



Better Brainstorming

Brainstorming can be a really good way of getting lots of ideas from a group of people. But it can also be dull and predictable. It works best if you follow these simple guidelines.

Plan

Decide if a brainstorm is **actually what you need** right now. It's great for generating **lots of new ideas** (but not for analysis or choosing between things you already know about).

You need **time and space**. Think about where you will do this, and when.

You need the **right people** and the **right facilitator**. This may not be the people you think of initially – or even the people you usually work with. If you want fresh ideas, why not include outsiders, your users, or your customers?

Tell people what the brainstorm is for. What do you want to have by the end of the session?

Warm-up.

Like any exercise, it's best to warm up first. Get the group to brainstorm something else for a few minutes – 101 uses for a paperclip; 20 ways to travel to the moon; design a machine to wake them up in the morning; how a mouse could weigh an elephant...

Rules.

Remind everyone of these simple rules at the beginning of **every** session.

- **Quantity not Quality**
The best way to get *good* ideas is to get *lots of* ideas
- **Encourage the extraordinary**
Whacky and unusual ideas are welcome. They spark off new trains of thought.
- **Delay judgement**
Don't criticise ideas during the brainstorm. Add to them instead.
- **Build on the ideas of others**
Cross-fertilise. Join ideas together. Spin them into new ideas.
- **All ideas belong to the group**
This is a group process. The boss's ideas aren't necessarily the best.

Process.

Make sure you collect **all** the ideas, deferring judgement and encouraging fun and creativity.

Focus.

At the end identify the most promising suggestions. Spend some time linking these to the objectives for the session. But don't rush to analyse them. That comes later.

Thanks.

This was a shared process and it's good to feed back the results to the whole group in due course. They will be proud to see the difference they have made – even if the details have changed since the brainstorm.