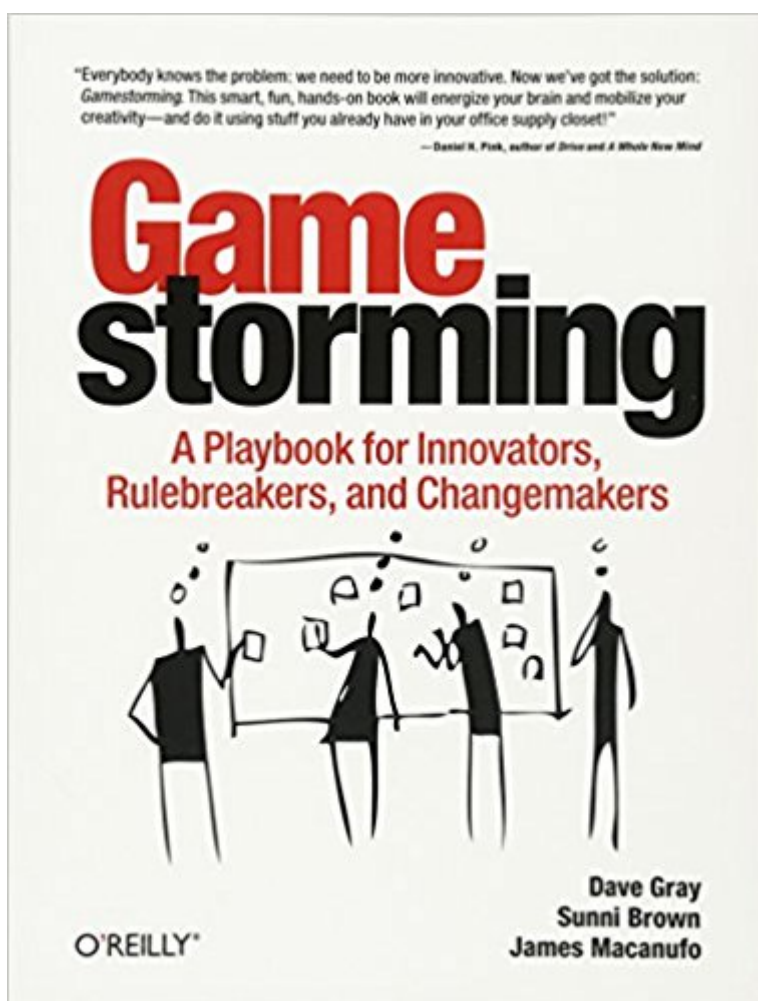


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# Gamestorming: A Playbook For Innovators, Rulebreakers, And Changemakers



## Synopsis

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

## Book Information

Paperback: 290 pages

Publisher: O'Reilly Media; 1 edition (August 2, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0596804172

ISBN-13: 978-0596804176

Product Dimensions: 7 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 140 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #20,678 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in Books > Computers & Technology > Business Technology > Software > Presentation Software #3 in Books > Computers & Technology > Business Technology > Software > Project Management Software #9 in Books > Computers & Technology > Computer Science > Human-Computer Interaction

## Customer Reviews

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.

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 Macanuso: 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.

The book starts with a solid introduction outlining a strong and clear definition of a game as an exploratory space with specific rules and players. It really helps you imagine the rich possibilities in developing helpful games as small journeys to find effective and practical solutions for all kinds of tasks. The examples of games are abundant. However, too many of the examples seem too similar, almost as if they are included to provide a deceptive feeling of abundance. It makes you want to apply Affinity Mapping approach to many of these games to outline the similarities as the core concept for groups of games and just add some notes on possible variations. Overall, it's a helpful handbook with ever-useful practices.

Dave does deserve a lot of credit for compiling the possible management activities into a book, which can act as a ready reckoner for some meeting. While I bought the Kindle edition, but I feel this should be bought as a hard copy and kept in the office for referencing. What I liked was the logical sequencing of the events (with particular focus on opening and closing), the clarity with which the activities were laid out and the checkpoints to decide whether the particular event is suited for a particular outcome. While some of them were familiar, however, there were still some which were quite interesting. I found "The Anti-Problem" activity very interesting and would like to try it out whenever we are stuck in an issue next time. Brainwriting was another interesting activity as it helps to get the view points of all in the room and not just the vociferous ones. Pecha Kucha is also exciting and have already tried it out a couple of times (not knowing that it had a name, just that had a very limited time and had to cover various topics). And I got the first proper reference for an elevator pitch. What didn't work for me was that most of the activities could not be categorized as 'game' by any stretch of logic. e. g. SWOT analysis. And also it would have been more interesting if some real life examples would have been quoted rather than imaginary situations. Each activity could have been a short story, engaging the readers much more. In the current format, it remains a good compilation, but a bit of pain to go through.

Gamestorming was recommended to me and it went beyond my expectations. I used this book to guide a cross-functional product team through a two-day design workshop. We used around 6 different games from the book and they were all received well by the group. Some people even said it was the best multi-day meeting they have ever attended. They really enjoyed the games, Draw the Box and Cover Story. It's always hard to be productive with sales, software development, support teams and other stakeholders in large meetings together. I found the techniques from Gamestorming gave everyone a voice and we were able to dig deeper into topics that would not have been possible with a typical meeting format. I highly recommend this book to anyone leading cross-functional teams.

Pretty straight-forward. Nice extension to "Innovation Gaming" if you ever got into that - more games and applications for them here. Rudimentary coverage of how to apply them, but sufficient to get you going (anymore would probably have been overkill anyway).

In our Management Consulting practice, we frequently have to facilitate meetings with executives,

sales people, call center agents and IT professionals. Using standard Q&A formats as laborious for the attendees, often leaving them open to distractions, and can result in losing focus. The methods outlined in Game Storming are great tools to speed up meetings, keep attendees highly engaged, extract better decisions and clearer requirements. Word of warning - it takes a lot more prep time to pull together meetings like this. Game Storming is not something to pull out the day before a meeting. On the other hand, you will find that your follow-up after the meeting is much more efficient.

There are some really useful ideas in here. I couldn't read it cover to cover....it didn't hold my attention like that...but I was able to pull out bits and pieces and implement those strategies with my team. Worth the read.

Each one of the games is described in one or two pages, if you are busy planning next stategy meeting is perfect. Any one with a minimum of group dynamics can execute. Games can be executed in sequence, allowing diverse results depending on your objective. One of the most useful books I ever purchased.

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