

A WAY TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION: BRAINSTORMING*

Brainstorming is a procedure for generating many spontaneous and diverse ideas in a short period of time. The aim of brainstorming is to stimulate creative and innovative solutions to a problem. It is an occasion for free association of ideas and for opening up new avenues of thought. Here are some reasons why brainstorming helps problem-solving groups become more creative:

- It stimulates full participation of all group members.
- It reduces the need to look for the "right" idea; all ideas, even the outlandish, are encouraged.
- It is fun, interesting, and stimulating.

To ensure success in a brainstorming session, follow these ground rules:

- Don't criticize while brainstorming.
- The wilder the idea, the better. Even offbeat, impractical suggestions may suggest practical ideas to other members.
- Quantity counts. The more ideas, the greater the chance for a good idea.
- Build on the ideas of others. Pool your creativity. Feel free to improve on a previous idea or to combine several ideas.
- Choose a person to record all ideas on newsprint briefly and accurately. Ideas should be recorded for everyone to see.

Be sure to stop all criticism, whether stated or implied by voice or manner. Everyone must feel completely free to express any ideas. The result of this process should be a list of creative new ideas. Following brainstorming, the idea list must be critically screened.

Encourage group members to review their list and to state four or five priority items. If several groups have brainstormed, arrange for them to review all the list and mark ideas they find constructive. Look for something sound in even the wildest idea. Don't attribute ideas to individuals, but rather to the brainstorming process. When several groups are reporting back to the large group, employ the following technique to get the most from the buzz sessions:

1. Have two or three easels with newsprint and large magic markers (or chalkboard and chalk)
2. Take only one idea from a small group.
3. Alternate the recorders.
4. Repeat step 2 and 3 until all ideas are before the large group.

This four-step technique makes recording rapid. All small groups will have at least one idea, and everyone will feel a sense of involvement.