

Setting Up a Brainstorm Session



KEY LEARNINGS: SETTING UP A BRAINSTORM SESSION

1. The Importance of Preparation

- A well-prepared brainstorming session boosts creativity and productivity.
- Think of it like setting the stage for a play—get the scene, cast, and props right for a great performance.

2. Step-by-Step Guide to Setting Up a Brainstorming Session

Step 1: Define the Purpose and Problem

- Be crystal clear about what you're brainstorming.
- Example problem statements:
 - “How can we reduce customer complaints about checkout time?”
 - “What services could we offer during the holiday season?”
- Write down the problem statement in one or two sentences.
- Include this in the meeting invite and display it clearly during the session.

Step 2: Choose the Right Participants

- Select a diverse group (mix of roles, perspectives, and expertise).
- Include people who experience the problem firsthand.
- Consider adding a "wild card" (someone from a different department for fresh ideas).
- Be mindful of group dynamics:
 - If someone is too dominant or negative, coach them beforehand.
 - If a senior leader might intimidate others, brief them separately instead.

Step 3: Set the Time and Place

- Pick a time when people are energized (mid-morning or mid-afternoon is best).
- Avoid Monday mornings or late Friday when engagement is low.
 - Time allocation: Simple topic: 30-45 minutes.
 - Broader topic: 1-2 hours (but pure idea generation should stay under an hour).
- Choose a creative-friendly space (natural light, flexible seating, and room to move).
- Create a welcoming environment—use sticky notes, colors, snacks, and drinks.

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Step 4: Gather Materials and Tools

- Classic brainstorming setup: Whiteboard or flip chart.
- Markers that actually work (test them beforehand!).
- Sticky notes, pens, and paper.
- For digital sessions: Set up an online whiteboard (e.g., Miro, MURAL, Google Docs).
- Ensure everyone has access before the meeting starts.
- Optional: Creativity triggers (magazines, objects, toys) to inspire unconventional thinking.

Step 5: Invite and Inform Participants

- Send a clear invite stating the purpose of the session.
 - Example: “Join us for a fun brainstorming session to generate ideas for X. No preparation needed—just bring your creativity! We’ll explain the ground rules, and all ideas are welcome.”
- Consider sharing background information beforehand if helpful (especially for introverts who prefer to prepare).
- Alternatively, keep it open-ended to encourage fresh, spontaneous thinking.

Step 6: Set the Creative Tone

- Arrive early to set up the space and display the problem statement.
- Write an inspirational or humorous quote about creativity on the board.
 - Example: “Imagination is more important than knowledge” – Einstein.
- Play light music as people arrive to ease tension and create an upbeat atmosphere.
- Greet participants warmly and break the ice with a casual remark or joke.

3. Key Takeaways

- Good setup = smoother brainstorming session.
- The goal is to create a space where people feel safe and excited to contribute ideas.
- A well-prepared environment boosts engagement and the quality of ideas generated.