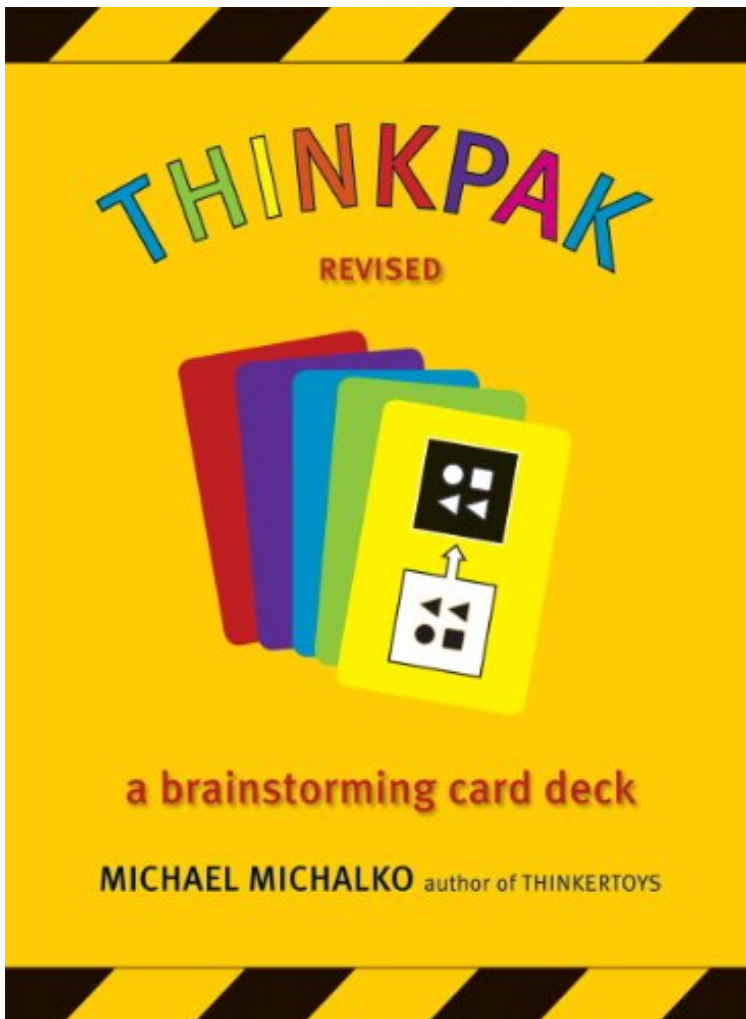


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Thinkpak: A Brainstorming Card Deck



Par Michael Michalko
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurLooking for a unique invention, an untapped market for an existing product, or a new solution? Stretch and flex your mental muscles with Thinkpak, a creative-thinking tool designed by Michael Michalko, author of the groundbreaking book Thinkertoys. This deck of illustrated idea-stimulating cards distills Michalkos proven methods, allowing you to view challenges in a new light. Shuffle, mix, and match the cards to spark fresh insights, then use the critical evaluation techniques to test, shape, and refine your original ideas into realistic creations. Filled with thought-provoking questions and examples of the techniques put to use, Thinkpak provides endless creative fuel to fire up the imagination.ExtraitWhat Is Thinkpak?Thinkpak is a brainstorming tool. It is designed to break you out of your habitual way of thinking and produce a wide variety of fresh thoughts that will lead to new insights, original ideas, and creative solutions to problems. It will change the way you think.SCAMPEREverything new is really just an addition to or modification of something that already exists. Whenever you want to create a new idea, product, service, process, breakthrough, or whatever you need, Thinkpak will help you take your subject and change

it into something else. Alex Osborn, a pioneer teacher of creativity, first identified the nine principle ways of manipulating a subject. They were later arranged by Bob Eberle into the mnemonic SCAMPER: Substitute something. Combine it with something else. Adapt something to it. Modify or Magnify it. Put it to some other use. Eliminate something. Reverse or Rearrange it. Suppose you wanted to improve the ordinary metal paper clip. You could substitute plastic for metal and add color, creating plastic clips that would allow clipped papers to be color-coded, thereby putting the clips to another use. Thinkpak contains idea-triggering questions based on these nine principles. The questions are designed to focus your attention on your subject in different ways and give you different means of interpreting what you are focusing on. These different ways of focusing will break your habitual thought patterns and let you look at your subject in fresh ways. You'll generate a quantity of ideas quickly, including ideas that you wouldn't have otherwise considered.

Once you apply the Thinkpak questions to your subject or situation, ideas begin to appear almost involuntarily. Applying SCAMPER to a Hamburger

Ray Kroc was a middle-class high-school dropout, a former piano player, and a real-estate salesman who sold paper cups for seventeen years. In his fifties, Ray Kroc left the paper cup business and hit the road selling a little machine called the Multimixer, which could make six milkshakes at a time. One day in 1954, a hamburger stand in California ordered eight Multimixers. Curious, Kroc drove his dusty little car out to investigate. He was stunned by the volume of business that Dick and Maurice McDonald were doing. They had unwittingly hit on the concept of fast food--homogenized, predictable items that are quick and easy to prepare. The McDonalds had simplified, economized, and minimized the hamburger stand. Kroc and the McDonalds formed a partnership that allowed Kroc to find new sites, and open and run them. What followed was not instant success but obstacles and challenges. Ray Kroc became a billionaire because he identified the right challenges and manipulated existing information into new ideas to solve them. Following are some of the challenges he faced and how the SCAMPER principles helped to shape his ideas.

Substitute Problem: The McDonalds proved to be lethargic business partners. Kroc was worried that they might sell out to someone who didn't want him around. **SCAMPER Solution:** Substitute a different partner. Kroc was cash poor, but he was determined to buy out the McDonalds. Kroc raised the \$2.7 million asking price from John Bristol, a venture capitalist whose clients (college endowment funds) realized a \$14-million return on their investment. The next substitution was to go public, which he did in 1963, making many investors rich.

Combine Problem: Ray Kroc's first hamburger stand was planned for Des Plaines, Illinois, but he couldn't afford to finance construction. **SCAMPER Solution:** Combine purposes with someone else. He sold the construction company half-ownership in return for constructing his first building.

Adapt Problem: Ray Kroc was interested in developing a new twist on the food business, but he lacked ideas. **SCAMPER Solution:** Adapt someone else's idea. Kroc was amazed at the volume of business the McDonalds were doing by selling a hamburger in a paper bag here, or a helping of french fries there. Kroc's big idea was adapting the McDonalds simple merchandising methods to create a brand new concept--fast food.

Modify Problem: The french fries made in Kroc's first stand in Illinois didn't taste like the originals; they were tasteless and mushy. He tried the McDonalds recipe again and again, to no avail. A friend finally solved the mystery--Kroc stored his potatoes in the basement, while the McDonalds kept theirs outside in chicken-wire bins, exposed to desert winds that cured the potatoes. **SCAMPER Solution:** Modify the storage area. Kroc cured the potatoes by installing large electric fans in the basement.

Magnify Problem: A number of franchise owners wanted to expand the basic menu. **SCAMPER Solution:** Magnify the burger and add new items to the menu. He created the popular Big Mac by way of a \$10 million Build a Big Mac contest. Later additions included the Egg McMuffin, Filet-o-Fish, and Chicken McNuggets.

Put to Other Uses Problem: Kroc needed to develop other sources of income. **SCAMPER Solution:** Put McDonalds to use in the real estate business. Kroc's company would lease and develop a site, then re-lease it to the franchisee, who would have to pay rent as well as franchise fees. Today, 10 percent of the company's revenue comes from rentals. In the 1960s, Kroc also bought back as many of the original sites as he could. While this policy initially accrued huge debts, it gave McDonalds the upper hand against competitors, who periodically faced massive rent hikes.

Eliminate or Minify Problem: Hamburger patty distributors packed their burgers in a way that was efficient for them, but that also meant McDonalds employees had to restack them to keep the bottom patties from getting crushed. **SCAMPER Solution:** Eliminate the problem. Kroc refused to do business with packagers unless they shipped fewer burgers in each stack. Employees no longer had to restack burgers, saving McDonalds time and money. He also eliminated the middleman by buying entire crops of Idaho Russet Burbank potatoes.

Rearrange Problem: Kroc wanted to differentiate his establishments from the competition. **SCAMPER Solution:** Rearrange the

architecture. Kroc kept changing the original red-and-white, box-shaped prototype into the Golden Arches and added drive-throughs in the 1970s. Asking SCAMPER Questions Even the hot dog, as we know it, is the result of asking the right question at the right time. In 1904, Antoine Feutchwanger was selling sausages at the Louisiana Exposition. First he tried offering them on individual plates, but this proved too expensive. He then offered his customers white cotton gloves to keep the franks from burning their fingers. The gloves were expensive, too, and customers tended to walk off with them. Antoine and his brother-in-law, a baker, sat down to figure out what inexpensive item could be added (modify) to the frankfurter to prevent people from burning their fingers. His brother-in-law said something like What if I baked a long bun and slit it to hold the frank? Then you can sell the franks, and I can sell you the buns. Who knows, it might catch on. Every new subject or idea produces a host of creative by-products, initially seen many times as irrelevant, but available for fashioning in novel new directions. Think of all the entrepreneurs who visited the McDonalds hamburger stand and did not see the latent potential. The McDonald brothers had unwittingly hit on the concept of fast food, but Ray Kroc took the concept and moved it into a novel new direction. Consider the Walkman radio. Sony engineers tried to design a small, portable stereo tape recorder. They failed. They ended up with a small stereo tape player that couldnt record. They gave up on the project and shelved it. One day Masaru Ibuka, honorary chairman of Sony, discovered this failed product and decided to look for its potential. He remembered an entirely different project at Sony where an engineer was working to develop lightweight portable headphones. What if you combine the headphones with the tape player and eliminate the recorder function altogether? Ibuka was mixing up functions. The idea that tape players also record was so well established that no one had considered reversing it. Even after Ibuka made his creative association, no one at Sony believed they could market it. Ibuka was not discouraged and plowed ahead with what he called a new concept in entertainment. Ibuka took a failed idea and, by combining, eliminating, and reversing, found the latent potential and created a brand new product. The Walkman radio became Sonys leading selling electronic product of all time and introduced all of us to the headphone culture. Ibuka took what existed (a failed product) and recycled it into something new. Similarly, Michelangelos masterpiece, David, was the result of another sculptors failed attempt. Back in 1463, the authorities of the cathedral of Florence acquired a sixteen-foot-high chunk of white marble to be carved into a sculpture. Two well-known sculptors worked on the piece and gave up, and the badly mangled block was put in storage. Other sculptors were brought in and asked to carve a statue. They refused to work with the mangled block and demanded a new block. They said they couldnt possibly produce art out of the mangled block. Their demands were not economically feasible, so the project was scrapped by the cathedral. Forty years later, Michelangelo took the mangled block of marble from storage and carved it into the youthful, courageous David within eighteen months. He took what existed and sculpted it into the worlds greatest statue. You can recycle any subject or idea into something else by transforming it in some fashion using the SCAMPER questions. Isolate the subject you want to think about and ask the questions to see what new ideas and thoughts emerge. The Thinkpak Cards Thinkpak consists of 56 cards: Card 1 is an easy-reference list of the nine principle strategies. Card 2 outlines the basic techniques for using Thinkpak. Cards 3 through 47 are idea stimulators. If you always think the way youve always thought, youll always get what youve always got. These cards are designed to change your thinking habits. You can use them randomly or systematically to stimulate your imagination and generate ideas. Cards 48 through 56 are techniques that help you evaluate your ideas. Random Strategies To stimulate your imagination, pick any subject--from a paper clip to reinventing your life--and ask yourself how it can be changed, improved, or made into something else. Shuffle the idea stimulators (cards 3 through 47), draw a card at random, and try to apply the questions to your subject. If the card is not applicable, keep drawing until you find one that is, but be creative in your interpretation and thoughts. List your ideas as you go, and keep drawing cards until youre satisfied with the ideas youve created. Sometimes, it takes a five-alarm wake-up call to jolt people out of their complacency. The chairperson of a nonprofit board wanted to energize her board members out of their lethargy. At the beginning of a board meeting, she asked the members to imagine that they are fired. Then she asked them to reapply for the board. This shocked the board members and forced them to rethink their knowledge and competencies and, most important, what they need to do to improve. Another technique for stimulating your imagination begins with separating the idea stimulators into nine piles--one for substitute, one for combine, and so on. Shuffle each pile and draw one card from each. Read the cards and discard any that are not applicable to your subject. Focusing on the questions that are left, try to apply your thoughts about these questions to your subject. An engineer was installing a giant generator in an excavated area. This job was

going to be expensive, as it required a huge crane that cost about \$4,500. Wanting to explore alternatives, he drew questions that prompted him to think about how he could eliminate something and adapt something from nature. He got his breakthrough thinking about icebergs. He ordered two truckloads of block ice placed in the excavated area, then pushed the generator on top of the ice. When it melted, his generator was neatly installed at a nominal cost.

Systematic Strategies After isolating the subject or challenge you want to think about, go straight through the idea stimulator sequentially, from card 3 to card 47, one at a time, thinking about the questions on each card. They will make you think up as well as about something. If a question isn't pertinent or doesn't prompt an idea, skip to the next. Spend one or two minutes per card and list your ideas as they occur. When you've gone through the entire deck, review your ideas. Try combining the first two ideas into one. Then take the third and try to integrate it into that new idea, and so on. Finally, select and evaluate your top ideas.

A furniture chain store used this method to brainstorm ideas for expanding its retail traffic. Inspired by the idea stimulators in adapt, magnify, and put to other uses, they came up with the idea of renting Christmas trees. The spirit of Christmas can't be bought, but for \$10 you can rent it, read their ad. For \$20 total--\$10 for the rental plus a \$10 deposit--the store rented you a Douglas fir that would have sold for \$50 or more. After the holidays, when customers returned the trees, the store would mulch them for a customer's garden, or donate the mulch to local parks. Each renter also received a coupon for a free four-year-old blue spruce sapling, available the first week in April. That's selling! Just by being extra nice to its customers, the store made it worth their while to visit not once but three separate times.

What is the essence of the subject? Think about your subject and then determine which principle is appropriate and work with those cards. For example, you could simplify a process by eliminating and substituting to create something different.

Millions of people perish every year because they simply don't have clean water to drink. Systems to clean water are costly and require electricity and spare parts. Many third world countries are unable to afford or access the systems. Danish designer Torben Vestergaard Frandsen worked for years on ways to simplify a water purifier. His goal was to create a purifier that would omit moving parts and eliminate the use of electricity, which does not exist in many areas in the third world. Frandsen realized that you needed some kind of force to implement any kind of water filtering. He chose to work with the simplest force of all--the human ability to create suction, which even babies have--and developed an incredible water-purifying device called the LifeStraw. When a person sucks water throughout the straw, it moves through textile filters and other media in the straws chambers, killing and withholding bacteria, viruses, and parasites, and improving the taste of the water. For the remarkably low price of \$2, the LifeStraw provides the user with clean water for about one year before it has to be replaced.

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