



How to hold a successful brainstorm session

Brainstorm sessions are not only a powerful tool to unlock creativity and problem-solve but they're a terrific way to engage and motivate the team. Like any meeting, the brainstorm session will take time out of the group's busy schedule. So it's important that the time is used wisely – planning and structure is key.

What's the point?

Prior to the session ensure everyone is aware of the objective. If possible, do this when inviting people to the meeting so that they can come prepared. Keep it simple – this will help you keep the session on track.

Tame the beast

There's a fine line between creativity and chaos, your role as facilitator is to capture the random ideas thrown at you. Sounds obvious, but you need to have a flip chart or other means to write up the information and pin it around the room for everyone to see. This is crucial, as brainstorming needs to involve the team – that means everyone must be able to see what's happening.



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Encourage everyone to participate, dismiss nothing and prevent others from pouring scorn on some of the more outrageous ideas – people won't participate if suggestions are criticised.

Put a time limit on the production of ideas and when the time is up and ideas exhausted link up the ideas and put them into categories. Condense and refine the ideas by making new headings or lists. The weaker ideas can be tactfully grouped into other themes to avoid dismissing or rejecting contributions.

Involve the group to assess, evaluate and analyse the validity of the ideas – are they on brief, are they logistically feasible. Then develop and prioritise the ideas so you end up with a clearer set of options.

Complete the circle

Agree with the team what the actions will be. Agree a timescale and who's responsible. Circulate notes and give feedback. A clear and positive outcome will help the team feel their effort and contribution was worthwhile. And when people see that their efforts have resulted in action and change, they will be motivated and keen to help again.