



BRAINSTORMING FOR BRIGHT IDEAS

The Basics Of Brainstorming

BRAINSTORMING IS A STRUCTURED PROCESS

First developed more than fifty years ago by an advertising executive named Sid Parnes—to bypass the natural human tendency to be unimaginative... to detour around our natural inclination to keep seeing things the same way and to keep coming up with the same handful of predictable answers or ideas. “Structured” means there is a set of rules, and those rules are necessary to let our trapped creativity out to play.

Anybody using brainstorming is looking not just for ideas, but for good ideas. But in brainstorming, you get there by intentionally ignoring whether a given idea is good or not! The magic of brainstorming is you don’t aim for quality. Instead, you aim for quantity, because that’s the proven way to achieve quality.

THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF BRAINSTORMING IS THAT PROBLEM-SOLVING ALWAYS HAS TWO PHASES:

1. **Generating Possibilities**

Requires that we suspend judgment. This is where the process aims purely at quantity, not quality. Suspending judgment means not considering—for even a nanosecond—whether a given idea is good or not.

2. **Choosing From Among The Possibilities**

Requires that we exercise judgment. It’s in this phase that quality enters the picture. Decisions are made as to which of that huge quantity of ideas are really good.

Sometimes, there are multiple steps in a complex problem-solving scenario, but each step always has those two phases—suspending judgment, then exercising judgment.

THE POWER OF BRAINSTORMING IS IN SEPARATING THE TWO PHASES

Without having a structure to do that, we humans just naturally edit ourselves, second-guess ourselves, and generally prevent ourselves from generating innovative ideas and solutions. The Rules of Brainstorming are there to make sure that we suspend judgment while we’re trying to generate possibilities.