

How to: Silent Brainstorming

What?

Silent Brainstorming is a useful technique for generating many different ideas and solutions to a problem without distractions or influence from other members of the group.

Why is it helpful?

It is often quite challenging to put a group of individuals in a room and expect equal, creative participation from them all. More often than not part of the group will be include passive individuals that are happy to let others take over, whilst other group members may naturally want to take the lead. Fixation on the ideas of other group members can also be quite destructive to problem solving, if the group becomes fixated on another members idea other solutions can be inadvertently blocked out.

Silent brainstorming can be a very useful way of avoiding some of these potential problems.

How to:

1. Write down the problem you would like the group to solve (clearly and concisely). All words carry with them implicit meanings so think carefully how you phrase your problem.
 - a. Keep it as a question
 - b. Use terms such as; 'In what ways might we' rather than 'How can we' as this suggests there are multiple different answers
2. Set firm grounds
 - a. No idea is off bounds - even ideas that may seem implausible at first glance may be extremely useful for sparking off further conversation and idea generation later on
 - b. No idea should be criticised - constructive discussions may follow this exercise however at this stage people must feel free to come up with many different ideas, without fear of judgement or criticism
 - c. No talking during this stage
3. Give everyone paper and a pen and ask them to write down (in silence) as many different solutions to the problem as they can within a given time period
4. Ask everyone to place their ideas somewhere in full view of the team so that people can read and think about them
5. Discuss the ideas as a team and group them into themes, this will allow you to see where the groups thinking is weighted. It can also be a useful way of dividing the ideas up so that the team can begin to construct problem statements for each theme if they need to be communicated outside of the room.
6. Decide next steps e.g idea prioritisation, action, what data do we need etc