

STRUCTURED BRAINSTORMING

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Introduction

This is a systematic process, which encourages participants to actively involve by contributing ideas in a non critical or non-evaluative environment.

Structured brainstorming sessions are undertaken by organizations to find solution to problems that persists in a work environment. Many successful organizations use structured brainstorming as key tool when it comes to decision making.

Benefits of Structured Brainstorming

The primary benefit of structured brainstorming is that it's a collaboration of ideas. However, there's a difference between structured brainstorming and unstructured brainstorming.

In structured brainstorming, the participants are given guidelines and rules to follow, so that the input from the sessions is in an orderly manner and constructive.

When it comes to unstructured brainstorming, there are many ideas by participants, but the brainstorming session may not be leading towards any specific goal.

The benefits gained from structured brainstorming are as follows:

- A collection of ideas from the team members with regards to a particular issue or a problem will prove to be more successful.
- Opens up a new culture within the organization where team members are free to voice their ideas.
- It further prevents dominant team members from taking the lead and giving the rest of the team members an unfair chance.
- Promotes synergy among team members.
- Helps the team members to come up with ideas to achieve the mission at hand.

Steps in Structured Brainstorming

Structured brainstorming can prove to be difficult as input comes from various team members. Hence, the following steps can be followed to ensure that constructive results can be obtained at the end.

- State clearly the objective/theme behind the structured brainstorming. Make sure that each participant is fully aware of what is expected from the brainstorming session. This will save time and energy of the team.
- Give each team member a chance to demonstrate or voice his/her idea.
- During structured brainstorming, advise that team members are not allowed to criticize one another's opinion or idea. This promotes freedom of sharing one's idea without hesitation.
- Repeat the round until the team members do not have any more ideas or solutions.
- Review the input from each team member and discard any duplicate input.

Dos and Don'ts of Structured Brainstorming

A bad structured brainstorming session will cost your organization money, energy and time if the objective of the brainstorming session is not met. This may cause detrimental factors, which trigger to loss of projects, etc.

Hence, here are some methods for successful brainstorming to be used in your organization.

- Focus is crucial when it comes to structured brainstorming session. Sharpen the concentration levels of the participants. You can use some exercises at the beginning of the session in order to increase the focus of the participants.
- Instead of writing down arbitrary rules, positivity with playfulness helps.
- State the number of ideas.
- Build and jump.
- Make the space remember.
- Stretch mental muscles.
- Get practical.

Talk and brainstorm about all the possibilities/causes etc., for the problem at hand. Never miss an idea. Have someone recording the brainstorming session.

Tools for Structured Brainstorming

SWOT Analysis & PEST Analysis are very effective tools for structured brainstorming.

SWOT analysis is a useful tool when it comes to decision making. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats. Brainstorming sessions often use SWOT as an analysis tool for reviewing strategies. SWOT analysis is used to assess the following factors:

- Market capitalization
- Sales distribution methods
- A brand or a product
- A business idea
- A strategy e.g., entering new markets
- A department of the organization

PEST analysis refers to Political, Economical, Social and Technology. PEST analysis is also often used in brainstorming sessions to understand the market position of an organization. PEST can be used under the following reasons:

- An organization analyzing its market
- A product accessing its market
- Assessing a particular brand in relation to a market
- A newly venturing business
- For new strategies based on entering a market
- For an acquisition
- For an investment opportunity

Post-Structured Brainstorming

Once you have completed the brainstorming session, the following needs to be done:

- Reduce the list of ideas given based on the agreed priority
- Mix the points, which are similar in nature together
- Discussion is crucial, merits to be given for each feedback
- Eradicate ideas that are not relevant to the topic

- Give the team members a chance to jot down ideas if they have any and communicate later

Conclusion

Structured brainstorming is a technique used to generate ideas, which can help to solve a problem. Structured brainstorming helps to encourage creative thinking and enthusiasm between team members.

It also encourages freewill to accept each other's thoughts.