

Results-oriented brainstorming

Do you have enough groundbreaking ideas?

Does this sound familiar? There are some new ideas within your organisation, but there are not enough of them and it seems as if they don't truly break new ground; they are often merely an extension of existing concepts. There's nothing wrong with that in theory. But, based on your years of experience, your gut instinct is telling you that something is missing: brainstorming sessions should be more effective, they should generate bigger results and deliver a better return on the investment you make to organise them (venue, catering, time, etc.).

The importance of lots of ideas

When developing new products or services, one of the biggest challenges is to ensure a constant and sufficient flow of truly novel and groundbreaking ideas. After all, the base for innovation is an abundance of ideas.

According to research in the FMCG sector, only 8% of all product ideas make it onto the market – or the shelves – successfully. A study by the Product Development & Management Association (PMDA) has produced the same figure. And not only that, but roughly half those 'successful' products vanish again within a few years.

In other words, successful innovation starts with people having lots and lots of groundbreaking ideas. Just one idea is not good enough, and nor is a dozen. A basis of 100 ideas is a good start, offering the chance of 8 successful launches – and 200 ideas are even better. When it comes to idea generation, it's all about quantity! The quality aspect comes later.

Should you go it alone or enlist help?

TWNQL helps to generate lots and lots of ideas. I hear you thinking, 'I can do that myself'. But can you? Time after time, we discover that behavioural patterns prevent us from taking a fresh, innovative approach. We go round and round in circles with the same familiar ideas. This results in little or no innovation, and that is not a sustainable situation in these turbulent times.

Needless to say, it's fine if you want to go it alone. To help you, TWNQL has put together this test and some tips for results-oriented brainstorming based on the TWNQL model.

Are you curious to discover how well prepared you are for a successful brainstorming session?

Find out now!

Award yourself a score for each aspect (1 = low, 10 = high), then add the scores together.

<p>We have a clear view of what the brainstorming session is about.</p> <p>T: The T for 'target'.</p> <p>TWNQL tips Determine your focus. What is the brainstorming session about? What is the topic exactly? Is this topic a good fit with the intended direction for the organisation?</p> <p>Formulate the question clearly and succinctly, starting with the words 'How can we...?'. The 'how' creates an open-ended question. For example: "How can we further boost sales of our eco-friendly rubbish bins?"</p>	<p>.....</p>
<p>We know why we have chosen that topic and all the other factors (venue, participants, date and time, budget, etc.) are taken care of.</p> <p>W: The W for 'why' and other factors (where, who, when).</p> <p>TWNQL tips 'Why?' is to double-check. Why do we want this? For example, does the topic you will be generating new ideas about address the main trends and developments that affect the organisation? Or: is spending time on this topic your top priority right now?</p> <p>Taking care of other factors is also important in this step:</p> <p>Where do we want to hold the brainstorming session – internally or externally? How much do I want to invest in the brainstorming session (in terms of time and money) and what result (number of ideas) do I want to get out of it?</p> <p>Which participants do I want? Aim to create as varied a group as possible, taking into account job functions, gender, age, seniority, back and front office, etc. The more diversity you have, the broader and more valuable the ideas will be. Do you only want to invite your 'own' people, or also customers/suppliers? Arrange for someone to take notes and a photographer for internal/external communication materials.</p> <p>When do you want to hold the brainstorming session? This relates both to the time of year (are you affected by seasonal influences, which lead time are you aiming for until the launch?) and the time of day. Think about how much time you want to spend on the brainstorming session too.</p>	<p>.....</p>

<p>We are very experienced in holding brainstorming sessions. We are familiar with effective techniques to help us break out of our normal thinking patterns.</p> <p>N: The N for iNspiration. This is about generating ideas.</p> <p>TWNQL tips Which approach will you take to arrive at lots and lots of new and innovative ideas?</p> <p>There are various creative thinking techniques you can use to break out of the normal thought patterns.</p> <p>For example: imagine that anything is possible. You live in an ideal world. Wouldn't it be great if...etc. Let your imagination run wild and make a note of every idea.</p>	<p>.....</p>
<p>We have devised an effective programme that combines the content, the framework and the process. This programme creates an open, safe and dynamic environment.</p> <p>Q: The Q stands for a playful element, for a 'twinkle' in the eyes.</p> <p>TWNQL tips Ensure that the programme allows enough room for inspiration, interaction and humour. While it is ultimately about the end result (as many ideas as possible in as little time as possible), it is also about fun, trust and engagement.</p> <p>Ways of achieving this include opening with an inspiring anecdote, an ice-breaker exercise or a presentation of the trends.</p>	<p>.....</p>
<p>We know how to make a selection out of all the new ideas and how we want to develop them further.</p> <p>L: The L for 'launch' and 'line-up'.</p> <p>TWNQL tips How can you ensure that you make the right choices out of all the ideas that are generated? How can you ensure that a number of ideas are developed into actual products or services? Who will do what – project ownership, project group, will they be relieved of current duties or will the project be added to their existing workload?</p> <p>When developing the plans, are the most important points of the organisation's back office and front office sufficiently safeguarded and linked?</p>	<p>.....</p>

So, how well prepared are you to organise a successful brainstorming session?

If your score is 40 or higher, you're totally ready. Maybe you could make just a couple of minor improvements to achieve an optimum result.

If you scored between 30 and 40 then you've got a fairly good basis for a successful brainstorming session, but I'd advise you to take a closer look at a few aspects. See if you can achieve a score of at least 40!

If you scored less than 30 then there is a lot of room for improvement, so it's time to set to work. You will discover that the better prepared you are, the more new and groundbreaking ideas you will produce. And that's what your organisation needs to stay at the front of the pack.

At TWNQL, I'm happy to help you by facilitating think tanks and brainstorming sessions, as well as by providing training in creative thinking skills. Feel free to call or email me today (without obligation)!