

Leadersheet

Brainstorming

Is your group stumped for new ideas? Do you do the same activities the same old way year after year? Do the leaders and 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 are followed.

First: 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 about which all participants can speak. Focus on only one issue at time.
4. Record all responses on a blackboard or big sheets of newsprint so everyone can see them but not the name of the person suggesting. Record only key words and phrases, not word for word.

Second: Explain the Rules

1. Do not discuss ideas
2. Do not 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. It is ok to be outrageous, even silly

Third: Use of the Members' 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. Try putting pluses and minuses by items.
4. Rank the most promising.
5. Select those with greatest potential and high-ranking priority for implementation or refinement.
6. Follow-up. If the ideas are to be implemented successfully, ask for updates on a regular basis.
7. Review and evaluate your ideas as they are being implemented. Make any changes deemed necessary by the group.
8. Be sure to utilize the ideas generated. It is extremely demoralizing for a group to invest its time, energy and creativity and have the idea disappear. Seeing your ideas come to fruition however, is extremely rewarding.

REFERENCES

Pfeiffer and Jones; 1972 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators.
Schindler-Rainmann E. and Lippitt, R.; Taking Your Meetings Out of the Doldrums.