



Overview

Idea brainstorming with a group of colleagues is a compelling technique. It creates new ideas, solves problems, motivates and develops teams. It is used for new product or service ideas, process improvements, marketing campaigns, employee satisfaction programs, and virtually any other topic that would benefit from creative group input.

Idea brainstorming is an effective way to generate ideas on a specific issue and then determine which idea – or ideas – is the best solution. This technique is typically performed in a relaxed environment. If participants feel free to relax they'll stretch their minds further and therefore generate more abundant and creative ideas.

Brainstorming works best with a varied group of people. Participants should come from various activities across the organization (and externally) with different backgrounds and skill sets. Even in specialist areas, outsiders can bring fresh ideas that can inspire the local experts.

The existence of legendary myths surrounding brainstorming may present impediments to success and should be refuted during the opening of a session. They include:

- Let's get only the known experts to participate and brainstorm a solution
- I am not a creative person and will not be able to contribute
- That is a brainless or ridiculous idea and should not be raised
- Constructive criticism will help improve the idea(s) from my colleagues
- That's a good idea. Let's run with it now
- It isn't broke so lets not fix it

There are four basic rules in brainstorming. These are intended to reduce the social inhibitions that occur in groups and therefore stimulate the generation of new ideas. The expected result is a dynamic synergy that will dramatically increase the creativity of the entire group.

1. Focus on quantity
2. No criticism
3. Unusual ideas are welcome
4. Combine and improve ideas

TKCI Approach

The TKCI Idea Brainstorming Session approach includes the below activities:

- Identify and quantify the problem(s) and objectives
- Create a background memo on the problem
- Select diversified participants
- Create a list of lead questions for the session
- Determine criteria and scoring systems for evaluating ideas
- Conduct session; use one or a combination of below techniques:
 - Nominal group technique
 - Group passing technique
 - Team idea mapping method
 - Electronic brainstorming
 - Directed brainstorming
 - Individual brainstorming
- Within above technique(s):
 - Categorize, condense, combine, and refine ideas
 - Assess and analyze effects or results
 - Prioritize options/rank list as appropriate.
 - Agree action and timescale.
 - Control and monitor follow-up
- Create forward action plan on implementing the approved ideas

The Bottom Line

Use idea brainstorming effectively and you will see exceptional results in improving the organization, performance, and developing the team. For example would the below provide a significant benefit to your organization:

- What if you created a new business model in a value-producing market segment?
- What if you developed new ways of saving money?
- What if you developed a new creative product or solution which became the market leader?
- What if you could cut down paperwork and bureaucracy?
- What if you improved mission-critical decision-making?