BRAINSTORMING

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What is Brainstorming?

Madison Avenue advertising executive, Alex Osborn, developed the original approach to brainstorming and published it in his 1953 book, "Applied Imagination." Since then, researchers have made many improvements to his original technique.

The approach described here takes this research into account, so it's subtly different from Osborn's approach.

Brainstorming combines a relaxed, informal approach to problem solving with lateral thinking. It encourages people to come up with thoughts and ideas that can, at first, seem a bit crazy. Some of these ideas can be crafted into original, creative solutions to a problem, while others can spark even more ideas. This helps to get people unstuck by "jolting" them out of their normal ways of thinking.

Therefore, during brainstorming sessions, people should avoid criticizing or rewarding ideas. You're trying to open up possibilities and break down incorrect assumptions about the problem's limits. Judgment and analysis at this stage stunts idea generation and limit creativity.

Evaluate ideas at the end of the brainstorming session – this is the time to explore solutions further, using conventional approaches.

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Why Use Brainstorming?
Conventional group problem solving can often be undermined by <u>unhelpful group behavior</u>. And while it's important to start with a <u>structured, analytical process</u> when solving problems, this can lead a group to develop limited and unimaginative ideas.
By contrast, brainstorming provides a free and open environment that encourages everyone to participate. Quirky ideas are welcomed and built upon, and all participants are encouraged to contribute fully, helping them develop a rich array of creative solutions.
When used during problem solving, brainstorming brings team members' diverse experience into play. It increases the richness of ideas explored, which means that you can often find better solutions to the problems that you face.
It can also help you get buy-in from team members for the solution chosen – after all, they're likely to be more committed to an approach if they were involved in developing it. What's more, because brainstorming is fun, it helps team members bond, as they solve problems in a positive, rewarding environment.
While brainstorming can be effective, it's important to approach it with an open mind and a spirit of non-judgment. If you don't do this, people "clam up," the number and quality of ideas plummets, and morale can suffer.

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