



Brainstorming

Why and When Is It Used?

Brainstorming was originally developed by Alex Osborn working in the advertising industry in the 1950s. It is the rapid pooling of all and any ideas that a group of people can come up with before any discussion or judgement takes place. It enables individuals and groups to:

- explore and solve problems;
- evaluate.

Every idea — no matter how bizarre or irrational — is recorded.

How Does It Work?

- Keep a relaxed atmosphere. Meetings should be disciplined but informal. If possible, choose an informal venue.
- Get the right size of team. The technique seems to work best with groups of five to seven people.
- Choose a leader. The leader checks that everyone understands what is going on and why.
- Define the problem clearly.
- Generate as many ideas as possible.
- Do not allow any evaluation and discussion.
- Give everyone equal opportunity to contribute.
- Write down *every* idea — clearly and where everyone can see them
- When all the ideas are listed, review them for clarification, making sure everyone understands each item. At this point you can eliminate duplications and remove ideas the group feels are no longer appropriate.
- Allow ideas to incubate. Brainstorm in sessions with perhaps a few days in between. This gives time for the team to let the ideas turn over in their mind, which often results in new ideas at a later session.

Approaches to Brainstorming

One at a time	A member of the group offers one idea and the session continues this way until everyone has had a chance to add to the list
Open door <i>or</i> freewheeling	Anyone who has a contribution speaks whenever he or she wants
Write it down	Ideas are written down rather than stated out loud, but everyone must be able to see each idea listed (this is sometimes called nominal group brainstorming)

MANAGING INNOVATION



Tools

Many variants on the basic theme of brainstorming exist and good websites include:

<http://www.brainstorming.co.uk/>

<http://www.mindtools.com/brainstm.html>