BRAIN STORMING-IDEA-GENERATION

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Madison Avenue advertising executive Alex Osborn developed the original approach and published it in his 1953 book, "Applied Imagination." [1]

Since then, researchers have made many improvements to his original technique. The approach described here takes this research into account, so it's subtly different from Osborn's approach. [2]

Brainstorming combines a relaxed, informal approach to problem solving with lateral thinking. It encourages people to come up with thoughts and ideas that can, at first, seem a bit crazy. Some of these ideas can be crafted into original, creative solutions to a problem, while others can spark even more ideas. This helps to get people unstuck by "jolting" them out of their normal ways of thinking.

Here, you can take advantage of the full experience and creativity of all team members. When one member gets stuck with an idea, another member's creativity and experience can take the idea to the next stage. You can develop ideas in greater depth with group brainstorming than you can with individual brainstorming.

Another advantage of group brainstorming is that it helps everyone feel that they've contributed to the solution, and it reminds people that others have creative ideas to offer. It's also fun, so it can be great for team building!

Step 1: Prepare the Group

How much information or preparation does your team need in order to brainstorm solutions to your problem? Remember that prep is important, but too much can limit – or even destroy – the freewheeling nature of a brainstorming session.

First, choose an appropriate and comfortable meeting space. This can be in the office, or virtual. Consider what would work best for your team. Make sure you have the right resources beforehand; you can use virtual brainstorming tools like Miro or LucidSpark, and you'll need pens and Post-Its for an in-person session. Now consider who will attend the meeting. A brainstorming session full of **like-minded people** won't generate as many creative ideas as a **diverse group** , so try to include people from a wide range of disciplines, and include people who have a variety of different thinking styles.
When everyone is gathered, appoint one person to record the ideas that come from the session. This person shouldn't necessarily be the team manager – it's hard to record and contribute at the same time. Post notes where everyone can see them, such as on flip charts or whiteboards; or use a computer with a data projector.

If people aren't used to working together, consider using an appropriate warm-up exercise, or an **icebreaker** .

Step 2: Present the Problem

Clearly define the problem that you want to solve, and lay out any criteria that you must meet. Make it clear that that the meeting's objective is to generate as many ideas as possible.

Give people plenty of quiet time at the start of the session to generate as many of their own ideas as they can. Then, ask them to share or present their ideas, while giving everyone a fair opportunity to contribute.

Step 3: Guide the Discussion

Once everyone has shared their ideas, start a group discussion to develop other people's ideas, and use them to create new ideas. Building on others' ideas is one of the most valuable aspects of group brainstorming.

Encourage everyone to contribute and to develop ideas, including the quietest people, and discourage anyone from criticizing ideas.

As the group facilitator, you should share ideas if you have them, but spend your time and energy supporting your team and guiding the discussion. Stick to one conversation at a time, and refocus the group if people become sidetracked.