

Brainstorming

Is your group stumped for new ideas? Do you do the same things year after year? A brainstorming session may be just the thing to rejuvenate your organization.

SET THE STAGE

1. Set a time limit for your brainstorming session. Usually 10-20 minutes is sufficient, 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 smaller groups and brainstorm simultaneously. After you finish, come back together and merge your ideas.
3. Determine the question or issue upon which you are brainstorming. Focus on only one issue at a time.
4. All responses should be recorded on a chalkboard or on big sheets of newsprint so everyone can see them. Record only key phrases and words: do not attempt to write the suggestions word for word.

THE RULES

Explain the following to the group before you start:

1. Brainstorming is not a discussion. It is simply "throwing out" ideas.
2. Do not evaluate the ideas while brainstorming.
3. Be spontaneous-no hand raising necessary, just call out ideas.
4. "Repeats" are OK.
5. Quantity counts (the more the better).
6. Build on each other's ideas-"hitch-hiking" or "piggy-backing" is encouraged.
7. Moments of silence are OK-often the best ideas come out of them.
8. Be outrageous, silliness is OK.

SIFT AND SORT

1. If there are 'repeats' cross them off the list.
2. Group related ideas together.
3. Decide which ideas are promising or reasonable, and cross out those that are not.
4. Rank-order the ideas you want to work on and get started.
5. Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meetings. Weak areas can be analyzed and improved for more productive meetings.