

BRAINSTORMING

Student Organization Development Center

1310 Michigan Union University of Michigan 763-5900

Is your group stumped for new ideas? Do you do the same activities the same old way year after year? Do the leaders and maybe just a few others seem to do all the talking?

Brainstorming may be just the technique to rejuvenate your organization and get everyone excited and involved. The purpose of this method is to get out as many ideas as possible - the more you have to choose from, the better your final choice will be! You can use brainstorming for almost anything - program ideas, themes, slogans, publicity, group goals and problem-solving.

The rules for brainstorming are deceptively simple - be sure the group understands them and someone has the job of making sure they're followed.

FIRST OF ALL . . . SET THE STAGE . . .

1. Set a time limit - 10 to 20 minutes, depending upon the size of your group and the complexity of the issue.
2. The best group size is 3 - 15 people. If you have more, break into two or more groups and brainstorm simultaneously.
3. The question or issue must be one to which all participants can speak. Focus on only one issue.
4. Record all responses on a blackboard or big sheets of newsprint so everyone can see them; don't record the name of the person suggesting. Record only key words + phrases - not word for word.

SECONDLY . . . EXPLAIN (AND POSSIBLY POST) THE FOLLOWING "RULES"

1. Do not discuss ideas
2. Don't criticize, praise or judge
3. Be spontaneous - no hand-raising, just call out
4. Repetitions are OK
5. Quantity counts
6. Build on each other's ideas - "hitch-hiking" or "piggy-backing" is encouraged
7. Enjoy the silences - often the best ideas come out of them
8. OK to be outrageous, even silly

THIRDLY . . . MAKE GOOD USE OF YOUR MEMBER'S CREATIVITY . . .

1. If several groups brainstormed the same idea, put the lists on the wall and let everyone read each other's work.
2. Group ideas into related categories for review.

3. Decide which ideas are most promising and which can be eliminated; can be done by group putting pluses and minuses by items.
4. Rank-order the most promising.
5. Select those with greatest potential and high-ranking priority for either implementation or refinement by committee.
6. Be sure to utilize the ideas generated. It's extremely demoralizing for a group to invest its time, energy and creativity and have its ideas disappear. On the other hand, seeing your idea come to fruition is extremely rewarding.

Thank you for your interest in "Brainstorming". There are many other techniques for improving the decision-making of your group. For more information on this and other leadership topics, visit the Student Organization Development Center (SODC). We have lots of information and staff available on a walk-in basis (1310 Michigan Union) or call for an appointment (763-5900).

References:

Pfeiffer and Jones; 1972 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators

Schindler-Rainmann E. and Lippitt, R.; Taking Your Meetings Out of the Doldrums

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