

BRAINSTORMING



Brainstorming is a technique used with teams to problem solve and generate creative solutions for the task at hand. The idea of brainstorming is to create a safe environment for free-flowing ideas and thoughts. Brainstorming is best accomplished when the group is allowed to open up and think divergently. The goal of any brainstorming session is to challenge the current paradigm.

Paradigm: Is our predetermined thought(s) on the way something is or has to be. Our paradigm sometimes limits us from seeing what is possible.

There are two types of Brainstorming sessions:

Structured – Teams use formal tools to capture and categorize ideas.

Example: Affinity diagrams, fishbone diagrams and 5-Whys.

Unstructured – Team members participate in spontaneous free flow of ideas at any time.

Example: Flip chart open forum.

Standard Brainstorming Guidelines

- Start with a broad, open-ended question for the team to work with.
- Discourage criticism/discussion of ideas during the free-thinking part of the exercise. Instead, build on those ideas that are given.
- Encourage seemingly wild idea clarify ideas if needed, but then move on quickly.
- Encourage everyone to participate, this can be done by using an “all around the table approach”.
- When the rate of new ideas slows, you know you have exhausted the process and are ready to move on to idea organization.

Tools to Consider to Help Organize your Brainstorming Sessions

1. Affinity Diagram
2. Flip Chart Open Forum
3. Fishbone
4. 5 Whys
5. Failure Mode Effects Analysis (FMEA)