewer than 3 ideas per constraint card means -10 points.*

- *The points are then divided 50/50 among the two team members.*

- *Now you can start again: new teams are formed, and new constraint cards are drawn. So, back to STEP 3. It is best that you decide in advance how many rounds you want to play. Usually, three rounds are recommended.*

STEP 6

- *After the game is played, each participant shows how many points they have collected. The participant with the highest number of points has won.*

- *The group now decides how many ideas they want to develop into a concept. Ideas can be selected by sticking stickers on the preferred ideas (and the most 'stickered' idea(s) will be developed), or the group can decide to form (small) teams again, with each team picking one idea that they want to work on.*