

## Brainstorming for Success

Brainstorming is a useful and popular tool that you can use to develop highly creative solutions to a problem. It is particularly helpful when you need to break out of stale, established patterns of thinking, so that you can develop new ways of looking at things. This can be when you need to develop new opportunities, where you want to improve the service that you offer, or when existing approaches just aren't giving you the results you want.

In 1941 Alex Osborn, an advertising executive, found that conventional business meetings were inhibiting the creation of new ideas and proposed some rules designed to help stimulate them. He was looking for rules which would give people the freedom of mind and action to spark off and reveal new ideas. To "think up" was originally the term he used to describe the process he developed, and that in turn came to be known as "brainstorming". He described brainstorming as "a conference technique by which a group attempts to find a solution for a specific problem by amassing all the ideas spontaneously by its members". The rules he came up with are the following:

- No criticism of ideas. Adverse judgment of ideas must be withheld until later.
- Go for large quantities of ideas. The greater the number of ideas, the more the likelihood of useful ideas.
- Build on each others ideas. Combination and improvement are sought. Suggest how ideas of others can be turned into better ideas or how two or more ideas can be joined.
- Encourage wild and exaggerated ideas. It is easier to tame down an ideas than to think it up.

He found that when these rules were followed, a lot more ideas were created and that a greater quantity of original ideas gave rise to a greater quantity of useful ideas. Quantity produced quality. With Osborn's four basic rules, groups were able to work together and generate 50 to 500 ideas in five minutes.

You can read Alex Osborn's original approach in his book "Applied Imagination".

### Wishful Thinking

It can be useful to dream and then consider how to meet your ideal. Use your ideal solution to set goals and generate ideas of how it can be obtained, or how part of it can be obtained. Some wishful questions you might ask yourself might be: What would my perfect solution be? What effect would my ideal solution have? What if money/morals/laws did not matter at all? What would I do if I had unlimited power and resources? What would my ideal solution look like? Once you have dreamed of your perfect solution, you must then look at how much of it can be put into practice and how you can achieve it. See what practical benefits you can get from the perfect solutions.

### Post it Note Mural

By brainstorming a completely unrelated topic, you can get a feel for the brainstorming process and begin to warm up and exercise the parts of the brain that will be put to work during the actual brainstorming session. Sample: "*What energizes you?*" or "*List three wishes.*"

### Starbursts

This form of brainstorming that focuses on generating questions about an idea or challenge in a comprehensive way. It's a useful tool to support your problem solving or decision making processes by helping you to understand all aspects and options more fully.

**Number Challenge:** Generate a list of possible solutions to a current issue or problem.

### **A - Z Brainstorming Activity**

Practice brainstorming to expand your ideas and think of diverse and creative solutions to the problem. To complete this activity, think of an issue. What will I buy at the grocery store? What activities is fun for me? Once you define the problem to solve try to brainstorm several solutions - each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet. For example: What are new marketing strategies for my business? A - advertising, B - business cards, C - call clients, D - diversify marketing tools, E - energize my website. Hang the page in a visible location to add to it as you think of new ideas. Encourage others to add their ideas.

### **Timeline Brainstorming**

Tonight I will \_\_\_\_\_

Tomorrow I will \_\_\_\_\_

By Friday I will \_\_\_\_\_

### **Final Thought**

Lots of people have learned lots of tricks to make brainstorming more effective. Some of the more useful include:

- Write it all down! Research has shown that the ideas that don't get written down are the most creative! An effort must be made to get every idea recorded and considered.
- Intelligent Ignorance. Expertise in an area can really slow down flexibility and fluency.
- Including someone who is bright but does not know what everybody else knows about the area can often find or trigger truly creative opportunities.
- What's good about it? It is often helpful to take the worst ideas, or the toughest part of the problem and ask the question "But what's good about it?" and creatively explore the possibilities.
- Make Things Worse! When a group is trying to make things better, it is good to loosen up their creativity by asking them to go the other way.
- The Worst Idea! A great exercise is to challenge a group to take the worst idea on the list and make it work in some fashion. About 20% of the time you get a worth while idea and most of the time you get some good team building laughter.
- Have Fun! Creativity and humor are practically identical. Whenever people loosen up the assumptions and categories enough to find creative ideas, they laugh a lot. If your people are not laughing during a brainstorming session, they are doing it wrong!

“A dream is your creative vision for your life in the future. You must break out of your current comfort zone and become comfortable with the unfamiliar and the unknown.”

**Need more ideas? Visit: [www.allthedaze.com](http://www.allthedaze.com) for “all the daze” you want to be creative.**

**c. 2010 Marcia Arpin, All the DAZE Productions**