

# BRAINSTORMING



Is your group stumped for innovative ideas? Do you do the same activities year after year? Try *brainstorming* for new ideas.

*Brainstorming* is a method of shared problem solving in which all members of a group spontaneously contribute ideas.

Here are some guidelines for brainstorming:

- Provide a central theme to focus on. This gives the brainstorming direction.
- Create an environment conducive to creative thinking. Try generating ideas in a unique location such as a coffee shop, outdoors or a restaurant to foster creativity.
- Focus more on quantity than quality.
- Be open to all ideas. Seemingly off-the-wall contributions can lead to exciting and innovative ways of doing things.
- Do not judge the quality of ideas. Refrain from either criticizing or praising ideas.
- Set a time limit on the brainstorming session. Fifteen minutes is an appropriate timeframe depending on the subject matter.
- Write the ideas down on a large sheet of paper, a chalkboard or a dry erase board for all to see. Record only key words and phrases.
- After the time has expired, bring everybody together to discuss the ideas that were generated in the brainstorm.
- Encourage open and respectful dialogue by letting everyone share his/her thoughts with the group.
- Based on your discussion, select ideas that will be useful. Provide justification for each idea chosen.
- Show appreciation for everybody's ideas and work. This will encourage people to participate in future discussions.
- Continually use brainstorming to elicit creativity and team-building when the discussion becomes stagnant.

*"All great action arises from the exploration of ideas."*