

Free the Genie is a product of Idea Champions —a consulting and training company specializing in creativity, innovation, team development, and out of the box products. Since 1986, we've been helping forward thinking organizations unleash their collect brilliance and create dynamic cultures of innovation.

This guide provides facilitators, trainers, change agents, coaches, and managers with a variety of innovative ways to use the deck. As an icebreaker. As a brainstorming catalyst. And as a coaching tool.

Visit our website to download the Free the Genie User's Guide and learn more about the many ways in which Idea Champions can help your organization become an innovation powerhouse.

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Free the Genie

Leader's Guide



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ICE BREAKERS

1. The Orient Express

Include one *Free the Genie* card in each orientation package. In your cover letter, include a request for people to reflect on their card and be ready to debrief it with a partner at your meeting/conference.

2. Card on the Chair

Place one *Free the Genie* card on each chair at least 30 minutes before people enter the room. In the act of searching for a place to sit, people will tend to read at least a few of the cards. Quite often, they will select a seat that has the card message that most intrigues them. Some people will reflect on their card's message (getting the creative juices flowing). Some will engage a friend or co-worker in a spontaneous discussion about it. Others will simply park the card in a pocketbook, briefcase or pocket for later reference.

3. Card Under the Chair

At least an hour before your meeting, tape a *Free the Genie* card to the bottom (underside) of each chair. At the appropriate "icebreaker moment" (or anytime you want to change gears), ask everyone to think of a "work-related challenge, opportunity, problem or idea—then reach down and remove the surprise beneath their seat." Once done, ask people to pair up, describe their challenge in two minutes or less, read their card aloud, and then—using card content as a catalyst—brainstorm with their partner for 5 minutes. Ask them to switch roles, so each partner gets a chance to respond to his/her card.

4. Welcome Door Prize

Give a *Free the Genie* deck to a few of your assistants (or hotel staff) and position these people at the various entrances to your meeting room. As people enter, your assistants fan the deck and ask people to "pick a card, any card." People, as you might guess, will be a bit surprised (but also delighted to be getting something fun upon their arrival.) Without any further instructions required, people will read their card as they move about the room. And all of this will get the "wheels turning" (at least for those who take the time to read/reflect on their cards).

5. On the Wall/ Off the Wall

Identify an appropriate wall space in the room (a wall immediately visible to people as they enter) and post the *Free the Genie* cards (one card for each attendee.) A percentage of attendees will naturally gravitate to this part of the room and begin to read the cards. At a designated time in your agenda, ask everyone to walk over to the "*Free the Genie* wall," peruse the cards and remove the one card that most "speaks" to them. Once done, ask them to pair up with a partner and explain WHY they selected this card.. and what "clues" it gives them about moving forward with a new idea, project, or opportunity.

7. Listen and Link

What passes for creativity is often just a person's ability to make new connections between seemingly unrelated elements. The more you listen to the person you're coaching, the more you will understand their world and the elements that comprise it. The more you understand these elements, the more connections you can help them make. What's the connection between "A" and "B?" you might ask. "How do these pieces of the puzzle fit together?" A good coach is really just a bridge between *this* and *that*—a human synapse that allows others to make powerful, new connections.

8. Know Your Cards

If you are going to use *Free the Genie* as a coaching tool, it's essential that you become familiar with them. As the person you're coaching elaborates on Topic X or Y, be ready to sift through the deck and pull the card that best summarizes the challenge under discussion. Give this card to your coachee and ask for a response. The message on the card will serve as a kind of "double click," validating the topic of your conversation and sparking deeper exploration.

9. Get Out of the Way

Good coaches are like waiters. They bring food to the table. Then they get out of the way and let their customers enjoy the meal. As a *Free the Genie* coach, you are the bringer of "food for thought." You are *not* there to force-feed people. Remember to maintain awareness that you are merely a catalyst for someone else's creative process. At selected intervals, feel free to give the entire deck to the person you're coaching. They will shuffle the cards, look through them, and select the ones that most immediately speak to their need.

10. Scribe

Once your *Free the Genie* session gets rolling, the person you're coaching will most likely be too animated to take notes or jot down ideas. This is not a problem. Quite the contrary, it's an opportunity. Your note taking will help your coachee stay focused on brainstorming, while helping *you* further tune into key themes for exploration.

11. Summarize

Towards the end of your coaching session, be sure that you leave enough time for key learnings to be summarized. "So what are your main takeaways from this session?" you might ask. "What patterns do you see?" These questions can be asked a thousand ways. The goal is to bring closure to the session so your coachee—likely to be overwhelmed by an infinite amount of possibilities—can begin making the shift from thought to action.

12. Clarify Next Steps

Aspiring innovators are often more comfortable with *generating* ideas than they are with *executing* them. Idea generation is fun. Idea generation is intoxicating. But until and unless those ideas turn into action—nothing will manifest. As a *Free the Genie* coach, it is your responsibility to ensure that all your sessions end with a "what's next?" process. "What are your next steps?" you might ask. "What can you do this week to move your project forward?"

“You can expect no influence if you not susceptible to influence.”

CARL JUNG

“Help! I need somebody. Not just anybody.”

THE BEATLES

“There is no such thing as a long piece of work, except one that you dare not start.”

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

“We don't see things as they are. We see things as we are.”

ANAIIS NIN

“If you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own being, you will have betrayed yourself.”

ROLLO MAY

12 COACHING TIPS

1. Establish Context

As a *Free the Genie* coach, you will not only be helping people get their creative juices flowing, you'll be creating the "banks of the river." Creativity, without form, dissipates. Creativity, too constrained by form, hardens. Your task is to walk the fine line between the two. One way to do this is to set the appropriate context and ground rules at the start of your session. Clarify expectations. Describe your role. Preview the process. And get agreement on the guidelines that will keep your session on track.

2. Clarify Vision

The reason why some people require *supervision* is because they do not fully own the *vision* of what they're trying to accomplish. As a *Free the Genie* coach, one of your tasks is to help people clarify their vision. "What is your vision of success?" you might ask. "Imagine it's a year from now and you have already succeeded. What does success look like?" (You can also, of course, select the appropriate vision cards from the deck and ask the person you are coaching to respond).

3. Question the Question

If you want to coach others into heightened states of creativity, you will need to know their *goal*. One way to do this is to ask them to frame their challenge in the form of a question starting with the words "How can I?" Usually, however, the first formulation of the question will be mushy or actually *two* questions masquerading as one. Take your time here. Unless your session begins with a clear problem statement, it is unlikely to yield meaningful results.

4. Get the History

Once the person you're coaching has identified their question, get them talking about its history. "What has been the history of your project?" you might ask. "What obstacles have you encountered? What successes?" The more you allow your coachee to wax poetic about their challenge, the more rapport will build—and the more rapport builds, the easier it will be for you to play your role.

5. Become Genuinely Interested

The most powerful thing you can do to help someone have a creative breakthrough is to *pay attention*. To pay attention, however, you will need to *become genuinely interested*. This, in turn, will require that you let go of your *own* dramas and get into theirs. Once you do, listen deeply. Maintain eye contact. Express positive regard. Often, all aspiring innovators need in order to get unstuck is to be in the presence of someone who really cares—and expresses that care.

6. Make it a Game

One of the advantages of using *Free the Genie* is its non-threatening nature. *It's a game!* You are not doing therapy. You are not psychoanalyzing. You are simply being playful in a focused way that helps aspiring innovators move forward. "Let's play a game," you might say as you ask your coachee to pick a card. "Let's have some fun with the genie," you might mention as you lay three cards—face down—on the table, asking your coachee to choose one and respond.

6. Break Breakthrough

Similar to #4 ("Welcome Door Prize"). The difference here, however, is that you make the cards available to people as they EXIT the room for a break or lunch (or even the end of the day). Be sure to invite people to "noodle" on the card's message during the break... or lunch... or overnight. The goal here is to maximize "incubation time." Research has shown that many people get their best ideas when they are in "downtime mode." This icebreaker simply increases the likelihood that someone will have a breakthrough on the break. (NOTE: Time allowing, begin the next part of your meeting—after the break—by asking for a show of hands from those who got an "insight," "new idea," "inspiration" or "next step" from reflecting on their *Free the Genie* card. Then call on someone and ask him/her to share their insight or idea with the full group).

7. The Wandering Facilitator

If you observe that some of your meeting participants are disengaged, stuck, or otherwise spacing out during the meeting, approach them, ask them to "pick a card, any card" and ask for any insights or ideas their card triggers in relation to a work-related opportunity, challenge, or project. This technique is especially appropriate to use during topic-specific breakout groups.

8. Scavenger Hunt

Here's a fun one that gets the energy moving quickly. Before your meeting starts, hide a number of the *Free the Genie* cards in various places around the room. Then, later in the day, when you perceive the need for a "change of pace," invite everyone to participate in the *Free the Genie* "scavenger hunt." Explain that you have hidden "X" amount of cards throughout the room and that a prize will be given to the person who finds the most cards in the next 7 minutes. When the contest is over, invite all (or some) of the "finders" to the front of the room and give them a chance, at the microphone, to read their card aloud to the full group and respond as inspired.

9. Genie Buddies

Let's assume that everyone in the room now has their own *Free the Genie* card. Ask people to read and reflect on their card. If they assess that the message on their card is one they "need help with" (i.e. the card says "Clarify Your Vision" and the cardholder realizes that he/she is not skillful at "visioning"), explain that "help is on the way if they are willing to ask for it." Then invite anyone who could use some support to come to the mike and read their card aloud. Once done, ask if there is anyone in the room who would be willing to be an "ally," "collaborator," or "coach" for the person who just read their card. Assuming somebody raises their hand, ask the reader and their ally to connect on the next break... or during lunch... or whenever is appropriate. In effect, you are creating a Genie-based coaching partner network on the fly.

"I'll play it first and tell you what it is later."

MILES DAVIS

"A pile of rocks ceases to be a rock pile when somebody contemplates it with the idea of a cathedral in mind."

ANTOINE ST. EXUPERY

"Security is mostly a superstition. Life is either a daring adventure or nothing."

HELEN KELLER

"I refuse to be intimidated by reality anymore. What is reality? Nothing but a collective hunch."

LILY TOMLIN

"I want to put a ding in the universe."

STEVE JOBS

10 BRAINSTORMING GAMES

1. Two Card Start-Up

Before participants enter the room, place two cards—face down—at each seat. Before you begin brainstorming, ask each person to turn over his/her cards, read them silently, and make a mental note of which card intrigues them the most. Then, as soon you sense a dip in your brainstorming session, ask each person to select one of their cards and read it to their partner or team—as a brainstorming trigger. (This is also something good to do whenever *you* are feeling stuck or need to leave the room for any reason.)

2. Stacking the Deck

Before your brainstorming session begins, read through the *Free the Genie* deck and select a subset of cards that most relates to your group's challenge. Put the discards aside. Then, whenever participants seem stuck or disengaged, approach them, fan the deck, and ask them to "select a card, any card." After they read the card, ask them to make a connection between the message/question on the card and the topic they are brainstorming. Don't move on until they make a least one connection. And if they can't, ask one of their teammates to do so.

3. What Suits You

Sub-divide the *Free the Genie* cards into its five suits (i.e. Attend, Intend, Suspend, Extend and Connect). Place the appropriate colored "suit descriptor" card (the one with lots of text) on top of each new mini-deck of 11. At your discretion, read each suit descriptor card to the full group. Then, ask each group to name the card you just read that felt the most significant to them (i.e. probably the one they need the most help with). Give each subgroup that particular stack of cards to use for the "next process." For example, they can discuss each of the 11 cards (jotting down new ideas) or simply pick a few cards of the 11 to use as brainstorm triggers. It's up to them.

4. The Genie Speaks

Before your session, familiarize yourself with all the cards in the deck. As your brainstorming session unfolds, be aware of "moments of truth" (i.e. a hot topic, a big challenge, an odd comment, a newly articulated idea) that relate to a specific card in the deck. At your earliest opportunity, give that card (or read it aloud) to reinforce the moment of truth that just happened in your session. Then ask the group (or a specific individual) to respond to the card you just read. This is a golden opportunity for people to stretch out and really express themselves about a particular challenge, idea, insight or need.

5. The Center of the Square

Deal five cards to each team, face down, in the following layout: 4 cards in a square, and one card in the center. Ask each team to turn over their cards and read each one aloud. Explain that their challenge is to look for the connections between the center card and each of the cards on the perimeter. You might ask, "What is the relationship between these two cards and what clues does it trigger about the challenge you are brainstorming?" If they cannot make a connection between two specific cards, encourage them to move on to the next connection quickly and see what clues it triggers for them.

6. Deck the Halls

Give each brainstorming team a full deck of *Free the Genie* cards. Ask them to divide the deck amongst themselves, read the headlines only, and select the cards that most intrigue them. Encourage people to move very quickly through this card selection process. You want their first impressions—not their analysis. The new "mini-deck" they create will be the one they will use throughout the session—whenever you ask them to consult the cards or whenever they feel stuck and feel the need for a creative jolt.

7. Cross-Fertilization

Here's a good way to use the cards if you have multiple sub-groups. Give each group a full deck of cards. Ask them to choose the five cards they think are the most essential for another sub-group in the room to consider. Once accomplished, ask each group to trade cards with another group. If you have an odd number of sub-groups, ask each group to give their cards to the first group on their left. Once each group receives their set of "mystery cards" from another group, they will read their cards aloud (within their group) and discuss the ones that are most evocative (being sure to continue jotting down whatever new ideas or insights emerge).

8. Cardiology

Before your session begins, post all relevant *Free the Genie* cards on a wall (content side facing out). Ask all session participants to stand in front of the wall and read the cards, in silence, until they find the one that most "speaks to them." Then ask them to remove that particular card from the wall and bring it back to their group. Their task is to read their favorite card to their group at the moment they believe will be the most appropriate—or when their team is most in need of a creative boost.

9. The Mystery Guest

At least 48 hours before your meeting, give a *Free the Genie* deck to one or more people who will not be attending. Ideally, these will be people who really care about your team's challenge, but cannot participate in the brainstorm session. (This is a good task for Senior Managers or other influential people in the organization.) Ask your "mystery guest" to select the seven cards they think will be the most provocative for the people in your brainstorming session. Then, at your discretion, introduce these seven cards into the mix, i.e. when the group is stuck, when energy is flagging, after a break, before action planning, or to kick off a new phase of brainstorming.

10. Idea Poker

Remember to take a look at the User's Guide that accompanies your *Free the Genie* cards. There are a number of fun "idea poker" card games for people to play—games that "raise the stakes" in many ways. Be sure you have some poker chips on hand. If you need another copy of the User's Guide, log onto www.ideachampions.com/downloads.shtml. All in, anyone?

“The lightning spark of thought generated in the solitary mind awakens its likeness in another mind.”

THOMAS CARLYLE

“The way to get good ideas is to get lots of ideas and throw the bad ones away.”

LINUS PAULING

“There is only one thing stronger than all the armies in the world and that is an idea whose time has come.”

VICTOR HUGO

“Not everything that can be counted counts; and not everything that counts can be counted.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN