



Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an informal approach to problem solving that uses lateral thinking. It may be conducted individually or within a group context. The technique encourages participants to produce ideas that, at first, may seem unorthodox, but can later be developed further. However, for the early stages of this technique, assumptions and presumed limitations are disregarded, with the objective of collecting the greatest number of ideas. Some of the ideas proposed may be transformed into creative solutions, while others may be the starting point for other suggestions. Critical to the success of this technique is the avoidance of criticism or reward for ideas before a predetermined number have been generated.

Using Brainstorming in a group context

Step 1: Prepare the group. Under ideal circumstances, it will consist of between five to seven participants from different departments or disciplines. A person is selected to record ideas and notes, a comfortable meeting room is arranged, and participants are chosen without any warning to prevent the loss of spontaneity through preparation.

Step 2: The focal problem for which the brainstorming session was organised is detailed, along with any additional, relevant criteria. Initially, participants are given time to generate ideas in silence.

Step 3: The discussion is then guided, ensuring that all participants have an opportunity to share their ideas. An icebreaker can be used if necessary. A note is made of every idea and displayed where it can be seen by all participants, for example on a white board or using post-it notes.

Step 4: A group discussion is commenced to develop proposed ideas or create new ones. The role of the facilitator is to avoid sticking to one topic by covering as many of the proposed ideas as possible. In circumstances where an insufficient number of ideas, or poor quality ideas have been generated, another technique can be used.

