Brainstorming

Field of application	#Ideation #Creativity skills development
Resume / Brief description	Brainstorming is a popular technique to generate a great amount of ideas to solve a problem. But, despite its popularity, this tool is not always used the right way. Its more clear advantage is its capacity to produce many ideas in a short time, allowing the participation of all members of the team. The technique was introduced and explained by Alex Osborn in its book "Applied Imagination" in the thirties. Its recommended when: - You need a big quantity of ideas to work with - Creativity and new ways of thinking are required - We want to encourage all the participants to collaborate. The Brainstorming technique divide the process of search for solutions into two parts: 1. The generation of lots of non-analyzed ideas. This part focuses on the quantity of ideas. 2. The analysis of ideas. This part focuses on selecting the better ones. Taking the analysis out of the ideation process makes easy for the participants to explore new perspectives and encourage all the participants to propose solutions. Category: Ideation
Target group	- Entrepreneurs - I&D teams - Innovation teams - Students - Community
Objectives	To generate a great quantity of ideas and possible solutions to a problem or challenge, in a short time.
Requirements	Material: - Paper sheet or paper cards to write the ideas - Pens, colors - a brainstorming platform as Ideaboardz, Realtime board or other. You can also use a standard word processor (Google Docs or similar) or a Mind mapping tool. Time: 20 to 120 minutes

Implementation - Overview	The process includes - Definition of the problem or challenge to solve - Definition of "idea capturing" process. It could be that everyone writes down their own ideas and the facilitator collects them after, or that all ideas are called out loud and a note-taker writes them down in a central place. - Opening to the ideation phase. Everyone must add ideas. The facilitator announce that critics and analysis is suspended. - Closing of the ideation phase. - Optional: An analysis phase can be conducted. In this case, the facilitator announce that the time for analysis has arrived and uses any of the evaluation methods available.
Implementation - Guidelines	Participants. In general it's a good thing to have participants from different areas, roles and expertise. This will add to the diversity and originality of the solutions found. A good way to start a Brainstorming session is to spend some minutes doing a "Brain-warming" activity. This will let all the brains to tune into the creativity mode and be more confident to release the analytic mind. Session 1. Present the problem and announce the purpose of collecting as many ideas as possible to solve it. Announce that the main focus is quantity so there will be no time to comment or analyse the ideas. Clarify that the analysis will be carried out later. Be sure that everyone understands correctly the problem and that it is an important one for them. If the problem is a big one, it's recommended to break it into parts and conduct a brainstorming for each of them. You can give the participants the following recommendations: - Focus on breaking the record of the number of ideas proposed. Forget about quality. - Explain that some ideas can seem to be "bad" but maybe can be the origin of other ideas with greater potential. - Motivate them to propose ideas inspired on ideas proposed by others - Ask everybody to make the personal purpose of proposing at least one "bad" idea. This will relax the pressure for quality. 2. Announce the time available to propose ideas (15 to 30 minutes will be a good amount of time) and give the signal to start the session. Thing to be into account: - Be sure that all ideas are being "captured" using the same description given by the autor. It's frequent that the note-taker chand the way an idea is described, losing important creative elements. - Encourage the participation of all. For some people it is not always easy to speak in public, even more if her boss or someone influential is present. - Find an assertive way to stop the natural tendency to criticize or evaluate ideas proposed. For the more analytic people, it's difficult to restrain their need to discuss the positive and negative aspects of an idea, so it is good if they know that time for this analytic task will be given later. 3. When the time is over stop the ideation activity and congratulate everybody for the creative effort. Announce if the analysis of the ideas will be carried out immediately or in a later session.

Example of application:	How to improve the service times in a restaurant? In this case, a local successful restaurant has been growing in number of clients and wants to improve the service experience. The restaurant manager decided to conduct a Brainstorming session to explore new ideas to make the experience of dining a lot better. The first thing he did was to reflect the problem in a direct question: How to become the restaurant acknowledge by offering the best experience in the world? Then, he invited 7 people including some waiters, a chef, the community manager and two clients. The manager himself facilitated the session. Being a restaurant, the first thing was an appetizer: a brainwarming game. In this first activity, the participants had to imagine and draw a new plate using the more exotic ingredient possible. All participants enjoyed the activity, especially when each one presented its invention. Once the facilitator took everyone to the "creative mode", the Brainstorming started. The facilitator presented the main question and announced that they would have only 30 minutes to generate 40 ideas. That means more than one idea per minute. The manager explained that the only way to achieve that incredible level of creativity is by focusing on idea generation and postponing the analysis of those ideas. During the first part (7 minutes), the facilitator asked each participant to write down 3 ideas using paper cards. This personal exercise let the group to have more than 20 ideas just starting the session. Then, the facilitator divided the group into two teams and appointed an idea-writer on each. The idea-writer was assigned with the job of writing down all the ideas each participant was proposing. Then, the facilitator gave 12 minutes to all teams to get 10 new ideas (nobody can use any of the ideas proposed on the cards) per team. The group reached the idea target and the facilitator served a new dessert as a reward for each participant. Nevertheless the amount of ideas proposed, several of them had very good potential: - Pre-ordering app - Surprise menu - Board games on each table to make the the wait a more enjoyable experience - Two menus: the fast one and the slow one - Clients helping to finish the plate preparation - Extreme slow food
Templates, Graphics for download	none
Additional format/references	The Team Handbook by Peter R. Scholtes http://petkoivanov.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/302-Brainstorm.pdf https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNFBoBAAYuw http://michael-roberto.blogspot.com/2016/06/brainstorming-at-google.html

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