

TMP'S TOP TEN BRAINSTORMING TIPS

Group idea generation requires a balance of free, associative thinking, combined with goal direction, unobtrusive discipline and a little “out of the box” guidance. Here are some tips in reverse order of importance:

Tip Number 10

Avoid sidebars. Brainstorming involves inclusivity. Side conversations and body language (e.g., eye rolling) disrupt the practical etiquette of brainstorming.

Tip Number 9

Brainstorming is not a debate. There is a time to persuade. There is a time to speak your mind. There is a time to vote. All come later, not during.

Tip Number 8

Honor the so-called off-the-wall idea. Almost any good idea was once off the wall for most. Wet blanketing could have stopped the iPod.

Tip Number 7

See the synergy between the offbeat and mainstream. As Everett Rogers has shown in the popular *The Diffusion of Innovations*, change usually moves from the pioneers and early adopters to the majorities and the mainstream. Why limit ideas to what you think will work now?

Tip Number 6

Your first thought may be the best. Or maybe it isn't. However, as Malcolm Gladwell has shown in *Blink*, if you have the ability for quick ideas, you can hit lots of nails on the head. And you'll spark the session.

Tip Number 5

Ensure the moderator's active neutrality. Whiteboards encourage not power, but facilitation. The moderator can say anything that generates new perspectives from others... as long as it doesn't presume authority over the gathering.

Tip Number 4

Appreciate diverse thinking styles. If everyone thinks the same way, innovation doesn't have much chance to break through. Brainstorming is great time to bring together your ENFJ and ISTP personality types as well as everyone else. That goes for just about every kind of diversity.

Tip Number 3

Put away the judging cap until later. Evaluating ideas on the spot simply fizzes a brainstorming session. Inhibiting people leads to less creativity.

Tip Number 2

Know who should come, where to start and where to stop. A good idea generation session consists of about 10 to 12 people. Smaller becomes a conversation that can drag. Larger can become unwieldy. In any case, everyone should know why they're there, and the facilitator should move to closure and evaluation at a high point.

Tip Number 1

Have fun.

