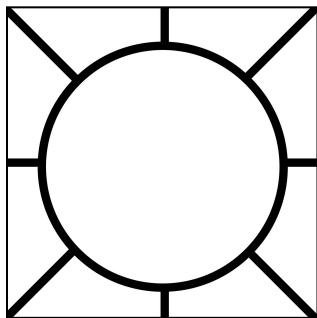




Every individual, group, and organization encounters obstacles that manifest as problems. The conventional approach is to seek a solution, but this often overlooks the potential for innovation and growth. Remember, when you focus solely on solving a problem, the problem retains control. A solution may provide a temporary fix but often fails to address the underlying cause. This is where THE SPARK comes in, offering a fresh perspective on problem-solving.

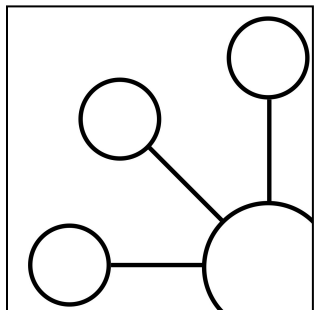
Cast Member Church has created a tool that will help turn any problem into multiple opportunities for innovation. We call it THE SPARK.



The first step is to distill the problem into a concise, one-sentence statement.

This may take some time, as the initial expression of the problem may be just a symptom rather than the root issue. Once everyone agrees on the statement, create a circle in the middle of a blank piece of paper or on a whiteboard and write the statement inside the circle. This forms the core of your SPARK.

Draw eight lines extending from the core circle and place a circle at the end of each line.

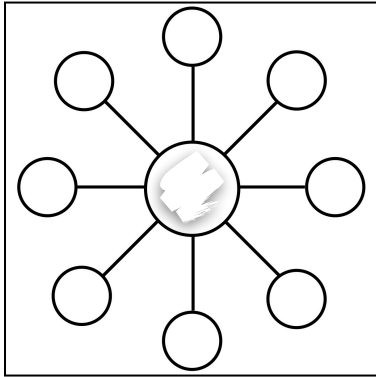


The second step is to write down one opportunity that the problem statement presents in one of the eight circles.

Avoid forming solutions to the problem; focus on identifying opportunities instead. Moving from problem-solving to brainstorming opportunities may take some time, so be patient. The more unconventional the opportunity, the better. Keep going until each of the eight circles contains a unique opportunity. Even if you need to come back the next day, do not continue forward until you have eight opportunities.

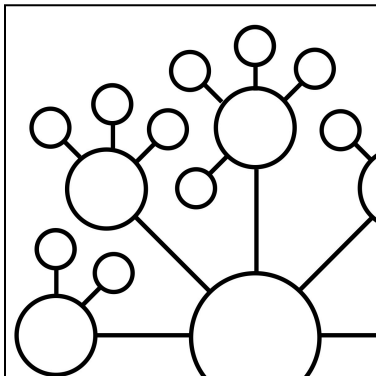
When introducing opportunities, it's imperative to remain open-minded and avoid criticizing. The most innovative opportunities may appear unconventional and unfamiliar at first. After careful consideration, you uncover each opportunity's true potential. Allowing others to share their thoughts without fear of judgment will free them to take risks and express opportunities they might not share otherwise.

The third step begins by erasing the statement identifying the core circle's problem. This is because the articulated problem is no longer necessary, as it is time to shift focus to each of the eight opportunities. It's crucial to remember that we don't want the problem to be in control.



We're not just trying to solve a problem; we're searching for the opportunities that the problem presents. This change in mindset might be challenging at first, but following this approach will prove beneficial, and its rewards will soon become apparent.

As mentioned earlier, problem-solving doesn't lead to innovation. True innovation is seeing what isn't there and finding a way to make it a reality. Just like a muscle, if your imagination is to grow stronger, it needs to be exercised. Problem-solving is a short-term fix. Consistently looking for hidden opportunities will forever expand your creative capacity and potential.



The fourth step is to focus on one of the outer circles and brainstorm ideas to make this opportunity a reality. For each idea, draw a line with a circle at the end and write the idea in the circle. Repeat this process for all eight opportunities. Sometimes, you come up with an idea for a previous opportunity, and that's okay. The key is to let the ideas flow and connect wherever they can.

This process stage may be messy, but it can also lead to a highly productive creative outburst unlike any you've experienced before.

The fifth step is taken when you have finished brainstorming (for now). It's time to consider which opportunities are worth exploring further. Choose two, three, or four. **The important thing is that you no longer have a problem to solve but multiple opportunities to explore.**

Once you have chosen the most beneficial opportunities, determine the next step for each. **AVOID CREATING A PLAN OR STRATEGY.** Just come up with a next step for each opportunity.

Assign tasks as necessary for each "next step" and agree to meet in a week or less to discuss the progress. Do not throw away THE SPARK you've been using. Keep it for the next meeting.

If more opportunities and ideas emerge in your next meeting, don't be surprised. THE SPARK's purpose is to catalyze releasing your creativity.

Yes, problems will arise further along in the process. Don't hesitate to implement a new SPARK each time. You'll be surprised how, over time, your mind will focus less on problems and more on opportunities.

Can you imagine the boundless opportunities waiting for you to find them?