

6 Make your brain rain

What?

This is a tool to generate many ideas in order to reach decisions or propose creative solutions. You have surely heard about brainstorming.

Time?

At least 60 minutes.

Why?

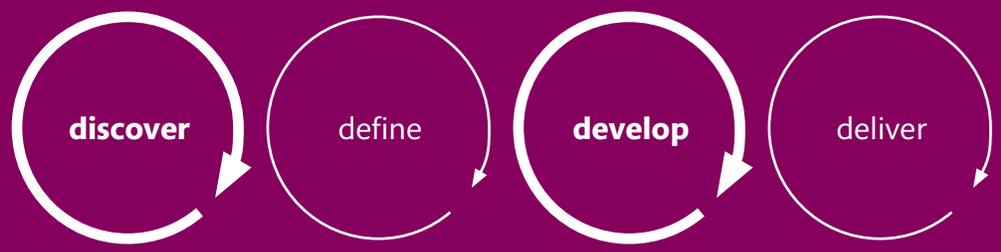
Brainstorming aims to generate ideas and propose various solutions, decisions or approaches. The term brainstorming comes from the idea of letting the brain think freely about a certain question or a proposed topic. This tool is well suited for groups of about 5-15 people. The participants will develop a better understanding of the thought processes and reasoning of other group members, thus facilitating the group process.

What is needed?

You will need post-its (if you want), pens, paper, a whiteboard or a wall to put up post-its. If you have access to a camera you can use it to document the results. As facilitator you will also have prepared a well-defined question or a topic that the group will brainstorm around.

How?

1. Begin by introducing the question or the topic. Make sure that the group is on the same page and that everyone has a shared understanding of the topic around which the group will brainstorm.
2. Begin individually. Give every participant time to come up with thoughts and ideas around the topic and to write them down on post-its.
3. Don't criticize or question during the idea generation phase, and save questions and comments for the discussion.
4. When every individual participant is done, you can start to share what you have come up with by putting the post-its on a whiteboard or wall.
5. Each participant should talk about their thoughts and post-its as she/he puts them up on the board.
6. If there are questions in the group, for example if a participant wants to ask questions about an idea that someone else has, let those come up now. Ideas that are irrelevant, or that the group cannot come to an agreement about can be taken away.
7. When you have gotten this far, you can choose either to continue the discussion by developing the ideas on the board, or to start grouping the ideas that are presented.



8. Look for connections and interpretations. Also look for things that are not on the board. Gaps can be interesting too.

9. Wrap up together with the participants by going through the ideas, the groupings, or the summaries that have been agreed upon.

Hints!

Create a good and creative atmosphere within the group. Be well prepared as facilitator, know your group and do your best to create a safe feeling of trust within the group. The more the group can let go of inhibitions, the more ideas will be generated through the brainstorm. Let the exercise take some time, the participants should have enough opportunity to exhaust their ideas.



Read more

A large amount of literature about brainstorming is available online. Here are some suggested readings, partly about how you can facilitate the exercise, and partly references to Osborn, the father of brainstorming:

Hullinger, J. (2014, 30 June). The Science of Brainstorming. *Fast Company*. Retrieved 2015-10-02 from <http://www.fastcompany.com/3032418/the-future-of-work/the-science-of-brainstorming>

Osborn, A.F. (1963). *Applied Imagination: Principles and Procedures of Creative Problem Solving* (3 uppl.). New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Osborn, A.F. (1948). *Your Creative Power*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Swaid, S.M. (2014, 18 November). The Critical Lead Time to Eruption in Brainstorming Sessions. *InnovationManagement.se*. Retrieved 2015-10-02 from <http://www.innovationmanagement.se/2014/11/18/the-critical-lead-time-to-eruption-in-brainstorming-sessions/>