

7 Brainstorming Rules & Techniques To Get More From Group Problem Solving

By Lyndsay Swinton

We all know that a camel was a horse designed by a committee right?! This perfectly demonstrates the unwritten law of business, where the output of a group does not equal the sum of the individual parts. Use these 7 brainstorming rules and techniques and be the exception to the rule, get more from group problem and keep the creative juices focused and flowing.



1. No idea too stupid

There is an ideal solution to your problem and brainstorming is the key to finding it. However, discussing, criticising or generally dismissing ideas as they come up reduces your chance of finding the secret treasure and render your brainstorming session useless.

2. Watch the clock

A little time pressure is good for brainstorming, so agree a maximum time for brainstorming, say 10 to 20 minutes, and stick to it. Start and finish on time, and encourage a brisk pace to maximise the time invested in this activity. Maybe assign a time-keeper to own this task.

3. Record your progress

All your good ideas are wasted hot air if they are not recorded methodically and more importantly, legibly. Consider using brainstorming software such as [MindManager©](#), post-it notes, flip charts or other such methods for getting your ideas down. Whatever you choose, make sure you bring all the necessary tools and materials with you!

4. Quantity not quality

The aim of brainstorming is to churn out as many ideas as you have time for BEFORE you do any reality check on their merits. Through quantity you will find quality, even though it might take some time and effort to get there. Ideas breed ideas.

5. Use both sides of your brain

Most work activities use your left brain, so make your right brain do some work for a change and get more from brainstorming. Use coloured or scented pens, random props or anything that says "creative and fun" and not "stuffy and staid".

6. Encourage the right mindset and have fun

Consider using an [ice-breaker](#) or creativity exercise to get group members into the right frame of mind and away from creativity blocking thoughts of unanswered emails, to-do lists and other priorities. And once brainstorming has started, remember performance anxiety will dry up creative juices quicker than a quick thing, so make sure the atmosphere is kept light and fluffy and above all, fun.

7. Let no good idea go unheard.

Not everyone enjoys brainstorming and group problem solving. Shyness, fear of looking stupid or silly may keep people quiet. Brush up on your facilitation skills and avoid the risk of great ideas being un-spoken or unheard.

Group problem solving can be effective, especially if you follow these 7 brainstorming rules and techniques. You can design a horse!



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