

# *Developing Innovative Ideas.*

## **OPERA IDEATION PROCESS:**

OPERA is a systematic team based approach to creative problem solving. OPERA is an effective and efficient method that works with simple visualisation, graphic delineation and primarily involves the whole team in creative problem solving.

OPERA helps to generate ideas through mutual collaboration and inspiration and allows the combination of individual and group work ensuring agreement of the whole team. The OPERA ideation process comprises 5 parts or phases:

**O - Own Thoughts:** Give 5 minutes to everyone to write down their own thought and suggestions on the topic you are exploring (like, for an example, an element of your service). Each workshop participant generates his/her own ideas to solve the problem individually and quietly, without any restrictions on their creativity. Ideally, during this process, the facilitator should try and maintain a quiet working environment.

**P – Pairs:** Next, give the group 15 minutes to pair up with their neighbour, and share their thoughts and ideas in their pair. Based on their discussion, ask the pairs to produce 4–5 common suggestions they both agree on. Ask the pairs to prepare one flipchart containing these 4–5 suggestions as a numbered list, which everyone in the group agrees on.

**E – Explanation:** Then, bring all the flipcharts in the front of the room, and ask the pairs to give very short presentations (2 minutes for each flipchart). Really, just a couple of words on each idea – to give a general idea of the suggestions for the group. Here, it's important NOT to allow general discussion of the features of the individual suggestions (for example, the pros/cons of each suggestion) as the extraverts amongst the group tend to dominate these discussions and it would not be adding value to the analysis of the topic. Ask, however, the participants to make their own notes of the suggestions that participants find interesting personally. At the end of this process, each group makes its appearance in front of the rest of the team and presents its 4 ideas, which they put onto so-called OPERA board (for an example of the Opera Board, see overleaf). The categorisation of the X and Y Axes on the Board are largely irrelevant at this stage, the board largely has a role in allowing teams to place their top 4-5 ideas into separate boxes.

**R – Rating:** Next, ask the pairs that worked together before, to have a short chat about which 5 suggestions they would like to vote on. Here, it's important to allow only ONE vote on each pair's own flipchart, regardless how brilliant they all are. Ask the group to have this discussion seated – not coming up to the flipcharts to have this chat, allowing all to see them. When the group has made their selections, ask them all at the same time to come up to the front of the room to mark their votes on the flipcharts with a different coloured 'sticky dots' (for example, a red +).

**A – Arrange:** Now, as the votes have been made, the final stage of the process is arranging the suggestions in groups or categories: For example, take 4–5 empty flipcharts, and title them according to the most voted suggestions (or if your group can see other categories that the suggestions can be grouped into). Now, allow your group to make suggestions, which individual proposals would go under which titles. Copy these suggestions under these topics.

At the end of this process, you will now have a categorized group of topics that form a basis for future actions on your original challenge. An hour is a suitable timeframe for the whole process.

## OPERA BOARD

A	B	C	D	F	F