**Brainstorming**

**Description and Meaning:**

Brainstorming is a simple way for a group to generate multiple ideas such as possible solutions to a known problem.

**When to Use:**

When you need as many ideas as possible. The classic method of round-the-table suggestions helps solve process improvement problems.

**Method:**

1- Follow the below to start a brainstorming session:

* The topic is agreed upon and written in clear terms in view of the group.
* The leader/ facilitator asks for ideas from the group.
* Each idea is written down without discussion, analysis, or criticism.
* The process is continued until the flow of ideas stops.

2- More structured ways:

* A round-robin approach involves asking each person in the group to state one idea and write it.
* If they have none, they simply pass.
* The next person is asked for one idea, then the next, until there are no more ideas.

3- Crawford Slip Method - Useful to improve trust among team members. Or when dealing with a particularly sensitive issue. The anonymous nature of this method allows people to feel free to provide their ideas. The team often finds that several people have the same idea, which begins to build common ground.

* Asks each person to create his or her own list of ideas on a slip paper.
* Set a determined time limit, 5 - 10 minutes.
* Slips are subsequently given to a trusted individual who compiles them into a single list.

**EXAMPLE:**

Here's an example taken from one of our brainstorming creativity seminars

**Problem:**

An umbrella manufacturer has an unsold stock of 500,000 old-fashioned, black umbrellas in the warehouse. How do you liberate the warehouse space while minimizing costs?

**List of Ideas:**

* Publicity carriers for firms
* Give out free umbrellas in rainy town centers
* Use material to make hats and coats
* Use upside down as irrigation devices
* Sell to UK
* Sell two as Carry Kit to the Third World
* Burn down the warehouse and collect the insurance
* Make a giant sculpture
* Use struts as bicycle spokes
* Send to northern Norway as snow-bound airport signaling device (several hundred could be opened and closed to spell out messages to approaching aircraft!)
* Sell to Africa as parasols, etc.

**Best Three Ideas After 5-point Multivoting :**

1- Use upside down as irrigation devices

2- Sell two umbrellas + a pole as a

 Carry Kit

 To Third World

3- Make a giant sculpture of an umbrella for publicity

**Brainstorming guidelines:**

There are four basic rules in brainstorming. These reduce the social inhibitions that occur in groups and therefore stimulate the generation of new ideas.

1. Focus on quantity:

This rule enhances divergent production, aims to facilitate problem solving through the maxim, quantity breeds quality. The greater the number of ideas generated, the greater the chance of producing a radical and effective solution.

2. No criticism:

During group brainstorming, put criticism on hold. Instead of immediately stating what might be wrong with an idea, the participants focus on extending or adding to it. Reserve positive criticism for the later selection stage of the process.

Never use negative criticism. By suspending judgment, one creates a supportive atmosphere where participants feel free to generate unusual ideas.

3. Unusual ideas are welcome:

To get a good and long list of ideas, encourage unusual ideas. They open new ways of thinking and provide better solutions than regular ideas. They can be generated by looking from problem from another perspective and setting aside assumptions.

4. Combine and improve ideas:

Good ideas can be combined to form a single very good idea, as suggested by the slogan "1+1=3". This approach leads to better and more complete ideas than merely generating new ideas alone. Allow idea association to build new ideas.