

SKIDMORE

C O L L E G E

Office of Leadership Activities

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Skill Building – Brainstorming

Introduction

Brainstorming is a tool for any club. Whether your planning events, rewriting your charter, or recruiting new members, brainstorming can help. It may be just the technique to rejuvenate your club and get everyone excited and involved. The purpose of this method is to get out as many ideas as possible—the more you have to choose from, the better your final choice will be! You can use brainstorming for almost anything: program ideas, themes, slogans, publicity, group goals, and problem solving.

Set the Stage

- Set a time limit—10 to 20 minutes, depending upon the size of your group and the complexity of the issue.
- The best group size is 3–15 people. If you have more, break into two or more groups and brainstorm simultaneously.
- Focus on one issue at a time. The question or issue must be one about which all participants can speak.
- Record all responses on a blackboard or big sheets of newsprint so everyone can see them; don't record the name of the person suggesting. Record only key words and phrases, not word for word.

The Rules

The rules for brainstorming are simple. Be sure the group understands them and someone has the job of making sure they are followed.

1. Do not discuss ideas
2. Do not criticize, praise or judge
3. Be spontaneous—no hand raising, just call out
4. Repetitions are okay
5. Quantity counts
6. Build on each other's ideas—"hitch-hiking" or "piggy-backing" is encouraged
7. Enjoy the silences—often the best ideas come out of them
8. It is ok to be outrageous, even silly

Make Good Use of the Members' Creativity

Your group is sure to be filled with people bursting with creativity, so utilize that in the best ways!

- If several groups brainstormed the same idea, put the lists on the wall and let everyone read each other's work
- Group ideas into related categories for review
- Decide which ideas are most promising and which can be eliminated; putting pluses and minuses by items can do this
- Select those with greatest potential and high-ranking priority for either implementation or refinement by committee or the group
- Review and evaluate your ideas as they are being implemented. Make any changes deemed necessary by the group
- Be sure to utilize the ideas generated. Seeing your ideas come to fruition is extremely rewarding

SOURCES:

Pfeiffer and Jones; 1972 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators.

Schindler-Rainmann E. and Lippitt, R.; Taking Your Meetings Out of the Doldrums.