



# 100-WHATS of Creativity!

One hundred “what-if” questions  
to spur your creativity, unmuck your mind  
and breakthrough your mental blocks

*by*

**DON!** the IDEA guy

**SPARK  
SIDE**

ENHANCED



### **100-WHATS of Creativity!**

One hundred “what-if” questions to spur your creativity, unmuck your mind and breakthrough your mental blocks.

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*For information contact:*

DON the IDEA guy

PO Box 26397

Columbus, OH 43229

614-630-3438

<http://www.dontheideaguy.com>

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*Dedicated to my Gram from her "inventor."  
I miss your wisdom, your meatloaf,  
and our Scrabble games.*

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# Introduction

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A lot (most) of these questions may seem strange to you.

**Good.** Creating a personality for your ideas can go a long way toward helping in the development, marketing, and expansion of your original concept.

If you're wondering what kind of pizza your idea would eat (#43) — Your brain may unlock long enough to allow your thought process to move forward. Knowing that if your product breaks, the pieces can be turned into something else (#19), speaks to both the manufacturing process and the intended use of the product. Something your audience would definitely want to learn through your marketing message.

If you're working in a collaborative group, it is helpful to know how each team member would answer the questions. Have the group choose a series of question numbers and answer them from their individual point of view. Trade answer sheets. Do all your team members have the same concept of the idea in their minds – or is each working under a different set of assumptions about the idea's "personality?"

So, while some of these questions may cause you to smirk, chuckle, or roll your eyes – whenever you're stuck, stumped or your brain is mucked – turn on one of these 100-What questions and learn something new about your idea through your answers.

# 1. What If...

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This is the single most important question in the creative process.

Without “What If” we wouldn’t have — electric lights, indoor plumbing, the 10-speed bicycle, or even sent a man to the moon!

When we stop asking “What If” we are saying to the world, “There is no more room for improvement, everything is hunky-dory just as it is... we are content with the status quo.”

Unfortunately, we would also be saying that creativity is dead. And if we submit to this premise, we may as well agree with the U.S. Patent Office when in 1899 they made the statement, “Everything that can be invented already has been.”

It is what we learn after we know it all that really counts.

## 2. What if... it was bigger?

---

Not just a little bit bigger, but what if it was HUGE!  
King Kong size!

Perhaps a calculator that you jump on like a  
trampoline to press the keys.

...Or maybe a new design for a floor lamp that is  
modeled after a mini book light.



### **Keep an eye out for the Spark Site logo!**

If after reading the What-If question you'd like some additional inspiration as you think about the answers, click the Spark Site logo and a website dealing with the What-If theme will open in a new browser window.

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Did you know a lightning bug can  
only light-up when moving  
forward?

That's when we shine brightest  
too, when we take an idea and  
begin moving forward.

— DON!

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### 3. What if... it was smaller?

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Make dishes smaller to have portions appear larger. Smaller credit cards fit on your watchband for easy scanning.

Make skyscrapers smaller for interior decor (the Empire State Building in your living room!)  
Smaller office phones would take up less space on your desk

...Or what if pens were made smaller to better fit behind your ear?

## 4. What if... it was thicker?

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A highlighter that can cover an entire paragraph (or an entire page) in one swipe, tire rubber 10-inches thick, winter shirts that have a self-contained second layer...

How about a mattress that's thicker at the headboard to include its own pillow area?

Kool-Aid that's more syrup than water?

Chewable applesauce?

Thicker baseball caps that offer more head protection for little leaguers?

How can you improve your idea by making it thicker?

## 5. What if... it was thinner?

---

A pen that folds flat into a notebook, computer cables on self-retracting spools to avoid the mess of wires behind your computer.

How about a radio so thin it fits in the back of your Daytimer — or in your business card case — or in the arm of your sunglasses? *Perfect for the beach!*

A TV remote control that is thin enough to be flexible, allowing it wrap around the arm of your chair.

Thin items are easy to transport and store. You can carry more of them in your arms and are cheaper to ship because they weigh less and you can fit more in a single container.

How many ways can you think of to make your idea thinner?



## 6. What if... it was taller?

---

A dinner table and chairs tall enough to swing your legs without touching the ground.

Stilt-Shoes you put on to clean gutters.

A bed tall enough to allow a chest of drawers to fit below.

What about doubling parking lot capacity by making some cars tall enough to park an additional car beneath?

What big benefits can you add to your idea by making it stand tall?

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New ideas should be a little  
frightening.

— DON!

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## 7. What if... it was fatter?

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A folding chair with a fat, padded seat.

Upholstery that gets fatter and overstuffed the more you use it.

Tires that have a canister of air built in to make flat tires fat tires.

Cups, cans and glassware so fat that they couldn't possibly spill over.

What if you sent direct mail advertisement out in envelopes that were padded — so that it seemed something important (or fragile) was contained inside? Do you think these “fatter envelopes” could increase your response rate?

## 8. What if... it was wider?

---

Folding chairs wide enough for two people.

A toothbrush wide enough to clean your top and bottom teeth at the same time.

Pillows wide enough to cover the mattress edge to edge.

What if watch bands were wide enough to hold a calendar, a to-do list and one of those small pens from question #3?

Wider can mean additional comfort, spacious surroundings, or a larger viewing area on a TV screen.

What does wider mean to your idea?

## 9. What if... it was slower?

---

Cars that automatically slow down in school zones.

A voice filter that slows down the speech of fast-talking salespeople.

Vitamins that slow the aging process.

What if you could make the evening hours go slower, lengthening your time away from work?

Developing computer programs more slowly could mean fewer bugs in the software, resulting in a stronger product.

How can being slower benefit your idea?

## 10. What if... it smelled?

---

Sweaters that smell like coffee.

Scarves that smell like hot chocolate.

A watch that smells like vanilla.

Hiking boots with the aroma of freshly mown grass.

Our sense of smell affects how we perceive the world.

Think about a cottage hidden away in the snow covered mountains. What do you smell?

The wood burning in the fireplace?

The smell of cinnamon and apples as the spiced cider warms on the stove?

What smell does your idea or product most represent?



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To create cool ideas you have to  
hang around cool people.

Magicians and madmen inspire  
creative thought, not pencil-  
pushers and bean-counters.

— DON!

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## 11. What if... you could see it?

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If you can see it in your mind, you can make it real.

Draw a picture of it, paint its portrait, mold it in clay, carve it in wood — create a prototype.

A three-dimensional prototype allows you to see your idea from all angles in real space.

Tower over it and look down on the prototype (they look like ants from up here). Set the model on a tabletop and lie on the floor and looking up at it (it's a bird, it's plane...!)

## 12. What if... you could feel it?

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Creating a three-dimensional prototype (#11) also allows you to actually touch your idea.

Hold it in your hands and press it against your flesh.

Is it hot? Cold? Sharp? Hard? Soft? Round? Wet? Bumpy? Slippery?

How will it feel when your customer holds it?

How will your customer feel?

## 13. What if... it was flavored?

---

Okay, so maybe your product or idea isn't edible.

But is it in good or bad taste?

Will using of your product leave a “bad taste” in someone's mouth? Or is the idea so good you can “taste” it?

iMacs come in colors that look tasty. Even the George Foreman grill is now available in colors that were influenced by the iMac.

Can you add a flavor to your idea?

What If you made the ends of pens and pencils flavored – Lollipop Pens?

I've seen many people, deep in thought, chewing on writing instruments —

*They may as well taste good!*



## 14. What if... it made noise?

---

Shhh!

Is your idea **LOUD** or *quiet*?

Does it jump out at you, demanding your attention? Or does it work in the background, so quiet and unassuming that you don't even know it's there?

Either option could be good (or bad) depending upon the type of project you're working.

A car radio that adjusts it's volume according to the noise in and around the car would be very useful -- People are forever turning the volume up and down.

Did you ever notice that people lower the volume of the radio when looking for a street address? It's almost as if a quiet radio improves their vision!

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Just because you own a small  
business doesn't mean you have to  
think small.

Think big to get bigger.

— DON!

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## 15. What if... it was colorful?

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Earth tones? Jewel tones? Pastels? Bold primary colors? Blinding fluorescent?

The spectrum is endless, but every color affects how your idea will be received.

The high sales of the iMac can almost be attributed to its cute design and colorful cases. Did you notice that almost EVERYONE designed their product to mimic the iMac colors?

I saw everything from trash cans to calculators molded in those oh-so popular translucent colors.

What color trend can you begin?  
How about glow-in-the-dark?

Glow-in-the-dark house paint would make it easier to locate your house at night, but the market for that product is (probably) very small.

## 16. What if... it had a texture?

---

Bumpy, bubbly, furry, curvy, cuddly, ridged, ribbed, waffled, sticky, slippery, sharp, silky, ? ? ?

Rough or smooth?

Which is better for your idea?

Both work great as sandpaper.

Will both work great for your idea?

Silky sheets and fuzzy slippers are popular.

Ridges in a skillet make for a great indoor grill.

Can you make curvy computer disks?

A honeycombed bookcase?

What texture can you add to your idea to make it more useful or desirable?

## 17. What if... it had a pattern?

---

Is every third widget blue?

Do your customers purchase an entire set to create an image out of the packages? Video collections sometimes take advantage of this type of design.

Does it come in herringbone or tweed, like a sportscoat? (A herringbone tv? A tweed toaster?)

Does it have lines, polka dots, zigzag, waves, flecks, checkers, ink spots, thumbprints, boxes, bows, flowers... ?



## 18. What if... you asked a Fool?

---

In medieval times the Fool was the only person allowed to poke fun at the King's law.

Through his jesting he influenced the King's opinion, allowing the King to see the "other side" of ideas and concepts.

What fools can you hang around with?  
Encourage silly ideas.

When I get together to brainstorm, my ears prick up whenever someone prefaces their idea with "This might sound cheesy, but..."

Ah! The Power of Cheese.

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If too many people like your idea,  
you're not thinking big enough.

— DON!

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## 19. What if... it was broken?

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Would it be fatal?

Would it still work?

Would you have twice as many?

Must you break it in order to use it?

Kit Kat candybars are made to break into five pieces.

There was an early coin minted in the shape of a clover. To spend it, you broke off the “leaves” and used them as smaller denominations.

How would a U.S. dollar look if you could break it into quarters? What if you could break a five dollar bill into ones?

Would it look like a Kit Kat?

## 20. What if... it was a Super Hero?

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All Lois Lane had to do was scream Superman's name and he would fly to her rescue.

What do your customers need to do in order to have your product or service "rescue" them?

A computer back-up program has the power to turn back time. Krazy Glue has super strength. FedEx delivers packages at super speed.

Superman could fly, had super strength, leap tall buildings in a single bound, yadda, yadda, yadda...

What powers does your idea have?



## 21. What if... it was an animal?

---

What animal best represents your idea?

Sly like a fox?

Wise like an owl?

Strong like a bull?

Are the qualities of the “animal” (the American Indians used guiding animal spirits called “totems”) reflected in your finished product? (a lion’s mane, the sleekness of a race horse, etc.)

A gas station formerly used the phrase “Put a tiger in your tank.”

What animal can you put in your product?

## 22. What if... it came from another culture?

---

Is it fragile like a Ming vase?  
Foggy like England?  
Gourmet like France?  
Frozen like Antarctica?  
In the shape of a boot like Italy?

Companies sell English breakfast tea. Irish pubs are popular places to meet.

There are plenty of steakhouses that call upon the spirit of Texas.

What geographical or cultural attributes can you graft onto your idea?

---

Want bigger and better ideas?  
Get larger groups of people  
together for brainstorming  
sessions.

Bigger Groups = Bigger Ideas!  
— DON!

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## 23. What if... it came from another planet?

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Is your idea “of this world?”

Is it a hero from Krypton, like Superman, or an evil invader from Mars?

Does it appear out of nowhere? (Beam me up, Scotty!) Does it move at warp speed?  
Phasers on stun?

Does the package look like a flying saucer?

Is it “serialized” like the old Flash Gordon movies?

What interplanetary ideas can be added to your product?

## 24. What if... it's a Pisces?

---

As hokey as it may seem, people born under specific astrological signs possess certain characteristics.

Horoscope signs represent Fire, Water, Air, and Earth. Hot tempered, creative, patient, honest... All these are said to be influenced by the signs under which we are born.

What is the astrological sign for your idea?  
When was it “born”?

Read the daily horoscope for your idea.



## 25. What if... it was candy bar?

---

Is it like a Milky Way, with a gooey center?

Nutty, like Pay Day?

Classic, like a Hershey bar?

Thick like a Chunky bar?

Compact like M&Ms?

Sweet like a Hershey's Kiss?

Sour like a Skittles?

Hot like a Fireball?

What makes your idea a treat to use?



## 26. What if... it was a season?

---

Colorful, crunchy, and crisp like Autumn?

Bright, new and green like Spring?

Hot, sandy and sunny like Summer?

White, pure and cold like Winter?

How can your idea instill feelings of a particular season all year round?

Dryer sheets smell spring-time fresh.  
Lemonade tastes like summer.

What season is most like your idea?

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An idea that's bold is worthless  
until sold!

— DON!

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## 27. What if... it had a name?

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If our ideas are like our children — we've got to name them, don't we?

A name can hold power.

Get a book of baby names with meanings and christen your idea.

Can your idea live up to the name it's been bestowed?

Ferrari, Edison, Disney, Lincoln, Napoleon...

Or will it be an Edsel?



## 28. What if... it had an apartment?

---

Does it keep the house neat as a pin, or is there dirty laundry strewn about?

An expensive penthouse or a tiny hole in the wall?

Lots of family pictures on the walls?

A monster stereo system?

Does your idea play video games?

A kitchen a chef would be proud of, or a countertop covered in take-out menus?

What personality does your idea display in its habitat?

## 29. What if... it had a hobby?

---

Does your idea play on a softball league?

Drive a racecar?

Collect stamps?

Paint portraits?

Trade sports cards, collect comic books, wine tasting, bowling, ballroom dancing?

Hobbies add interest to a person's life, how can they make your idea more interesting?

### 30. What if... it was an automobile?

---

A big gas-guzzler or an economy car?

A convertible sports car or the family stationwagon?

American-made, or an import?

Candy-apple red or metallic gray?

A dragster or a bumper-car?

What does your idea look like when transformed into an automobile?

---

Thinking creative thoughts and  
behaving creatively can get you  
called a “Meathead.”

Can you take it?

— DON!

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## 31. What if... it was employed?

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Your idea can't just have any job, right?

Does your idea lust after the big, corner office with the window? Or does it already sit in the big office, with its legs up on the desk perusing the latest copy of the Wall Street Journal?

Does your idea show up for work everyday in a sleeveless t-shirt, wearing a hardhat?

Maybe it's an idea working its through college, delivering pizzas.

Or does your idea ask the eternal question --  
*"Ya want fries with that?"*



## 32. What if... it was in the yearbook?

---

Did your idea graduate from an Ivy League school, or did it learn its lessons on the streets in the school of hard knocks?

What kind of grades did it get?

Did it do its homework?

Was it in the drama club?

Track team?

Chess club?

Which clique did your idea hang out with -- the Brains, the Brawn or the Beautiful people?

### 33. What if... it had an attitude?

---

It has been said, “Attitude is a small thing that makes a big difference.”

What difference would a strong attitude make to your idea’s profile?

There used to be a battery commercial that demonstrated a “tough guy” attitude when it dared viewers to knock a battery off the shoulder of its spokesperson.

Is your idea tough?

Happy? Grouchy? Sarcastic?

If your idea could speak to you, what tone of voice would it use?

## 34. What if... it played a sport?

---

Is your idea the Michael Jordan of concepts?

A baseball star? Football hero?

Maybe it plays golf? Hockey?

Does it glide like a downhill skier, float like a hang-glider, or fly through the air like a pole vaulter?

Will your idea qualify for the next Olympics?

If it did, will it win the gold, silver or bronze medal?

In which event?

---

Ideas are hard to sell because they are an invisible product.

The brighter and more revolutionary the idea, the harder it is to sell. If you've truly had a creative vision it's difficult to share your insight.

It's what made the idea so visionary in the first place.

— DON!

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## 35. What if... it had a favorite food?

---

Spicy Mexican burritos, or over-priced nouveau cuisine?

Does it eat in a nice sit-down restaurant, a street cafe, or does your idea just hit the drive-thru?

Plenty of fiber in your idea's diet?

Perhaps your idea is a vegetarian?

What if your idea only worked in conjunction with vegetables (food processor)... Or made hamburgers easier? (The George Foreman grill.)

What foods appeal to your idea?

## 36. What if... it watched movies?

---

Does your idea like scary movies?

Old classics? Science fiction? Westerns?

How about different flavored popcorn for different movie genres? (Cheddar for “cheesy” B-movies, Caramel for sweet love stories, etc.)

A great movie idea in the fifties was something called the “Tingler”, it caused the seats to vibrate during especially shocking scenes in the movie.

There was another promoter who had ticket buyers sign a waiver releasing the theater from liability if they were “scared to death.”

*Brilliant!*

If you’re a fan of horror movies how could you NOT go see a movie that was so scary you were required to sign a legal document?



## 37. What if... it was a movie character?

---

As long as we're on the topic of movies...

Is your idea more of a Dirty Harry or a Mary Poppins?

Will your concept be so ingenious it'll "make your day" or will you need a "spoonful of sugar" to make it go down?

Is it a young idea making its way in the world like Luke Skywalker, or an adventurer on a quest – like Indiana Jones?

Most movie characters are archetypical personalities. Which archetype does your idea most resemble?

## 38. What if... it listens to music?

---

Yo, dude! We're rockin' out to some awesome ideas!

Listening to country, rock, punk, classical, jazz, blues, funk, even disco music\* can affect your creativity.

You can even channel your creative styles based on the music you're listening to at any given time.

Try listening to different types of music and watch your creativity jam!

*\*WARNING: If disco is involved, the results could be frightening!*

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You have to feed your brain a steady diet of new experiences if you want it to grow up big and strong and bright.

It takes the right kind of brain food to fuel creative thinking.

— DON!

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### 39. What if... it was like a TV program?

---

Your ideas would be very different if they went from watching the McLaughlin Report to viewing Melrose Place.

*Well, maybe not that different...*

What TV show is your idea most like?

Edgy and dramatic like NYPD Blue?

Quirky and unusual like Seinfeld?

Ironic and spooky like the Twilight Zone?

Is it "Must See TV" or Late Night with David Letterman?

Is your idea more like an after-school special, or a prime time mini-series?

## 40. What if... it drinks?

---

Are we talking pulp-novel, liver-rotting, whiskey-swilling, detective-style drinking?

Maybe your idea is more of a good old boy named “Bubba” sipping some corn-squeezings on his front porch.

Perhaps it’s strictly a social drinker, meeting its friends for happy hour.

Or maybe the idea is a tea-totaller -- sticking to non-alcoholic beverages like Kool-Aid or soda pop?



## 41. What if... it has a bedtime?

---

Does your idea doze off in the armchair before *Wheel of Fortune* is over, or does it stay up late enough to hear the national anthem end the broadcast day?

Does your idea or product have specific hours of operation and use, or does it go on forever — a true 24/7/365 concept?

Perhaps your idea needs a glass of water before it's tucked in at night.

What kind of sheets does it sleep on?

Is the bed a Bunk bed, sofa-bed, futon or water bed?

## 42. What if... it was edible?

---

A steak and potatoes type of idea — performing to perfection only the most basic of functions — or are we talking about the haute cuisine of concepts where style rules the plate?

Paper or cloth napkins?

Is your idea similar to a street vendor hawking hot dogs or closer to some high-falutin' joint where you bribe the maitre de just to get your name on a six-month waiting list for reservations?

There's a taste for every palate -- what's yours?

---

Creative thinkers should draw and paint and doodle and sculpt and weld and build and mold and cut and paste and glue and tear and staple and sing and dance and mime and act -- creating physical manifestations of their idea.

Some ideas cannot be expressed by words alone.

— DON!

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## 43. What if... it orders pizza?

---

What would the pizza guy deliver?

Cheese only? Sausage? The “Works?”

Would the idea be sucking down anchovies — or would it be some fancy-shmancy wood-fired specialty pizza with imported duck-sausage and portabello mushrooms?

Ordered from a large franchise, or a neighborhood joint?

Thick or thin crust?

Hand-tossed or deep dish?



## 44. What if... its friends visited?

---

Would you like the crowd your “child” was hanging out with?

Leather-jacketed hoodlums — or chess-club geeks?

Are they throwing pajama parties on the weekend or breaking into your liquor cabinet while you're asleep?

Who your idea hangs out with reflects on your concept. What other related products are in your field?

Do you want your “baby” to be associated with them?

If you had a choice, what associations would you arrange?

## 45. What if... you bought it a present?

---

Would your idea be unwrapping socks and underwear?

A polka-dot tie?

Maybe Santa brought a bicycle?

Which gifts would your idea enjoy?

Which gifts would it hate?

What toys would your idea play with?

---

Ideas are gifts from the devil.

The greater the idea -- the more passionate you are about the concept -- the better the chance you'll go mad trying to bring it into reality.

— DON!

---

## 46. What if... it likes poetry?

---

Frost? Browning? Byron? Keats? Tupac?

Whose voice speaks to the spirit of your idea?

What words ring true to its heart?

Does your idea walk in beauty like the night, or  
does it take the road less traveled?

What creative words inspire your creativity?

## 47. What if... it has a favorite book?

---

Does your idea delve into the dark world of Sylvia Plath?

The fantasy of Tolkein?

The humor and wit of Twain?

Do you read it a bedtime story from the Brothers Grimm, or does your idea read romance novels while enjoying a hot bubble-bath?

Does it read the latest best-seller, or thumb through used paperbacks?

If your idea was a book, who would be the author?



## 48. What if... it wore clothes?

---

Jeans and t-shirt or Brookes Brothers suit?

Sunday morning church clothes or an eternal casual day at the office?

Air Jordan or Gucci on its feet?

Does it wear a top hat and tails like Fred Astaire or a baseball cap and drooping overalls like Dennis The Menace?

Tailor-made or off the rack?

When you create supplemental product for your idea, will they have to be custom made, or will one size fit all?

## 49. What if... the idea fails?

---

Would you start again or close up shop and go into another business?

Would you build on the existing concept or abandon it all together to pursue a completely new idea?

What does a failure say about the market for your product?

The project execution?

The personnel involved?

What will you have learned?

What lessons can you take to the next project?

What constitutes a failure?

---

Ideas popping into your head in the middle of the night always turn out to be the brightest.

...And the hardest to decipher when you wake in the morning.

— DON!

---

## 50. What if... the idea succeeds?

---

Retirement in the Bahamas?

Constant improvements and upgrades to the idea?

Buy up smaller support companies?

Sell the finished concept to a mega-company?

Will there be imitators?

What will you have learned?

What lessons can you take to the next project?

What constitutes a success?

## 51. What if... you're scared?

---

Are you afraid of failure? Success?

Appearing foolish?

Sometimes thinking seriously about what you fear most can put you back on the right track.

Once you've expose your fears to the light of day and literally speak them aloud, they no longer appear so dark and foreboding.

If you're afraid of being "talked about", remember that Oscar Wilde said the only thing worse than being talked about is NOT being talked about.



## 52. What if... you are certain?

---

Instead of dwelling on the unknown, why not review the “known?”

Is a need for your product?

Do you know your manufacturing costs?

The time needed to put your concept into action?

Required resources?

Every project needs a progress checklist, keep your morale high by creating a list of “positive project certainties.”

## 53. What if... there are risks?

---

Don't be ignorant of the true risks.

Knowing what the dangers are ahead of time can allow you to minimize, or completely avoid, anticipated pitfalls.

Looking at the downside doesn't make you a pessimist — it makes you prepared.

## 54. What if... there are rewards?

---

Okay, you looked at the down-side — now what's the upside?

Constantly fantasizing about the “great things” that will happen to you when you strike it rich can be hazardous to your idea.

BUT, reviewing why you're doing all this in the first place can you keep you motivated when the chips are down.

It's okay to daydream.

---

If you have an idea that will help someone else, share it with them.

You never know when they may have an idea for you.

— DON!

---

## 55. What if... you focus on the problem?

---

Take another look at what prompted you to start this train of thought.

Once you've traveled down a single track to a solution, it's easy to lose sight of the problem that started it all.

Is the idea you're working on going to solve your original problem?

It's perfectly acceptable to make course adjustments.



## 56. What if... you solve more than one problem?

---

Sure, you probably started out working on ONE solution, but what about all the other ideas that you're not working on?

I find it's always helpful to have two, three, or even five projects in process at one time.

The best ideas usually come to me when I'm working on something else.

You've probably come up with great ideas while you were in the shower or driving to work.

That's because setting your conscious mind on an alternate task allows your subconscious to solve the big problems that are "really" bugging you!

## 57. What if... you had to defend your idea?

---

Are you willing to stand up for your concept?

Willing to fight for it?

Die for it?

How much are you dedicated to the idea as it currently exists?

Are you willing to negotiate?

Does the success of the idea depend on keeping its original integrity intact?

## 58. What if... it could do something different?

---

Can your idea multi-task?

A lot of products serve more than one purpose.

Does yours?

If your idea only does one thing, can you make it do another?

If it already does two things, can you make it do three?

Four?

---

No matter how advanced  
computers get, or how intuitive  
graphics software becomes --

Nothing beats sketching out an  
idea on the back of a restaurant  
napkin.

— DON!

---

## 59. What if... you were in the IDEAL situation?

---

If you've ever used a pencil to trace your way through a maze drawn on paper, you may have found it's easier to solve the maze by starting at the end and working your way backward to the start.

What is the ideal conclusion to your project?

Patent? Trademark? Notoriety? Money?  
All of the above?

Something completely different?

Think about exactly what you want.

*Put it in writing.*

Now work your way backward — what path do you need to follow in order to end up at your final (ideal) destination?

## 60. What if... you had the WORST solution?

---

What is the worst solution?

Could it be turned around and made better?

How did you arrive at the worst solution?

Could the problem be reframed to make your solution more compatible?

Does your “worst” solution solve another problem you hadn’t considered?

## 61. What if... you made a commercial?

---

What benefits would you advertise to consumers?

What guarantees?

Who would be your spokesperson?

During what program would your commercial air?

What imagery would appear in your commercial?

Animated or live action?

Special effects?

What's your favorite commercial?

Would it still be your favorite if it advertised your idea? What changes would you make?

## 62. What if... your idea had a theme song?

---

From Barney the Dinosaur's "*I Love You – You Love Me*" to McDonald's "*You Deserve a Break Today*" to the *Gilligan's Island* theme song—

Jingles invade your brain and lodge themselves in your gray matter.

What does your idea have that's worth singing about?

Who would do the singing?

Sinatra? A church choir? Adam Sandler?



## 63. What if... you surrendered your idea?

---

What if you gave it up?

Just chucked the whole thing and started from scratch?

Would you relish the freedom from your previous chains of commitment?

Consider burning your existing “mental map” and charting a completely new course of creativity.

---

There's always a better way to do something.

There is a creative genius in every frustrated individual who's dissatisfied with the way things currently exist.

— DON!

---

## 64. What if... you asked someone else's opinion?

---

Additional insight can be helpful, especially when you're at a dead-end.

But, it must be welcomed with open arms.

Don't make excuses —

*"I was gonna do that." "I tried it that way."*

*"I would have done that..."*

Say these things in your head if you must, but not to the person sharing their opinion with you.

Their initial comments may seem simple to you (you already tried something, or considered that option) but they need to work their way past the obvious suggestions before they can get to the good-stuff you might consider useful.



## 65. What if... you looked at it sideways?

---

You know how you'll sometimes catch a glimpse of something out of the corner of your eye?

Why not catch an inspiration or an insight?

Close your eyes.

Think about your situation for a few seconds.

Now, slowly rotate your head sideways and rest it on your shoulder. If you created a prototype (#11) or have some item that provides a visual cue to your problem — face the item and open your eyes.

What does your new perspective reveal to you?

*What if you stood on your head?*

## 66. What if... you combined it with something else?

---

Plenty of great stuff comes out of combining two (or more) different ideas.

*The first thing that comes to mind are Reese's Cups! Peanut butter and chocolate... Mmm!*

Most times combining items makes them more useful. (A lamp plus portability equals a flashlight.)

What if coffee beans could be purchased in a combination disposable grinder, brewer and cup?

What can you partner with your idea to make it more useful... more successful?

## 67. What if... you made it simpler?

---

Most things can be simplified.

Think in terms of a first-time user.

Will a person seeing your idea for the first time understand how it works?

Does it require elaborate instructions or training?

What can you do to streamline its use?

All things being equal — wouldn't you buy a product that's easy to use?

Wouldn't everyone?

---

Make lists of items and then  
combine them in a unique way.

The PalmPilot is basically a  
combination of a pocket calculator  
and a notepad.

— DON!

---

## 68. What if... you made it difficult?

---

Difficult doesn't have to mean "bad."

Perhaps your product is more advanced than others in the market, users may require special certification before beginning its use, perhaps your product has additional features that others do not.

A product perceived as more difficult could also be perceived as more valuable. More "high-tech."

What can you do to increase the value of your product?

## 69. What if... you force it?

---

Can't make it fit?

*Force it!*

Kids are great at this.

They'll twist toys every which way while playing,  
and if they break it... they'll play with the pieces.

What if you force your round project into a square  
hole?

What if you force it into a more convenient shape?  
A better container?

Use (the) force, Luke!



## 70. What if... you shift direction?

---

Just a small change can make a huge difference.

The tiniest shift in the course of a meteor in space can cause it to come crashing into the Earth.  
(Or so the movies say.)

Just a few degrees can mean the difference between life and death.

What can you shift on your project?

Shift changes and their effects can be cumulative — A tiny shift now could mean dramatic changes down the road.

Find out where you'd like to be, and start making small shifts in your course to get there.

## 71. What if... you rearrange it?

---

Think rearranging stuff doesn't mean much?

You may have heard the saying *"You're just rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic."*

Meaning, the situation is already doomed, why bother?

This is not always the case.

As it exists, the alphabet doesn't spell anything, but rearranging the letters creates our entire written language.

A simple rearrangement of a finite number of letters allows for the creation of our greatest written works.

Shakespeare had no more letters to create with than you, he just put them in the right order to create his place in history.

What can you rearrange to leave your mark?

## 72. What if... you just relax?

---

Stressed?

Stumped?

Is your brain locked?

*Take a break.*

Listen to music, read a book, see a movie, grab something to eat.

Just walk away from the problem for an hour or two.

The world won't come to an end, and you won't need to buy a wig because you pulled all your hair out in frustration!



## 73. What if... you rotate it?

---

A twist to the left opens most bottles and jars.

Twisting a screw to the right enables you to lock two pieces of wood together to form building frames.

Rotating the tires on your automobile can extend their life, saving you money.

Can you rotate something on your idea to save your customer time or money?

Perhaps it's the location of your control buttons, or where the power source is located.

Or maybe it's as ridiculously simple as turning it completely upside down...

*Hey, it works for the Magic 8-Ball!*

---

If you are unable to put a great idea into action -- give it to someone who can.

There is nothing more worthless than a notebook full of ideas that could have changed the world.

— DON!

---

## 74. What if... you ask an Oracle?

---

When the ancient Greeks needed guidance, they asked the Gods.

Oracles provided a voice to the Gods.

They were wise beyond measure and answered (most times cryptically) the questions brought before them. The trick to using a modern Oracle is seeking a source that WON'T give you a straight answer!

Form a question regarding your project.  
Make it specific. *Write it down.*

Consult your chosen Oracle —  
Read your horoscope,  
Use tarot cards,  
Choose random words out of a book,  
Use a line from a movie, song, or poem.

Use this offbeat and unrelated information to plan your next move.

## 75. What if... you beat it with a hammer?

---

Seems like a pretty simple question, doesn't it?

If you hit it with a hammer it'll break!

*Right?*

Not necessarily.

You could dent it, scuff it, shatter it, chip it, knock a hole in it, the hammer could bounce off, it could make a sound like a drum or a cymbal or chimes, or a gong, it could strike sparks, set off an explosion — or the hammer could even break!

*What else can you hit it with... ?*

## 76. What if... it bounced?

---

Would your idea bounce?

Would it just lay on the ground if you dropped it?

Would it return to your hands, or would it double its height – like a “*Super Ball*?”

You don’t have to take this question literally —

How does your product respond to setbacks?  
Will it “bounce” back?

Will its success bounce you into a new tax bracket?

## 77. What if... a child invented it?

---

Big, colorful controls?  
Simple and easy to use?  
More durable and long-lasting?

Perhaps it makes comical noises when you push a control button.

Maybe there are pictures of cartoon characters.

Users may consider it *fun* to use instead *work*.

Using it could bring a smile to your customer's face.

## 78. What if... you wrote a joke about it?

---

The funniest (*meaning most successful*) comedians appeal to their audiences by pointing out the humorous side of everyday life.

Things that are “too true.”

Even if the comedian's material speaks of inequality, racism, and other serious topics concerning our society — their humor points out the plight, making everyone acknowledge (between the guffaws) that there IS a problem.

What serious truths can you find in your project to poke fun at?

What troubles can you make light of?

*Find solutions within your laughter.*



## 79. What if... you slept on it?

---

Does your brain hurt from thinking about your project too much?

*Then there's only one thing to do...*

Take a nap.

That's right — catch some Zs, visit dreamland, call the Sandman — just go to bed.

Close your eyes and let your mind catch some insight from your subconscious.

Thomas Edison didn't really sleep a *normal* night's rest. Instead, he took small naps throughout the day. He even had a sleep station in his lab to catch a few Zs whenever the mood struck him.

Take a new look at your problem —  
Through your eyelids!

---

A good idea solves problems.

A great idea does it at a profit.

— DON!

---

## 80. What if... it was someone else's problem?

---

Can't find a solution to your situation...

*Give it away!*

Hand off your problem to Einstein, Copernicus, Edison, Franklin — any expert you like!

View your puzzle from their perspective.

You don't need to be an expert on anyone else's life — you just need to know the basic principles they stood for. Use a book of quotations.

Decide upon an individual whose input you'd like to hear and find quotes by that person. Then, apply the quotes to your specific situation.

For fun, I like to enlist *Sherlock Holmes* or even *Batman* to help solve my problems. You can easily put them on the case by renting a few titles from your friendly neighborhood video store.

## 81. What if... you could see the next generation of your idea?

---

Stumped on where to go next with your idea?

*Try to see the next version!*

What are the logical advances to your idea or product? In your competitor's product?

By looking into the near future (one or two years down the road) you can work backwards to the successful completion of the first version.

Peeking into the future can be quite an advantage!

## 82. What if... you knew what customers liked most (or least)?

---

Knowing exactly what customers loved about your product would be great, but you're not much of a mind reader, right?

Sit down and walk through each feature of your idea. Pick out five things you like best, and five things you like least.

Now switch personalities.

Be your ideal customer — the one for which you can do no wrong — and work your way through the two lists again. You'll collect glowing praise in this mindset, even the “bad stuff” doesn't seem so horrible.

*Now try it again.* This time as the cranky old man down the street. He hates everything.

How does he feel about your idea?  
What can you do to improve his opinion?



## 83. What if... it were made of gold?

---

Aside from the obvious — *melt it down and cash it in* — what else would making the product out of precious materials mean?

Would it increase the functional value of your project — gold used to make the best fillings for teeth — or could making it out of gold (or diamonds, or silver, or rubies) actually *decrease* its real-world value?

Strive to make your idea so useful, so functional, so revolutionary, that even if you made it out of platinum it couldn't increase the value of the product to your customers.

## 84. What if... you were stranded on an island with it?

---

Could it save your life?

Keep you from being bored?

Would it give you something to work on in your spare time?

If you knew you would be alone on an island with your idea — would you make any changes to it?

Would you want to be stranded with it?

What could you change to make your project indispensable in *any* situation?

## 85. What if... it existed in the distant past?

---

WOW!

Your idea — alive 1,000 years in the past!

*It must've been revolutionary!*

The simplest idea of our time existing in the past  
could have changed the world —

*Machine guns in the Revolutionary War...*

*Space travel during the middle ages...*

*Photography in the Jurassic period...*

What would the world have thought of your ideas  
so many years ago?

---

Creativity is a simple process.

Unless you don't understand it.

Then, it's like trying to figure out a magic trick -- a simple process for the magician, but a source of astonishment for the audience.

— DON!

---

## 86. What if... it existed in the future?

---

How would your concept be received if thrust  
1,000 years into the future?

*Would it still be revolutionary?*

...Or would the concept be met with a polite  
snicker?

Is it outdated — or still innovative?

What can you do to ensure your idea's originality  
into the far-flung future?

## 87. What if... it was like Play-Doh?

---

What can you do to make your idea “squishy?”

Play-Doh has captured the attention of the public for years.

It’s malleable enough to take any shape and novel enough to make us smile.

It’s a simple product in simple packaging.

It’s reusable, economically replaceable, and its name says what it is.

*How does your idea compare?*



## 88. What if... it was a Dr. Seuss character?

---

If your project walked on the beach,  
like a Star-Bellied Sneech,

What could you learn soon,  
if your idea was like a Seuss cartoon?

Imagine that — Like the Cat in the Hat!  
What could you do with an idea like that?

Would you like your idea in a box?  
Would you like it with a fox?

Would your idea be a big deal?  
What can you do to make your idea real?



## 89. What if... you changed its use?

---

You started down your creative path by finding a problem and attempting to solve it.

*But, now you're stuck.*

You've innovated yourself right into a corner.

The idea has had unexpected results, and you don;t know what to do.

*How about this?* Find a different problem to solve.

Many great ideas came about by changing the problem it was intended to solve.

Name one, you say?

*I'll name two.* Silly Putty and Post It Notes.

If you can't find an existing market for your project — invent your own!

## 90. What if... money was no object?

---

Unlimited funds to develop your project?  
*What would you do with all that money?*

*Make a list* — All the things you would do if you had a blank check to develop your idea.

Now review your list and come up with real-world alternatives that fall within your budget.

*Going to spend money on test marketing?*  
Hand out samples to your family.

*Going to host a focus group?*  
Treat your coworkers to free pizza if they'll agree to use your product and share their opinions afterward.

Big money doesn't always solve problems — the creativity to produce your idea with limited funds will keep you focused on your goal (the idea) instead the money.

## 91. What if... it doesn't inspire you?

---

If your project doesn't inspire you, there are only two things you can do.

Reframe the project in terms that do inspire you, or drop it and move on.

That's right — *move on*.

Life is too short to spend on projects that you're not excited about.

Find a project that moves you — or move on.

---

Brainstorms can literally flood  
you with ideas.

You can gauge how successful the  
brainstorming session was by how  
bad your writer's crap is  
afterward.

Clock your creativity -- how many  
ideas did you generate per hour?  
How many per minute?

— DON!

---

## 92. What if... you played with someone else's toys?

---

Did you know the playful Yo-Yo was originally a weapon in the Philippines?

The original Yo-Yo (yes, it had the same name) was a four-pound rock at the end of a 20-foot cord.

It was used in two ways -- the first was for hunting, the second was to fight off enemies.

It wasn't until 1927 when Donald Duncan first saw the Yo-Yo and turned it into the one of the best selling toys of all time.

What toys can you play with?

How can you re-purpose it's original use to create a brand new idea for a product?

## 93. What if... an evil genius wanted to defeat your idea?

---

Villains plotting against you — keeping your idea from being successful.

*Put yourself in the role of the evil genius.*

What schemes would you-as-the-villain hatch to keep you-as-the-innovator's ideas from becoming successful?

Write all your maniacal plans down (or have an evil henchman take notes for you.)

*Okay — Snap out of it!*

Back into your real role of the Innovative-Hero.

Your job is to now come up with a way to defeat each one of the Evil Genius' plans.

By creating solutions to the evil plans, you'll be creating solutions to most of the real problems that will cross your path on the way to success.



## 94. What if... your idea evoked emotions?

---

Does your idea tug at the heartstrings, or make you giggle with glee?

Does it spark passionate feelings of loyalty, or instill feelings of indifference?

If your not satisfied after analyzing the feelings your product currently evokes — Change your idea to get the response you desire.

Keep making adjustments until you feel good about the feelings you're idea is spreading around.

## 95. What if... your competitor created it?

---

You're closest competitor just put an identical product on the market before you've even decided upon your packaging.

*What are you going to do?*

It's the same product, it even has a similar name. What (if any) changes will you make to your product before it hits the streets?

Will you shelve your product, feeling you've been beaten to the punch? Will you delay your release until you can add features — making your product more attractive to buyers?

Perhaps you'll choose to release your version as-is, getting it to market as quickly as possible in order to cash in on the excitement your competitor's product may generate.

*What other choices can you think of?*

Why wait until the threat of a competitor's product forces you to improve your own idea — Do it now!

## 96. What if... it was the opposite?

---

The world has started spinning backward!

Left is right, up is down, right is wrong, and innovative is boring.

Your product idea has just been transformed into its exact opposite.

*What do you do?*

A minor change to your advertising campaign, or a complete redesign of the product?

Has the problem you've been trying to solve also been reversed?

Has its solution been reversed as well?



---

A creative person needs to love selling. How else will their idea be put into action?

It's not so much a sales pitch as an exchange of excitement.

The thinker must transfer a portion of their love for the idea to the person who can put it into action.

— DON!

---

## 97. What if... it could move?

---

*C'mon baby — do the locomotion!*

If your idea was been imbued with the power of movement — what form would it take?

Crawl, walk, stroll, canter, gallop, skip, run, swing, saunter, limp, roll, jump, hop, fly, float, bounce, trot, plod, swim, burrow, etc.?

*Or, take another approach —*

How will you move your product from one place to another?

...By hand-delivery, ship, plane, bicycle, automobile, truck, unicycle, fighter plane, speedboat, slingshot, pogo stick, parachute, street vendor, singing telegram... ?

Or, perhaps your idea is SO cool —  
It takes a limo!

## 98. What if... it was adjustable?

---

One size fits all.

This usually (with the exception of baseball hats) does not hold true.

Adjustable means you can personally make the necessary changes to have the item fit your needs.

Adjustable chairs, desks, hats, car seats, etc.

What options on your idea can be made adjustable for the user?

Color cases for desktop computers?  
Photo inserts for watches?

How can you apply this concept to your idea?

## 99. What if... it came with accessories?

---

Whenever I shop with my wife, she tells me accessories make the outfit.

It's amazing how much variety you can get out of one set of clothing by adding the correct accoutrements.

Add a scarf, different jewelry, a belt, a hat, etc.

It's like getting several outfits by spending a bit more on accessories.

What items can you create for your product that will enhance its value through available accessories?

This is a way to make additional profits as well --  
*Think about all the clothes they sell for Barbie dolls!*

## 100. What if... you gave it to your grandmother?

---

Finally, what would your grandmother say if you gave her a copy of your concept, idea or product?

Would she be proud? Excited? Embarrassed?

*The hope is, she would be proud of you.*

When the world shares their opinion of your idea (and they will!) — Just think about what your grandmother would say.

If you're true to your idea (and your ideals), and it will make your grandmother proud — let the rest of the world have their opinions.

*Let them worry about what their own grandmothers will say!*



---

The only thing more important  
than asking WHY, is asking  
...WHAT-IF?

— DON!

---



---

*I hope you enjoyed **100-WHATS of Creativity**.*

*Keep this book on hand for whenever  
you stumble across a mental block  
— these idea detours will help you find  
your way back on to the path of creativity.*

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—DON!*

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