IB Workshop on Radical Innovation – Manual

The IB workshop with Jean-Philippe Hagmann on February 3, 2023, focused on how to gain more radicality in the innovation process.

To increase the potential for radical innovation, it is worth taking a longer look at how to find inspiring, new questions with which to search for possible solution ideas. This is because it is much harder to find extraordinary ideas for a familiar question than it is to find extraordinary ideas for an extraordinary question. Jean-Philippe calls such an extraordinary question the „wow question".

QUESTION:
HOW CAN PROBLEMS BE SOLVED MORE RADICALLY ?

BY ASKING
"WOW QUESTIONS"

UNUSUAL

INCLUDE UNCOMMON ASSUMPTIONS

AIM FOR UNCONVENTIONAL ANSWERS

Questions already point in a direction. They are like torches that illuminate certain ideas for solving a problem more than others.
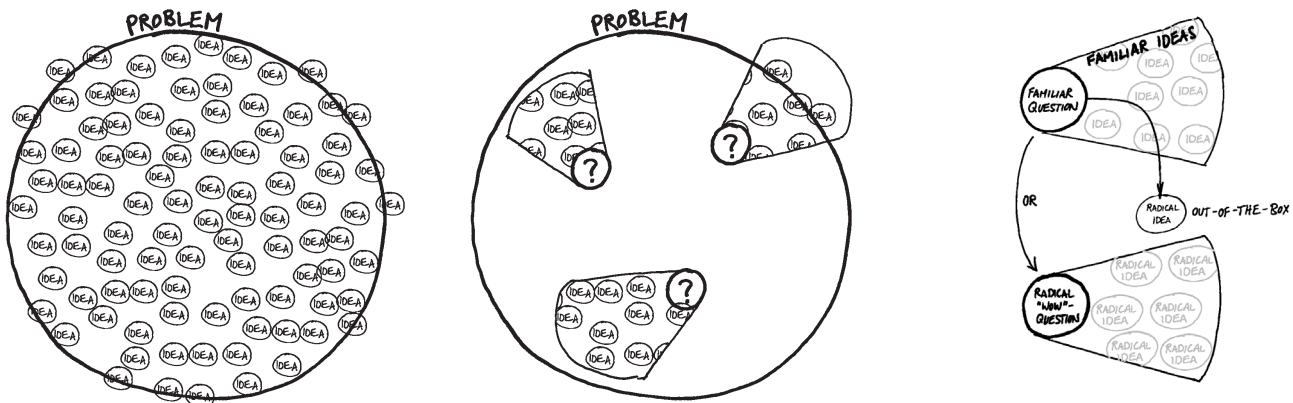
There are assumptions in every question. And the first step in finding a wow question is to confront our implicit assumptions and beliefs about the problem at hand.

"WOW QUESTIONS"

INCLUDE UNCOMMON ASSUMPTIONS

This is where the workshop starts.

Link to the Miro board: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVPsYq9MM=/?share_link_id=913721863160

You can copy a template provided on the board to your own board or to use on pin walls on site.

Tip:

Workshop groups ideally have a facilitator to guide the process and make sure the group stays focused, e.g. doesn't wander off into meta-world pains.

To make it easier for all group members to talk openly about their assumptions and beliefs, the Chatham House Rule is worth mentioning here:

When a meeting or part of a meeting is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s) nor that of any other participant may be revealed.

The Workshop

These three workshop steps help people to unlearn their preconceptions and related implicit assumptions, and to rethink problems they have already formulated. Although not ideal, it is possible to start this process with an idea already in mind, as long as the idea owners are willing to reframe or drop their idea.

Aim: To unlearn common assumptions about a problem in three steps and formulate a wow question for the ideation process.

Step 1: Collect and rewrite assumptions

Introduction:

We use assumptions or beliefs to create a shared world so that we can live, work and do things together more easily. To change a shared world, the underlying assumptions or beliefs need to be changed.
When we explore an issue or deal with a problem, assumptions and beliefs are always involved. Often we are not even aware of them.

Yet they steer the creative process in a particular direction. We want to prevent this by uncovering our unconscious assumptions and turning them upside down.

Task:

Exchange ideas about the topic or problem at hand. What are the basic assumptions? Are there any core beliefs that you are convinced are definitely true?
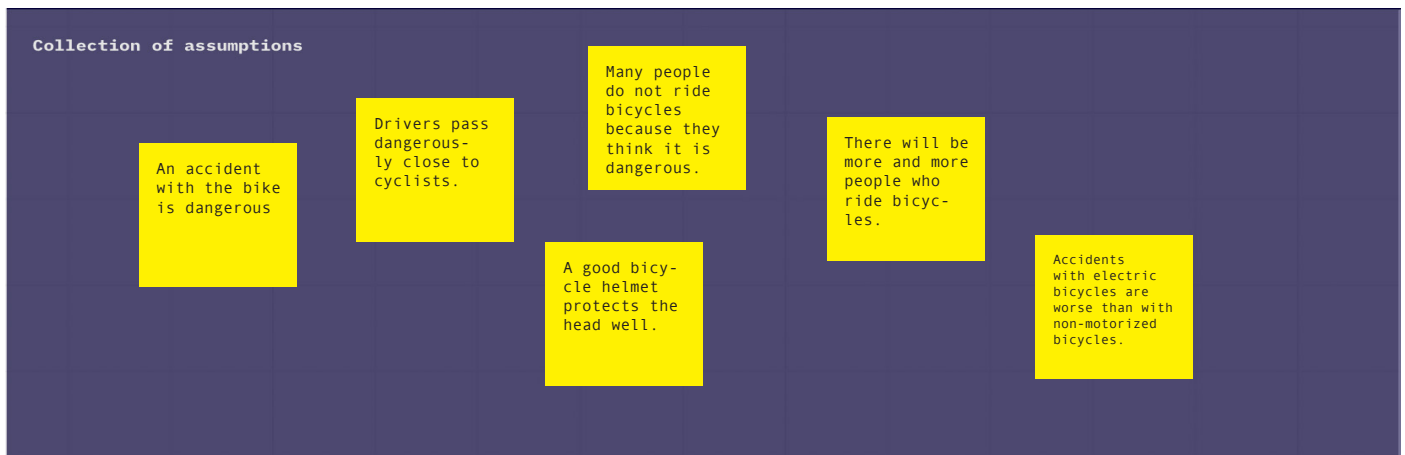
First, everyone writes down their own assumptions about the topic or problem on post-its.

Tip:

Include many different perspectives from different backgrounds, or invite users directly to the workshop based on the customer persona you have identified. Or put yourself in someone else's shoes (role play) if you are missing important perspectives.
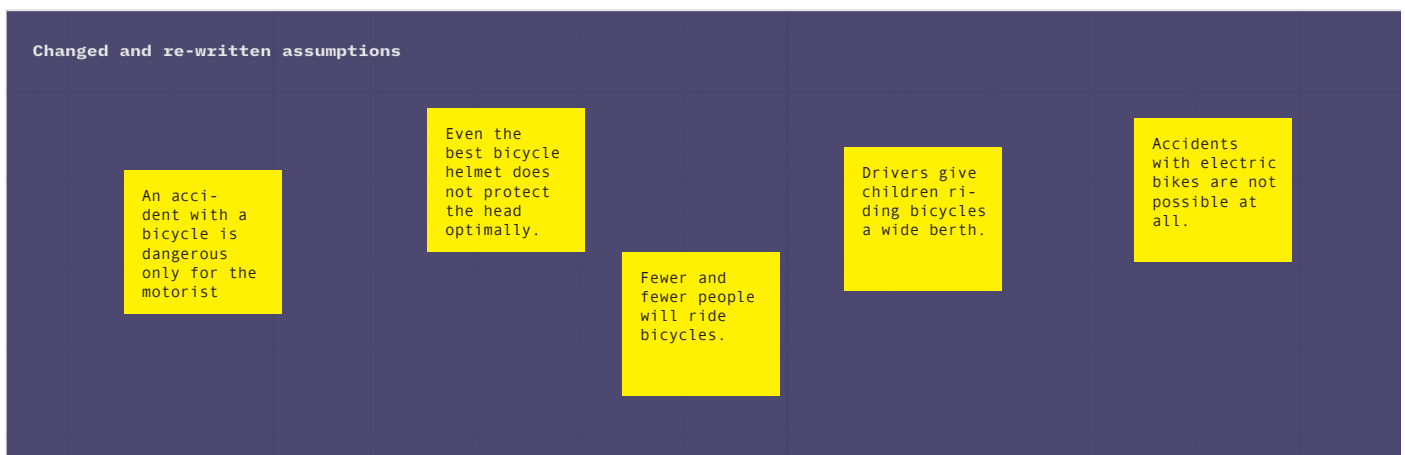
Illustrative example:

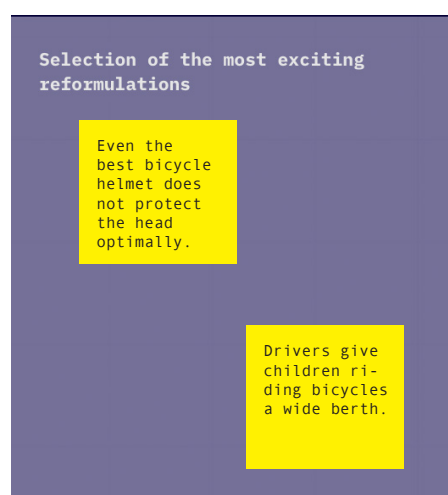**The initial situation is the topic: serious head injuries in cyclists in road traffic.**

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Collection of assumptions
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An accident with the bike is dangerous

Drivers pass dangerous- ly close to cyclists.

Many people do not ride bicycles because they think it is dangerous.

A good bicy- cle helmet protects the head well.

There will be more and more people who ride bicyc- les.

Accidents with electric bicycles are worse than with non-motorized bicycles.

Then try to challenge and rewrite your beliefs and assumptions. Discuss, debate and rethink the things you may take for granted.

Tip:

Try to write crazy new assumptions from existing ones. Turn the assumptions around. Distort them to the extreme, e.g. by stating the complete opposite. The wild new assumptions will make it easier to question the previously implicit assumptions.

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Changed and re-written assumptions
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An acci- dent with a bicycle is dangerous only for the motorist

Even the best bicycle helmet does not protect the head optimally.

Fewer and fewer people will ride bicycles.

Drivers give children ri- ding bicycles a wide berth.

Accidents with electric bikes are not possible at all.

Now choose the most exciting reformulations for Task 2 - or if you don't find any exciting, continue to make your assumptions even more unusual.

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Selection of the most exciting
reformulations
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Even the best bicycle helmet does not protect the head optimally.

Drivers give children ri- ding bicycles a wide berth.

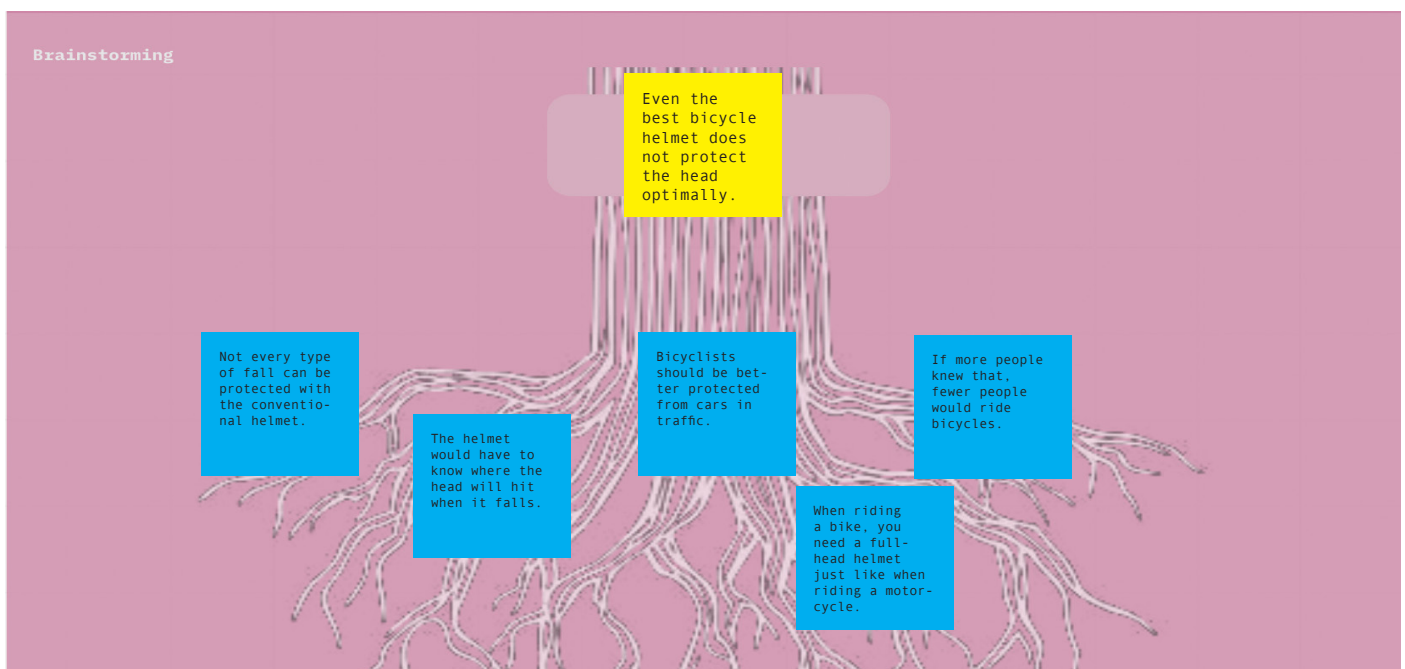## Step 2: Consequences of changed assumptions

Introduction:

When beliefs and assumptions change, it often has a ripple effect on many other related areas. It changes the way you look at an issue. What also needs to be rethought or questioned by the new set of beliefs you have chosen?
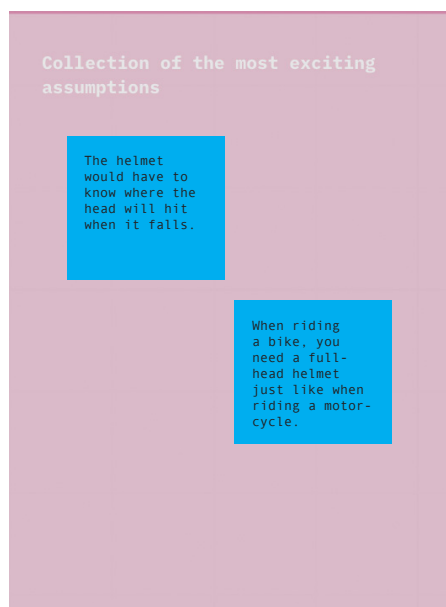
Task:

Place one of your chosen exciting reformulations of an assumption in the box in the tree trunk. Then collect around the roots with post-its other assumptions that need to be challenged if this assumption is true. And try to reformulate them immediately.

Tip:

Dig deeper into the roots of your assumptions and collect more assumptions by questioning each one: What other assumptions need to change if we take the new core assumption for granted?

Brainstorming

Even the best bicycle helmet does not protect the head optimally.

Not every type of fall can be protected with the conventional helmet.

The helmet would have to know where the head will hit when it falls.

Bicyclists should be better protected from cars in traffic.

If more people knew that, fewer people would ride bicycles.

When riding a bike, you need a full-head helmet just like when riding a motorcycle.

Select the most exciting assumptions for Task 3

Collection of the most exciting assumptions

The helmet would have to know where the head will hit when it falls.

When riding a bike, you need a full-head helmet just like when riding a motor-cycle.

Step 3: Find a wow question

Introduction:

A question is the concrete expression of a problem. A question directs our thinking in a very specific direction. Depending on how the question is formulated, the answers - i.e. the ideas for solutions - will be quite different. This is because every question already contains assumptions.

Instead of using creativity primarily to answer a familiar question in a new way, it is easier and more promising to use creativity to find a new, inspiring question. After that, the extraordinary solution idea is already a significant step closer.

Task:

Now formulate questions based on one or more of the new assumptions.

Collection of questions

How can a helmet know during the fall what the crash will be like?

How can a full-head helmet be so light that you hardly notice it?

How do we get cyclists to like wearing better head protection?

How could the whole body be protected in the event of a fall?

Would an airbag for cyclists be an option?

Can the head be protected without a helmet?

Then choose your favourite question and add more variation to the formulation.

Select a question from above and formulate completely different variations of it

Are there any effective methods to protect the head that do not involve wearing a helmet?

Are there any alternative ways to protect the head besides helmets?

Can the head protection be activated only when an accident occurs?

Can a head protection system be engineered to remain dormant until an accident happens?

Finally, choose the most stimulating questions as your wow questions to work with and answer.

Collection of the most stimulating and creativity-stimulating questions (wow questions)

Are there any alternative ways to protect the head besides helmets?

Can a head protection system be engineered to remain dormant until an accident happens?

Once you have identified your wow questions, go out and validate them by trying to find people who are already excited about the prospect of getting an answer soon (desirability testing). Based on the feedback, refine or reformulate them if necessary to meet the needs of your target audience.

Based on your final wow question, start your ideation process.

In our illustration example, the wow question could then give rise to the idea of developing a scarf with an integrated airbag, for example, that is only activated when the person falls and encloses the entire head. This product exists and bears the name „Hövding".

This approach to developing a wow question can be applied at the very beginning of the innovation project (1) and/or when some information about the problem has already been gathered (2).