

Brainstorming Ground Rules



KEY LEARNINGS: BRAINSTORMING GROUND RULES

Why Ground Rules Matter

- Brainstorming without rules leads to interruptions, criticism, and lack of participation.
- Structured rules create a safe, creative, and productive environment.
- Example: A restaurant brainstorming session fails when ideas are immediately dismissed, but with ground rules, creativity flows and better solutions emerge.

Key Ground Rules for Brainstorming

1. Defer Judgment (No Criticism)
 - No idea should be dismissed, criticized, or shut down.
 - Encourages free thinking without fear.
 - Example: A mascot dancing outside may seem odd, but it could inspire an innovative marketing idea.
2. Encourage Wild Ideas
 - Thinking outside the box leads to breakthrough innovations.
 - Even impractical ideas can spark workable solutions.
 - Example: "Drone pizza delivery" might be unrealistic but could inspire bicycle-based local delivery.
3. Aim for Quantity
 - The more ideas, the better.
 - Setting a goal (e.g., 20 ideas in 15 minutes) pushes beyond obvious solutions.
 - The best ideas often come after the initial, easy ones.
4. One Conversation at a Time
 - No interruptions or side conversations.
 - Ensures equal participation and prevents dominant voices from taking over.
 - Facilitators should remind the group to listen fully before moving on.
5. Build on Others' Ideas ("Yes, and..." Technique)
 - Instead of rejecting ideas, expand on them.
 - Collaboration leads to richer, more refined ideas.
 - Example: "Free shuttle from the airport" → "Yes, and it could offer Wi-Fi and coffee to enhance the guest experience."

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6. Stay on Topic (Focus on the Goal)

- Keep the discussion aligned with the brainstorming objective.
- Example: If brainstorming ways to improve a spa's customer experience, logo redesign ideas should be parked for another time

7. Make Sure Everyone Contributes

- Avoid brainstorming sessions where only a few people speak.
- Encourage quieter participants by directly inviting their input.
- Techniques like brainwriting can help collect ideas from introverts.

The Impact of Ground Rules

- Encourages open participation and fosters creativity.
- Used by Google, IDEO, and Toyota to promote innovation.
- Creates a culture where ideas are valued and respected, leading to better problem-solving.

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