

# Idea Generation Tool

## PPCO



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## WHAT IS PPCO?

### Get Better Feedback and Teach People How to Be Open to New Ideas

Too often, we see an idea and dismiss it without giving it proper consideration. Many of us lack a framework to quickly discuss other opportunities for an idea in order to salvage it, make it better, or perhaps use parts of it vs. the whole concept at once. PPCO is a tool that helps you improve on an idea in a structured manner, and learn how to give better feedback to an idea you are evaluating.

1. **Pluses:** What is **good** about the idea as presented?
2. **Potentials:** What are the future **benefits** that might result from this idea? “It might...”
3. **Concerns:** Phrase as **open-ended** questions. “How might we...?”
4. **Overcome:** **Brainstorm** ideas to overcome your top concern.



**Lisa Bodell**  
Founder and CEO

**futurethink**

For a video introduction to PPCO, click on the image above or go to:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAFDLiiRBQI>

## WHEN TO USE THIS TOOL

- When people are taking a skeptical, negative, or dismissive (all or nothing) approach to ideas.
- When there is no framework in place for giving feedback on ideas.
- When you want to teach people how to be more accepting of new, novel, and even rough initial ideas.
- When you want to understand leadership’s risk-tolerance for new ideas.

Note: The PPCO technique was developed in the early 1980s by Diane Foucar-Szocki, Bill Shepard, and Roger Fierstien.



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## FACILITATION GUIDE

**SUGGESTED AUDIENCE:** Relevant for all levels of staff and senior leadership.

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**HOW TO USE THIS TOOL:**

- Have teams use the worksheet when evaluating initial ideas for exploration.
- Use the feedback to improve ideas and understand what key information managers need to move ahead and make approval decisions.

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**SET-UP:**

- Designate teams of 3–4 people per team.
- Print out copies of the worksheet.
- Each team should receive a worksheet with a pre-selected idea to evaluate.

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**RECOMMENDED TIMING:**

1. Introduction:	5 min.
2. Pluses:	5 min.
3. Potentials:	5 min.
4. Concerns	5 min.
5. Overcome:	5 min.
6. Group Discussion:	15 min.
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	<b>40 min.</b>

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### SUGGESTED MATERIALS:



Worksheets  
(enough for each participant, plus a few extra)



Whiteboard or flipcharts  
(use them to write down all group ideas; no idea is a bad idea)



Colored markers, pens, and pencils  
(separating ideas by color will help organize your thoughts)

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THE IDEA TO EVALUATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pluses:**

**(What do you like about the idea? What is good about the idea?)**

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**Potentials:**

**(What other ideas does this spark for you? What else could this do?)**

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**Concerns:**

**(Phrase your concerns as an open-ended question that starts with “How might we...?” or “In what ways could we...?”)**

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**Overcome your top concern: (What ideas do you have for solving your top concern?)**

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### TIPS FOR SUCCESS

#### **Identify Positives First**

Instead of responding with negativity, think in terms of what's good about the idea by using the phrase "I like that this idea...does XYZ."

#### **Phrase Potentials as "It might..." Statements**

Phrases that start with "It might..." or "It could also..." can spark new thinking around the idea.

#### **Phrase Concerns by Asking Open-Ended Questions**

Keep the dialogue constructive by presenting concerns, such as "In what ways could we...?" or "How might we...?"

#### **Overcome Concerns About the Idea**

Provide ideas to solve your concerns or make the idea more viable.

#### **Share Your Innovation Criteria**

Be open to some level of innovation risk. Using PPCO will help define your own risk tolerance by highlighting the level of concern you typically have for new ideas.

#### **Stretch Your Risk Tolerance**

Don't let too many ideas pile up in your pipeline for review or funding. Evaluate or "map" your ideas on a regular basis to make the process manageable and to provide an up-to-date snapshot of your innovation portfolio. This enables you to adjust efforts to better reach goals and to better put funding in places where it's needed most.

#### **Use PPCO Many Ways**

Share the Tool with your team to help them strengthen their ideas before presenting them, create a common language for idea evaluation, or provide a framework for feedback (even as a performance evaluation).

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