



Brainstorming puts a full range of ideas on the table before decisions are made. It is used to generate a free flow of ideas that are not bound by the usual barriers. It allows people to explore new ideas and challenge traditional thinking, by letting them put ideas on the table without fear of being corrected or challenged. At the end of a brainstorming session, there is a long list of creative ideas from which to work towards a solution.

Step 1 Announce that you will be using brainstorming and review the rules:

- Let ideas flow freely
- No evaluating of ideas until later
- Build on the ideas until later
- Build on the ideas of others
- Be humorous and creative
- There are no bad ideas
- No debating
- Everyone participates
- Think in new ways
- Keep discussion moving

Step 2 Clarify the topic being brainstormed, then allow a few minutes of quiet while people think about solutions

Step 3 Encourage the group to let their ideas flow. The actual brainstorming can be structured (go systematically around the group), or be spontaneous (members offer ideas as they come to mind)

Step 4 Record ideas as they're generated. Do not discuss or elaborate on them.

Step 5 When people have run out of ideas, allow for a few minutes of thinking time and reflection. Sometimes the best ideas emerge in the second round.

Step 6 When there really are no further suggestions, discuss each brainstormed idea in detail so that it's fully developed and clearly understood. Combine similar ideas that are worded differently.

Step 7 Use a decision or voting process to sort the good ideas from the poor ones.

Step 8 Agree on the final list of best ideas.

Why does it work?

- By freeing people from practical considerations, it encourages them to think creatively.
- It's also an energizing process that helps move people to take action.
- Because it's highly participative it makes everyone feel that they are an important part of the solution.

Designed to
be Shared



License:
Creative Commons Attribution 3.0
Unported creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/

Major Source: Bens, Ingrid (2000). Facilitating with Ease! A Step-by-Step Guidebook. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Prepared by Oliver Ferguson and Kathryn Heinz, July 2014
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Available at www.meas-extension.org/tip-sheets

