

## **Brainstorming Approach And Mind Mapping In Synergy Creating Activity**

**Harashit Kumar Mandal**

*DIM, 2 Year PGDPM & IR, MBA (HR)  
The Global Open University, Nagaland*

### **Abstract**

*Brainstorming* is a group or individual creativity technique by which efforts are made to find a conclusion for a specific problem by gathering a list of ideas spontaneously contributed by its member(s). When *individual brainstorm* on their own, they can come up with more ideas (and often better quality ideas), than groups of people who brainstorm together. When brainstorming on one's own, consider using *Mind Maps* to arrange and develop ideas. *Group Brainstorming* can develop ideas in more depth than individual brainstorming and it can be great for *organizational team building and synergy creating activity*.

**Keywords:** Brainstorming, Group Brainstorming, Individual Brainstorming, Mind Mapping, Organizational Team Building.

### **Introduction**

*Brainstorming* is a popular tool in generating many radical, creative ideas. It is particularly useful when one wants to break out of state, established patterns of thinking, so that one can develop new ways of looking at things. It also helps one overcome many of the issues that can make group problem-solving a sterile and unsatisfactory process. 'Brainstorming in solitary' is known as '*Individual Brainstorming*'. Study has shown that when individuals brainstorm on their own, they come up with more ideas. When Brainstorming on one's own, consider using *Mind Maps* to arrange and develop ideas. *Group Brainstorming* is used with one's team, it helps one bring the diverse experience of all team members into play during problem solving. This increases the richness of ideas explored, meaning that one can find better solutions to the problems one face. It can also help one get buy in from team

members for the solution chosen---after all, they were involved in developing it. What's more, because brainstorming is fun, it helps team members bond with one-another as they solve problems in a positive, rewarding environment and develop an attitude for *organizational team building and synergy creating activity*.

### **Origin of Brainstorming**

The original approach to brainstorming was developed by Madison Avenue advertising executive, *Alex Faickney Osborn*, in 1950s. He began developing methods for creative problem solving in 1939. He was frustrated by employees' inability to develop creative ideas individually for ad campaigns. In response he began hosting group-thinking sessions and discovered a significant improvement in the quality and quantity of ideas produced by employees. Osborn outlined the method in his 1953 book *Applied Imagination*. Since then, many researchers have explored the techniques and have identified issues with it.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Osborn's Method of Brainstorming.** Osborn claimed that there are two principles which contribute to "*ideative efficacy*." They are- 1. *Defer judgment* and 2. *Reach for quantity*.

Following these principles, he established four general rules of brainstorming with intention *to reduce social inhibitions among group members, stimulate idea generation and increase overall creativity of the group*.

**Osborn's four general rules of brainstorming.** i. Focus on quantity, ii. Withhold Criticism, iii. Welcome unusual ideas, iv. Combine and improve ideas.

**i. Focus on quantity.** This rule is a means of enhancing divergent production, aiming to facilitate problem solving through the maxim *quantity breeds quality*. The assumption is that the greater the number of ideas generated, the greater the chance of producing a radical and effective solution.

We can say, *The number of Ideas  $\alpha$  The chances of Radical Solution*.

**ii. Withhold criticism.** In brainstorming, criticism of ideas generated should be put '*on hold*'. Instead, participants should focus on extending or adding to ideas, reserving criticism for a later '*critical stage*' of the process. By suspending judgment, participants will feel free to generate unusual ideas.

**iii. Welcome unusual ideas.** To get a good and long list of ideas, unusual ideas are welcomed. They can be generated by looking from new perspectives and suspending assumptions. These new ways of thinking may provide better solutions.

**iv. Combine and improve ideas.** Good ideas may be combined to form a single better good idea, as suggested by the slogan "*1+1=3*". It is believed to simulate the building of ideas by a process of association.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Why use Brainstorming?

Conventional group problem-solving can be fraught with problems. Brainstorming provides a freewheeling environment in which everyone is encouraged to participate. All participants are asked to contribute fully and fairly, liberating people to develop a rich array of creative solutions to the problems they're facing.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Variation of Brainstorming

- 1. Nominal group technique.** The nominal group technique is a type of brainstorming that encourages all participants to have an equal say in the process. It is also used to generate a ranked list of ideas. Participants are asked to write their ideas anonymously.
- 2. Group passing technique.** Each person in a circular group writes down one idea, and then passes the piece of paper to the next person, who adds some thoughts. This continues until everybody gets his or her original piece of paper back.
- 3. Team idea mapping method.** This method of brainstorming works by the method of association. The process begins with a well-defined topic. Each participant brainstorms individually, then all the ideas are merged onto one *large idea map*.<sup>[4]</sup>
- 4. Electronic brainstorming.** It is a computerized version of the manual brainstorming technique typically supported by an electronic meeting system (EMS) but simpler forms can also be done via email and may be browser based, or use peer-to-peer software.<sup>[5]</sup> Software solutions for this technique include web applications such as *Monsoon*<sup>[6]</sup> and desktop software such as *ThinkTank*. Proponents such as Gallupe, *et al.* argue that electronic brainstorming eliminates many of the problems of standard brainstorming, including production blocking and evaluation apprehension.<sup>[7]</sup>
- 5. Directed brainstorming.** Directed brainstorming is a variation of electronic brainstorming. It can be done manually or with computers. Directed brainstorming works when the solution space (that is, the set of criteria for evaluating a good idea) is known prior to the session.<sup>[8]</sup>
- 6. Guided brainstorming.** A guided brainstorming session is time set aside to brainstorm either individually or as a collective group about a particular subject under the constraints of perspective and time. Participants are asked to adopt different mindsets for pre-defined period of time while contributing their ideas to a *central mind map* drawn by a pre-appointed scribe.
- 7. Individual brainstorming.** "Individual brainstorming" is the use of brainstorming in solitary. It typically includes such techniques as free writing, free speaking, word association, and drawing a **mind map**, which is a visual note taking technique in which people diagram their thoughts.<sup>[9]</sup>
- 8. Question brainstorming.** This process involves brainstorming the *questions*, rather than trying to come up with immediate answers and short term solutions. The answers to the questions form, the framework for constructing future action plans.<sup>[10]</sup>

## Individual Brainstorming & Mind Mapping

While group brainstorming is often more effective at generating ideas than normal group problem-solving, study after study has been shown that when individuals brainstorm on their own, they come up with more ideas (and often better quality ideas) than groups of people who brainstorming together. When Brainstorming on one's own, consider using *Mind Maps* to arrange and develop ideas. A *mind map* is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Mind Maps are used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas and as an aid to studying and organizing information, solving problems, making decisions and writing.

## Group Brainstorming and Organizational Team Building

**Group Brainstorming.** When it works, group brainstorming can be very effective for bringing the full experience and creativity of all members of the group to bear on an issue. When individual group members get stuck with an idea, another member's creativity and experience can take the idea to the next stage. Group brainstorming can therefore develop ideas in more depth than individual brainstorming.

### How to Use the Brainstorming and Mind Mapping Tool

We can often get the best results *by combining individual and group brainstorming*, and by managing the process carefully and according to the "rules" below.

To run a group brainstorming session effectively we might have to do the following:

- Finding a comfortable meeting environment, and setting it up ready for the session.
- Appointing one person to record the ideas that come from the session.
- If people aren't already used to working together, consider using an appropriate warm-up exercise or ice-breaker.
- Define the problem we want solved clearly, and lay out any criteria to be met.
- Giving people plenty of time *on their own* at the start of the session to generate as many ideas as possible.
- Asking people to give their ideas, making sure that we give everyone a fair opportunity to contribute.
- Encouraging people to develop other people's ideas, or to use other ideas to create new ones.
- Encouraging an enthusiastic, uncritical attitude among members of the group.
- Ensuring that no one criticizes or evaluates ideas during the session.
- Let people have fun brainstorming.
- Ensuring that no train of thought is followed for too long. Make sure that we generate a sufficient number of different ideas, as well as exploring individual ideas in detail.
- In a long session, taking plenty of breaks so that people can continue to concentrate.

**Key Points.** Brainstorming is a useful way of generating radical solution to problems. During the brainstorming process there is no criticism of ideas. This approach aims to get people unstuck by “**Jotting**” them out of their normal ways of thinking. When individual brainstorm on their own, they come up with more ideas, (and often better quality ideas) than group of people who brainstorm together. When Brainstorming on one’s own, consider using Mind Maps to arrange and develop ideas. Group brainstorming helps everyone involved to feel that they’ve contributed to the end solution. The best approach to brainstorming combines individual and group brainstorming for organizational team building.

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