Brainstorming

Brainstorming encourages divergent thinking and the production of many different ideas in a short period of time. The goal is to generate as many ideas as possible with input from all group members. To make brainstorming work, don't spend time evaluating or judging ideas, just generate as many ideas as possible; allow the ideas to develop freely on a particular issue. Brainstorming is a time for free association of ideas and for opening new avenues of thought, not for assessing the practicality of a few suggestions.

Brainstorming Can Help A Group By:

• Increasing member involvement and participation
• Getting the most ideas in a short period of time
  • Making the session more fun, interesting, and stimulating
  • Reducing the need to look for the "right" idea in order to impress authority figures in the group
  • Reducing the competition, one-upmanship, or the formation of cliques during the problem solving process

Why Brainstorming Works

• Brainstorming will be more productive if ideas are not evaluated or discussed at the time they are proposed. This is important because education and experience have trained most of us to think judicially rather than creatively. By deferring judgment of the ideas, there can be more alternatives from which to choose.
• Group production of ideas can be more productive than separate, individual production of ideas. Experiments in group thinking have demonstrated that the average participant in this kind of creative collaboration can think of twice as many possible solutions as when working alone.
• The more ideas generated the better. In most types of problem-solving, it is far more likely to choose the right path toward the solution if 10 ideas are suggested as possible alternatives instead of only two or three.

A Brainstorming Exercise

Rules

• During the first phase all criticism or evaluation of an idea is ruled out. Ideas are suggested and placed before the group without evaluation or critical analysis.
• Wild ideas are expected in the spontaneity that evolves when the group suspends judgment. Practical considerations are not important at this point. The session is to be freewheeling.
• Piggybacking on the suggestions of others is to be allowed and encouraged.

Phase One
- Divide a large organization into small groups limiting each to no more than seven members. Each group is given a newsprint pad and marker.
- One person from each group is assigned to write down the brainstorming suggestions. Remember, each suggestion is written down and no evaluation or discussion is taken at that time.

**Phase Two**

- Evaluate the suggestions and as a small group, rank them.
- The groups then join together, and one person from each small group presents the suggestions to the large group.
- After hearing the small group's suggestions, the large group ranks them as a whole.
- Discuss the alternatives, and make a decision.