



THE ROSE BOWL GAME



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The Rose Bowl game

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The Rose Bowl Flea Market is, just like any other flea market in the world, a crowded place where people come to together to offer goods they have for sale, and where other people try to find the things they are looking for for a long time. The Rose Bowl is a vivacious and busy place where hawkers compete in extolling their products and in persuading the buyers to buy what they have to offer. Buyers stroll the market place from stall to stall to find the best products for the best price.

The Rose Bowl game is a versatile and useful game that uses the above metaphor to generate ideas and prioritize these with a large group of participants in a fun and challenging way.

1 Purpose

The Rose Bowl game can be used for a variety of subjects and purposes, such as designing strategies, finding solutions for a problem, generating applications for new products, designing the steps in an action plan, formulating the use and demands for a new building, et cetera.

The game consists of two parts:

- ▶ In the first part participants brainstorm about ideas¹ related to the issue at hand and make products, i.e. posters representing their ideas and proposals
- ▶ In the second part they bring their products to the Rose Bowl Market and try to sell them to each other.

Participants of the game are divided in small groups of 4-8 people. They have a brainstorm about the issue and put their final idea on a flip-over, in an attractive and creative way.

Then the Rose Bowl Market starts. Each group has its own stall and has to sell its idea to the other buyers by convincing them of the quality. The buyers are also the participants of the game. Each buyer gets ten units of money (tokens). They walk around to compare the products. For more information they can ask the idea developers for clarification.

¹ In the remainder of this article we speak of ideas as the intended yield of the game, but with this word we also refer to solutions, strategies, action plans, et cetera.

If a buyer wants to invest in an idea s/he puts one to ten of the tokens into the basket of the group. S/he can support more than one idea, and also his/her own. If later on a buyer thinks another idea is more appealing s/he can withdraw (part of) his/her money and invest it in the other idea. The product with the most money at the end of the game wins.

You can keep this game very basic or you can equip it with all the trimmings. We have played this game in the simplest way (a flip-over, some pens and paper money) but also very elaborated: participants had a lot of time to make a poster, and used images, pens, magazines, et cetera to make an attractive poster. Either way, the market always becomes a buzzing place, with people moving from one stall to the other. Talking to sellers, meeting people, and exchanging ideas.

2 Goals and objectives

- The participants get insight in possible and feasible ideas in relation to a selected issue
- The participants select one or more ideas which is/are broadly supported.

In case Rose Bowl is applied for a client (problem owner) to help him to get insight in possible solutions for a problem, then in the end the client gets suggestions for solutions that have the support (commitment) of a large group.

3 Practical characteristics

3.1 Target audience

This game can be used in a broad variety of situations, there is not a single primary target audience. In fact, the audience for the Rose Bowl game can be described as the persons who are involved in any way in thinking about the issue.

3.2 Group size

The game can accommodate for small and large groups. We have played this game with 30 to 300 participants.

A 'normal' sized group will consist of 20-60 participants divided in groups of 4 to 8 persons. It is recommended to have heterogeneous groups with participants representing different perspectives on the issue.

Fifteen participants in five groups of three is the absolute minimum. The maximum depends of what you are comfortable with, the amount of assistance, and what technology is available.

3.3 Duration

With a 'normal' sized group Rose Bowl will take at least 2.5 hours for introducing, carrying out and debriefing the activity.

The minimum amount of time required for a normal sized group per step is as follows:

Activity	Time
Introduction	15 minutes
Group brainstorm	30 minutes
Make a poster	30 minutes
Market	45 minutes
Debriefing	30 minutes

For larger groups more time is needed for the market, because there will be more products on the market and buyers need time to see all products and come to a decision. Working with larger groups also requires some extra time for handling the logistics.

If more time is available, you can extend the time for making the posters, the market and the debriefing. We do recommend not to extend the time for the brainstorming phase.

3.4 Physical setting

Ideally you have two rooms: room 1 for the introduction, the brainstorm, the poster making and the debrief, and room 2 for the market.

In room 1 tables are randomly placed in the room. Every group has its own table with a chair for each member. For the introduction it is necessary that all participants have a clear view on the facilitator (and the presentation screen). For the debrief participants can be seated at the tables, or they can be asked to take their chairs and come to the front, closer to the facilitator and each other. Optionally room 1 can be rearranged during the market.

The market room needs sufficient wall space, poster boards or 'stalls' (tables) for posting the products. Optionally, a table can be placed in front of the poster to create the idea of a stand or counter.

If you only have one room, try to get one which is large enough to have the groups sit at their own tables at one side and a market space at the other side. Or, if a large room is not available, you can change the setting between the brainstorm and poster making phase, and the market phase (plan enough time in your schedule for this).

4 Materials and equipment

Introduction:

- a presentation with the central issue, the assignment and the steps of the game
- a brief task description and time schedule per group on their tables.

For the group brainstorm and poster making:

- note pad and pens
- a flip chart/poster and pens per group
- materials so the groups can make creative and attractive posters, like crayons, felt-tip pens, markers, sheets of colored paper, glue, stickers, magazines, and whatever you can think of that might be helpful.
- if desired or necessary: background information about the issue (books, reports, news papers), to be consulted by the participants to get a better understanding of the issue.

For the market:

- tape (to tape the posters to the wall)
- for each group room to expose their poster; you can make this as posh as you want, you can give the groups real market stalls, but a part of the wall for the poster and maybe a table in front of it may also do.
- tokens (money) for all participants; these tokens can be chips or slips of paper; in the latter case you may decide to print the participants' name or a number on the slip of paper, so it is clear who invested in which ideas. If there are distinct groups of participants it is an option to have tokens of different colors for the groups.

5 Facilitator comments

Facilitator's tips during the brainstorm and poster making step:

- make the groups responsible for their own time schedule
- some participants will need a lot of time for the brainstorm, others will start working on their posters quickly. Don't worry about that: some need more time to think before acting, others want to act directly. If a few groups are beginning to rummage through the available materials and starting with their posters, other groups will follow soon.
- If groups are getting too far behind on schedule, go to them and tell them to start on the posters in for example 5 minutes.

Facilitator's tips during the market:

- Officially start the market (I now declare the Rose Bowl market opened....)
- Challenge the participants to make it a vivacious happening (for example by underlining the competition between sellers)
- Some groups may have the same idea or similar ideas. If they want to merge, let them. You can stimulate this yourself, but it is better to let them come to this themselves, spontaneously.

Facilitator preparation

- To facilitate the Rose Bowl game there is no specific knowledge needed. However, to support the debrief of the activity properly, the facilitator must have knowledge about the issue at hand and about the conditions.
- Most of the time we compose the groups randomly: for example by giving participants a piece of paper with a number corresponding with number on a table. But if you want divide the participants over the groups in a specific way you have to think about that beforehand.
- If you want to have materials that challenge the creativity of the participants, such as magazines, brochures or newspapers, it might take some time to collect them.
- Preparing the money for the participants might take a lot of time, especially when you have decided to have each participants name on the tokens.

- ▶ You may want to give the groups some questions to structure the poster presentation. For example: what is your group's idea? What will it contribute to the central theme? What will the results be? Who needs to take the initiative for this project? Who needs to be involved in order to make it a success?

6 Process

1. Introduction:

- 1a. Present the central issue
- 1b. Explain the objective, the procedure and the steps for the game
- 1c. Direct the participants to their groups and if necessary help them to get started.

2. Brainstorm:

- 2a. Participants brainstorm on ideas, strategies, solutions, and so on
- 2b. Participants choose one idea (or combination of ideas) they think is the best
- 2c. The facilitator walks around, monitors how the groups are proceeding, supports groups when necessary.

3. Poster making:

- 3a. Participants make a poster
- 3b. Participants post their poster on the market
- 3c. Facilitator takes care that all groups finish making their poster and bring it to the market in time
- 3d. Facilitator hands out money/tokens to each participant.

4. Rose Bowl Market:

- 4a. Explain how the Rose Bowl Market works. During the Rose Bowl Market all participants have a double role: as seller and as buyer. Point the participants to the fact that there should always be one group member present at the poster; the other group members can stroll the market.
- 4b. You open the market officially.

- 4c. Participants as sellers praise their goods and try to sell their product on the market. They try to catch the attention of the buyers, clarify their idea and answer questions.
- 4d. Participants as buyers walk around, see what is offered to them, ask questions, listen to explanations and compare the products of different sellers.
- 4e. Participants as buyers can invest in an idea by putting one to ten of their tokens into the basket of the group; they can support more than one idea. They are also allowed to support their own idea.
- 4f. If later on a buyer thinks another idea is more appealing s/he can withdraw his/her money and put it in that idea (this is only possible if the tokens are marked, for example by the name of the participant).
- 4g. When it's time you close the market.

5. Debriefing

- 5a. After closing the market allow the participants some time to cool down and to drop their role of sellers and buyers.
- 5b. Invite the participants to go room 1 and take a seat. Decide beforehand whether you want the participants to sit together in their groups or not.
- 5c. Debrief what happened during the market and announce the results (see the next section).

7

Debriefing

The debriefing can focus on several aspects. Below we formulate examples of questions that may be helpful to start the discussion on the process and the outcomes for each of these three aspects:

1. The process of generating ideas
 - How did the groups work?
 - How easy or difficult was it to generate ideas?
 - How did they come to the selection of one idea?

In addition, it might be interesting to ask whether ideas were generated that did not make it to the market, but that are worthwhile to be mentioned.

2. The process of selling and buying on the market
 - What arguments were used by sellers to praise their goods, what were the argument that made buyers decide to spent their money on specific ideas?
3. The outcome of the market.
 - What makes the winning idea(s) so important/relevant/ feasible that so much money has been invested in it?
 - How is the idea being supported: by a lot of participants who invested a little bit of money, by a small group who invested a lot of money, or something in between?
 - What will have to be the results / deliverables of this idea?
 - What do we need to make this idea work?
 - Who needs to take the initiative for this project?
 - Who needs to be involved in order to make it a success?

8 Two variation to the original activity

8.1 Variation 1

In the original version, participants have tokens and they put them in the basket of the product they want to invest in. In the end that tokens are counted and it becomes clear which idea has the most support. An alternative approach is to have a 'stock exchange' where participants can invest their money in one of the ideas. This 'stock exchange' consist of a spreadsheet in which the investments are recoded and the scores are displayed immediately on a large screen.

This variation brings extra dynamics in the game, since the preferences of the participants and the changes of these preferences are known constantly. This immediate feedback may urge sellers to change their strategy and look for other arguments to praise their goods. It may address buyers' attention to specific ideas and may help them in deciding on how to invest their money.

8.2 Variation 2

The second variation on the Rose Bowl game can be described as the reversed focus. This variation can be played with a heterogeneous group of participants who are in the same area of work/interest, but are experiencing different issues (for example teachers, managers of health care institutions). In the original version, participants generate in their groups ideas that can be seen as answers or solutions to the raised issue, and bring these ideas to the market. In this variation, participants are asked to formulate an issue they want to elaborate. Groups are formed around these issues: each participant can work on the issue s/he thinks is most relevant for him/her. The group thinks about ideas/solutions to the issue, but also on what knowledge is lacking to implement the idea successfully, on bottlenecks, and on foreseen problems. On a poster they present their idea and formulate questions that should be answered to make this idea work.

They bring their posters to the market, and this market is now not a market of products that entail solutions, but a market of demands, questions and request for support.

The role of the 'seller', who is now the demanding party, is to invite and motivate the other participants to help them by answering their questions. The role of the 'buyers' becomes in this variation the role of an adviser or consultant. They walk around over the market place, look at the ideas and the questions that are presented on the posters. If they can help someone in answering their questions they can go to a market stall and:

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- try to answer questions that are formulated
- give advice on how to deal with the questions and problems
- share their experience with the demanding party and give suggestions.

In this variation the groups have the money at their disposal. They use it to pay for the answers or advices they get. Dependent on the their estimation of the quality of the advise, they can decide to spent from 1 to ... tokens for the advice they get (the maximum number of tokens depends on the number of groups and the number of participants).

In the end the person who has given the most valuable answers, suggestions or advice to the groups will have earned the most money.

The debriefing of this version is in essence the same as in the original version, however the point of departure are the questions and bottlenecks and how to overcome them.

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