Brainstorming: Idea generation and collection

Set up: 1. Meeting room with tables and chairs.

2. Invitation list of a group of Key Stakeholders.

3. Flip chart pads of paper to be stuck onto the wall.

Or a very large whiteboard

4. Masking tape or fun tack to post the paper on the wall.

5. Appropriate Markers. Make sure markers do not penetrate onto the

wall and only use dry-erase markers on whiteboards.

6. A scribe person, or two, (persons who write every idea on the flip chart or

whiteboard). These people do not participate in idea generation.

7. A facilitator who makes sure the rules are followed. This person

does not participate in the idea generation. If you are the PM, you

can be the Facilitator (see Step 1)

8. Two open-ended, related questions that will generate ideas.

Rules: 1. Write all ideas down.

1. Go for quantity, not quality. Encourage wild and exaggerated ideas, but must answer the question (see Procedure).
2. No discussion allowed. No judgment of ideas
3. Every person and every idea has equal worth. Facilitator makes sure everyone is heard from.
4. Facilitator does not contribute ideas. The ideas are to come from the group of Stakeholders (see Step 1)
5. Stack one idea on another. Build on the ideas put forward by others.
6. Set a time limit. About 20-30 minutes is usually enough time. Let the group know there is a limited time.
7. Sort, eliminate, and polish, only after brainstorming

Procedure:

Step 1. Ask your first question.

* As Project Manager you want the ideas to come from the group. This does 3 things:

1. it gets Stakeholder **participation** in your project,
2. you get more **first-hand** information, from source
3. people tend to like their own ideas best. So the idea **selling is done** for you by the group.

* Even if you have ideas, resist presenting them until the very end so they can hopefully come from a group member instead.
* The ideas may start out slowly, then should come more quickly as people get “into it”. Then, ideas will be slower coming after a while.
* Allow about 15-20 minutes for the first question.

Step 2. Ask your second question when the idea generation (from the

first question) has slowed down.

* Use same process as Step 1.
* Allow about 10 minutes for the second question

Step 3. Collect up the ideas and thank the group. Sorting, eliminating,

and polishing ideas is a separate exercise.

Question Examples: The questions you ask for idea generation in a Brainstorming Session must relate to the business need found in the Business Case and the SOW in the Project Charter. Here are some real-life examples of brainstorming questions:

For a project to Improve Customer Service:

Question 1: What could we do to make the biggest impact on the way our

customers perceive the service we provide?

Question 2: What should we try to avoid doing?

For a project to Provide New Tools to a workforce:

Question 1: What are some of the frustrations you experience with the tools

we have today?

Question 2: Of the tools you like, why do you like those ones?

Asked Question 2 at 24 minutes