

Top 10 Tips – A guide to brainstorming

Supplied by: *Partner Electronics Ltd*



If you have an idea that you want to develop or a problem that needs to be solved, then brainstorming is a technique that is very powerful. If done correctly it also very useful in other ways too. It can bring a team of people together, it can motivate and it ensures everyone understands the ideas, the problem and the final solution.

- 1.** Find a location that's right for you. It's often best to move away from your normal location in the office to avoid being distracted by the phone or visitors. This could be a meeting room, or just the other end of the office. If the weather is fine, go outside. A change of location is sometimes all that's needed to stimulate new ideas.
- 2.** Invite the whole team. It is important to get as many ideas as possible. Don't exclude people. This is especially useful if you have people in the team that are not used to working together. If possible invite them personally.
- 3.** Start by asking for ideas. Don't exclude any idea at this stage and never be critical of any ideas. Take the idea at face value. Don't try to work out the detail - not yet at least.
- 4.** Acknowledge each idea. Ideally write down the ideas. A large white board or flip-chart is good for this, or just cover a wall in Sticky Notes. Letting people see each other's ideas is important. It encourages new ideas. One person's idea can often trigger a new idea from someone else.
- 5.** Don't let anyone hog the limelight including yourself. Try to be even handed and allow everyone a chance to contribute.
- 6.** Once you have lots of ideas, the next thing to do is to organise them. Remember to keep everyone involved. Categorising the ideas can help. Often several ideas will be similar and can be combined. Look for common themes. This process can also generate new ideas. Try to guide people along, developing the most promising routes. You now need their creativity to focus in on the detail.
- 7.** Focus on a few of the most promising ideas. Get people to brainstorm around these. Expand each idea. What are the problems with these ideas? Brainstorm problem areas.
- 8.** Fill in some of the detail, but don't get bogged down in the trivial. Detail can be filled in later and is best done outside of the session by less people.
- 9.** Keep the session short. Stop the brainstorming as soon as you have a solution. Don't let the session drag on. You don't want people to get fidgety, as it not good for ideas.
- 10.** Before ending the meeting, summarise your solution. Make sure that the people that need to implement the solution know who they are and what needs to be done. Remember at the end of the session to thank everyone for attending and for all the ideas submitted. We use brainstorming as a day-to-day tool to help us solve both our own and our customers technical problems. We know that it is truly an invaluable and effective tool.

Top 10 Tips Supplied by...

Partner Electronics Ltd
Silverstone Innovation Centre
Silverstone Circuit
SILVERSTONE
NN12 8GX
Tel: 01327 856140
Web: www.partnerelectronics.com

