

Spiders' webs and sea shells – drawing from nature

“To see a world in a grain of sand, And a heaven in a wild flower, Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, An eternity in an hour.” William Blake

The big idea

The big idea of this tool is to help you have big ideas. To use the whole of your brain. To stimulate your curiosity and your creativity. It is designed to expand your visioning and to encourage you not to focus in on an idea too soon. It may seem more like art than business but that is the point. There are plenty of businesses out there that take nature as their inspiration, and just because we are thinking about business it does not mean it has to be dry and dull.

Purpose

Looking to other sources of inspiration is intended to unlock your thinking and open up the visioning exercise. Its purpose is to encourage divergent thinking to allow you to explore all your aspirations. Using drawing, images and symbols based on nature, you will be coming at your business visioning from a new perspective.

The tool

There are a number of ways you could go about this, either making your own drawings and doodling from nature or using books and finding images of nature as inspiration. Essentially the steps consist of:

1. Relax and prepare your space. Have pens, pencils, crayons and paints to hand. The more colours and textures the better
2. Put some big sheets of paper on the tables or walls; the bigger the better
3. Take a few minutes to think about your vision for the business, your aspirations for its future
4. To warm up, just doodle and scribble for a few minutes
5. Then, if you have collected other images, use them and just start drawing

6. Or, using free association, draw whatever comes to mind
7. After 15 to 20 minutes, stop drawing and write down any ideas that have come to you regarding your business
8. Put them on the wall and let them mellow for a while. Repeat the exercise again after a few days and see what else emerges

When looking at your sources of inspiration, you might want to use the following techniques:

- Look really closely. Focus in on details, shapes, patterns or forms you may not have noticed before
- Find different forms of the same thing like leaves or flowers or branches. Study their differences and similarities
- Try not to use the obvious – look at rocks, insects, cats or dogs. Study textures, shapes and patterns
- Use unusual or different perspectives. Get closer up or draw from at least three different perspectives
- What about nature in motion? Does that suggest different shapes or forms?
- Combine different elements that are not usually seen together – kangaroos in the arctic, cacti in the rain forest and so on
- Just focus on texture
- Play with colour
- Focus on shape
- Think of a place you love or somewhere you went on holiday
- Imagine yourself in the desert, a forest, up a mountain or in the sea
- Zoom out and take a really high-level view

Take the next step

Collect a leaf, a stone and a flower. Take some time out to study them and look at their characteristics. Use their attributes to think about a challenge you are facing. The next time you are outside, look at the borders of things. Consider what happens at the edges and how that might inspire your next big idea

Top tips

- Next time you are taking a walk, look around you at the patterns

- Try not to be inhibited by the exercise. Relax into it and let your imagination drive you rather than your rational thinking
- Have a look at other examples of organisations that use nature as inspiration for what they do, such as [Laliaflia](#)
- Taking inspiration from nature and applying it to other technologies, known as [biomimetics](#), has also become a new area of study. Have a look at what it has inspired