



Review

***Gamestorming:
A Playbook for Innovators, Rulebreakers, and Changemakers***

Dave Gray, Sunni Brown, and James Macanufo. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly, 2010. 288 pp. ISBN: 978-0-59680-417-6. \$29.99.

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For this book, Dave Gray, Sunni Brown, and James Macanufo collected games from a variety of contributors to help organizations think outside the box, and they provide opening, exploring, and closing games that challenge people to envision solutions in new ways. The authors propose that everyone's innate creativity can be tapped by creating a world of play where the rules of ordinary life are temporarily suspended. In this alternate world, people can engage in everything from blue sky thinking to concrete problem solving.

The book is divided into discrete sections, beginning with a detailed explanation of what a game is, how to conduct games, and core gaming skills. The section on core games introduces basic games that may be incorporated into any of the opening, exploring or closing games. They may be as simple as card sorting and dot voting or as involved as storyboarding. There are 26 games for opening exercises, 41 games for exploration, and 11 games for closing. Participants can range from one to unlimited, depending on the game, and last for as little as 30 seconds or for as long as four hours. Facilitators will be able to select games based on participant numbers and time allotted, but it would have been a wonderful addition to have this information listed in the table of contents beside the title of each game.

In a high-tech world being squeezed by budget woes, it is nice to see games that rely on basic supplies like sticky notes and index cards. Participants must physically be present in the same space, working closely to solve problems for their own environments. With some games, ideas from other successful endeavors can be introduced, but the premise is that the people most intimately involved will be the ones to work on envisioning solutions.

The games are described in open-ended terms so that they can be adapted to individual situations. Prompts are provided in most cases to assist with picturing how the game goes. Each game is broken down into the object, the number of players (if applicable), the duration of play, directions on playing, and the strategy. Credit is given for each contribution. The end of the book is set aside for an example of how gaming worked for one organization that netted them an account with Starbucks.

The authors stress that it is important for organizers to include an opening, an exploratory, and a closing game in a meeting. Although that may require a significant investment of time, the point is to keep the energy going. Spreading the games out over time would deplete that energy.

Some librarians may resist the idea of participating in gaming as a way to seek solutions. It is vital to create an atmosphere of trust where no ideas are punished. It is also vital that facilitators implement the solution(s) that are discovered to continue that bond of trust. Otherwise, this becomes yet one more wasted opportunity for tapping what is best and brightest in the people who know the most about how the organization functions and where it could go.

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