



Stage

Gather

4 to 8 participants are best. Too many people in the room dampens participation and enables hierarchies.

Morning meetings are best.

Focus

Establish an agenda that the decision makers agree on.

Define

Define the outline of the problem: Why are you here?

Establish a time frame for the major areas of the activity, 20 to 30 minute sections work well, or divide it into multiple rounds of brainstorm/sort.

Assign the facilitator

Keeps the conversation moving, negotiates speakers, ensures a single conversation. Writes down key ideas on a whiteboard or oversize post-its without editorializing. Seeing the ideas helps people create new ones through association.

Everyone else is a participant & records loosely what has been said.



Storm

Ingest

Always bring something to munch on. It gets peoples jaws working. Don't make it too rich or people will resent you. Ginger snaps or graham crackers are non-threatening.

Defer

Judgement. Nothing kills a brainstorm faster than someone pulling rank and killing the flow.

Brainstorm

No idea is a bad idea; no one is the boss.

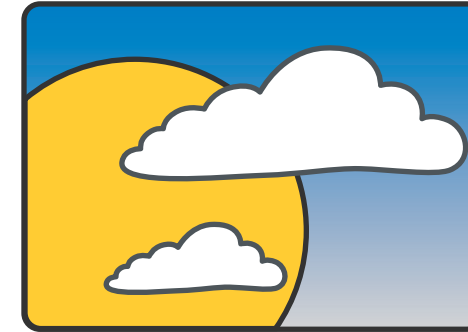
Quantity is good. The more ideas, parts of ideas, follow ups to ideas, the better.

Hop skip & jump

Feel free to piggyback another person's idea. Take an idea & change it a bit, tack another thought onto it, or imagine it's opposite. Three really dumb ideas can lead to a great one. Let them travel.

Encourage crazy ideas. Outrageous or humorous ideas can be very good, or lead to good ideas. Free-wheeling is good.

Keep your sense of humor. People talk more & think better when they are relaxed.



Distill

Sort

Afterwards, sort the ideas. This done at the end of the same session with the same players. Make sure you tell the group that you are changing gears into critique mode; it is best to set a specific time for this.

_ Combine the ones that feel like duplicates.

_ Group the ones that seem to align.

_ Number the remaining ideas.

_ Vote &/or prioritize the ideas.

Document & Collect

The group adds photos and notes to a wiki page. Using a wiki for this can allow the brainstorm to function as the start of a process, rather than a sum.

Consider

Often the brainstorm will kickstart a set of ideas that continues for days, weeks or months afterwards.



Roadblocks:

1] Someone in authority pulls a power move. It's best to remove them from the room if this happens.

2] People start critiquing & judging ideas. There are no bad ideas, just ones that somebody else hasn't bounced off yet.

3] A participant obsesses about a particular issue & kills the flow. Note the issue with respect & establish a time or forum to address it.