Brainstorm Solutions

Brainstorming helps you take the insights learned in discovery and turn them into actionable solutions. The brainstorming process helps you generate many possible solutions to the barriers you identified in discovery and prioritize the ones most relevant to your challenge.

Steps in This Activity

Step 1. Select Barriers to Address
Step 2. Reframe Barriers into Actionable Questions
Step 3. Generate Potential Solutions
Step 4. Prioritize Solutions

Expected Time: 2-2.5 hours

Expected Results: By the end of this activity, you'll have a prioritized list of potential solutions to your challenge

HOW TO
Step 1. Confirm the Target Audience

List out the key barriers that need to be addressed to solve the challenge from *Diagnose Barriers* from discovery.

Barriers

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Example: AIM Consolidated Credit Counseling Services (AIM CCCS)

1.	Clients can be overwhelmed by the number of steps outlined in the setup folder.
2.	Many clients are missing a payment in their first two years.
3.	Clients rarely contact client services or counselors once enrolled in the debt management plan (DMP).
4.	Clients are unlikely to reach out for personal support leading up to a missed payment.
5.	If a payment is missed, the notification call seems to make only a small difference in clients getting back on track.
6.	Calls from counselors appear only effective if made by the original counselor.

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7.	Clients trying to come up with own solutions while stressed due to an unexpected event or emergency is not effective.
8.	Staff often struggle to find time to make proactive three-month follow-up calls.
9.	A DMP termination often severs the relationship between AIM CCCS and the client.

As you likely have limited time and resources, reduce the overall number of barriers you are trying to address to approximately 4-6. First, cross out any barriers that are repetitive. Then, review the list of barriers and check each one to make sure it aligns with your organization's goals and priorities. Cross out any barriers on your list that are not well-aligned.

Alignment Review Questions

Are all barriers related to your challenge? All barriers should be related to your challenge. Barriers you identified in other parts of the journey map can be removed.

Are any of the barriers repetitive? Each barrier should represent a distinct challenge experienced by clients during the journey.

Will fixing these barriers help you reach your desired outcomes? Ensure addressing these barriers is likely to make a difference in achieving your desired outcomes.

If you are not yet down to 4-6 key barriers, decide which of the ones you have left are the most important to advance.

Example: AIM CCCS

After listing the barriers, AIM went back and crossed out the barriers that were not well-aligned with the challenge or were repetitive.

Barriers
1. ~~Clients can be overwhelmed by the number of steps outlined in the setup folder.~~
2. Many clients are missing a payment in their first two years.
3. ~~Clients rarely contact client service or counselors once enrolled in the DMP.~~
4. Clients are unlikely to reach out for personal support leading up to a missed payment.
5. If a payment is missed, the notification call seems to make only a small difference in clients getting back on track.
6. ~~Calls from counselors appear only effective if made by the original counselor.~~
7. Clients trying to come up with own solutions during a stressful time is not effective.
8. ~~Staff often struggle to find time to make proactive three-month follow-up calls.~~
9. ~~A DMP termination often severs the relationship between AIM CCCS and the client.~~

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Step 2. Reframe Barriers into Actionable Questions

By defining key barriers, you've identified areas that pose significant challenges to your clients. As you did with your challenge in *Frame the Challenge* of discover, reframe your barrier statements into "How Might We" questions to turn them into opportunities for design. A properly framed "How Might We" question gives you a powerful invitation for innovative thinking. You may need to revise the language of the barrier, so make sure you're still capturing its meaning correctly.

Barriers	"How Might We"

Example: AIM CCCS

Barriers	"How Might We"
1. Many clients are missing a DMP payment in their first two years.	1. How might we help clients stay on top of their DMP payments?
2. If a payment is missed, the notification call seems to make only a small difference in clients getting back on track	2. How might we keep clients engaged after they miss a payment?
3. Clients trying to come up with their own solutions while stressed due to an unexpected event or emergency is not effective.	3. How might we help clients prepare in advance for an unexpected event or emergency?
4. Clients are unlikely to reach out for personal support leading up to a missed payment.	4. How might we help clients when they are in danger of missing a payment?

Check each of your "How Might We" questions to make sure they're within scope.

Does your question allow for a variety of solutions? A useful "How Might We" question should easily generate at least five solutions within a few minutes?	☐ Yes ☐ No, broaden it

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Does your question allow for too many unrelated solutions?	☐ Yes, narrow it
A useful "How Might We" question should not leave you or your team asking too many clarifying questions to get at the core barrier to address.	☐ No

Once you have finalized your "How Might We" questions, it is time to begin your actual brainstorm. Whether alone or in a group, it is helpful to use sticky notes to capture your ideas. Write your "How Might We" questions on flip chart paper or large paper pads and post them around the room so that you have a separate brainstorming space for each question.

Step 3. Generate Potential Solutions

Start coming up with potential solutions to your questions. For each "How Might We" question, take approximately five minutes to brainstorm ideas. Try to think of as many ideas as you can and put each one on a sticky note. Make sure you revisit your "parking lot" from discover as there are likely ideas there you will want to review.

Put all those sticky notes on the wall under the "How Might We" question. Move on to the next "How Might We" question and repeat. If you are not working with sticky notes, write each "How Might We" question in the text box and list your brainstormed ideas beneath the appropriate question. Use extra paper as necessary.

At this point, do not worry about the quality of the solutions. Aim for quantity.

Solutions

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Example: AIM CCCS

Solutions Brainstorm
How might we help clients prepare in advance for an unexpected event or emergency?

Helpful Hint: Brainstorm Rules

Here are some rules adapted from the IDEO.org Design Kit to help ensure an effective brainstorming session:

- Playing music as you brainstorm can help reduce stress and improve creativity.
- Defer judgement as you never know where a good idea will come from.
- Encourage all ideas because they can lead to intuitive or create leaps.
- Build on the ideas of others; in discussions, try to use "and" instead of "but."
- Stay focused on the topic so that you don't go too far out of scope.
- Try to have one conversation at a time—that way you can all build on one idea.
- Be visual. Nothing gets an idea across faster than drawing it!

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Step 4. Prioritize Your Solutions

Once you have a set of possible solutions for each question, it's time to narrow in on the solutions you will develop.

As your organization likely does not have the time or resources to pursue all your brainstormed solutions, the next step is to narrow them down to a list of approximately 4-6. First, consider eliminating solutions by reviewing each with the following criteria.

Question to Select Solutions

Is the solution unique or different from others that already have been reviewed?

Does one of the other solutions address this barrier more effectively?

Does your organization have the capacity to implement this solution?

Confirm that the solution(s) address(es) the prioritized barriers and, if applicable, make sense in combination. List the prioritized barriers facing your clients from *Step 2. Reframe Barriers into Actionable Questions* alongside the potential solutions.

Draw arrows showing the links between the barriers and the solutions.

Barriers	Links	Solutions
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Note: There does not need to be a one-to-one correspondence between the barriers and solutions. Some solutions can and should address multiple barriers.

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Example: AIM CCCS

Barriers	Links	Solutions
1. Many clients are missing a DMP payment in their first two years.		1. Interactive, online back-up plan creation tool
2. If a payment is missed, the notification call seems to make only a small difference in clients getting back on track.		2. DMP roadmap infographic
3. Clients trying to come up with their own solutions while stressed due to an unexpected event or emergency is not effective.		3. Updated web pages
4. Clients are unlikely to reach out for personal support leading up to a financial emergency.		

You should now have the small set of solutions you will eventually prototype. Write them here with a one sentence description for each.

Solutions to Prototype
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Example: AIM CCCS

Solutions to Prototype
1. Online back-up plan creator: An interactive tool to help clients create a plan for and deal with financial emergencies.
2. DMP roadmap: A simple, colorful infographic that prompts clients to call should they encounter a financial emergency.
3. Updated client services web pages: Webpages with pictures and bios of team members and language that encourages clients to call AIM when they have financial issues.

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ACTIVITY SUMMARY

In this activity, you should have done the following before moving on:

☐ Prioritized the most important barriers your clients experience
☐ Brainstormed solutions to the key barriers your clients experience
☐ Determined which solutions to prototype