



ECSU Student Center and Student Activities Office *Co-curricular education for student organizational leadership*

← **BRAINSTORMING** →

Is your group stumped for new ideas? Do you participate in the same activities the same old way year after year? Do the leaders and maybe just a few others seem to do all the talking?

Brainstorming may be just the technique to rejuvenate your organization and get everyone excited and involved. The purpose of this method is to generate as many ideas as possible -- the more you have to choose from, the better your final choice will be! Use brainstorming for almost anything: program ideas, themes, slogans, publicity, group goals, and problem solving!

SET THE STAGE

Before you begin brainstorming, you must set the stage:

- ◆ Set a time limit, 2-20 minutes, depending on 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.
- ◆ The question or issue must be one to which all participants can speak. Focus on only one issue.
- ◆ Record all responses on a blackboard or big sheets of newsprint so that 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 deceptively simple. For the most productive brainstorming session, be sure the group understands them and that someone has the job of making sure they're followed. You may explain the rules and/or post them before your session starts.

- ◆ Do not discuss ideas.
- ◆ Don't criticize, praise, or judge.
- ◆ Be spontaneous - no hand raising, just call out.
- ◆ Repetitions are ok.
- ◆ Quantity counts.
- ◆ Build on each other's ideas ("hitchhiking" or "piggy-backing" is encouraged).
- ◆ Enjoy the silences, often the best ideas come out of them.
- ◆ It's ok to be outrageous, even silly.
- ◆ Put each idea on the list; no editing.

CREATIVITY

During the session, make good use of your members' creativity:

- ◆ 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; this can be done by the group putting pluses and minuses by items.
- ◆ Rank-order the most promising.
- ◆ Select those with the greatest potential and high-ranking priority for either implementation or refinement by committee.
- ◆ Be sure to utilize the ideas generated. It's extremely demoralizing for a group to invest its time, energy, and creativity and have its ideas disappear. On the other hand, seeing your idea come to life is extremely rewarding.

REFERENCE

Adapted from: St. Norbert College, Department of Leadership, Service & Involvement

*Additional resource handouts are available as well as consultation services.
For more information, contact the Student Activities Office in the Student Center at 465-4450.*