

## **Brainstorming**

Brainstorming encourages creative thinking and very quick production of a lot of different ideas. It is a method of generating ideas, which requires the full participation of all group members. All evaluation is suspended and ideas are allowed to develop freely. It is a time for free association of ideas and for opening new avenues of thought.

### **Brainstorming helps a group by:**

1. Increasing member involvement and participation.
2. Providing a means of getting the most ideas in the shortest period of time.
3. Making the session more fun, interesting and stimulating.

### **Brainstorming ground rules:**

1. During the first phase all criticism or evaluation of an idea is ruled out. Ideas are suggested and placed before the group without evaluation or critical analysis.
2. Wild ideas are expected in the spontaneity that evolves when the group suspends judgment. Practical considerations are not important at this point. The session is to be freewheeling.

### **A typical brainstorming exercise:**

Divide the organization into small groups limiting each to no more than seven members. Each group is given a newsprint pad and marker. One person from each group is assigned to write down the brainstorming suggestions. Remember, each suggestion is written down and no evaluation or discussion is taken at that time.

The second part of the exercise is to evaluate the suggestions and as a small group, rank them. The groups then join together, and one person from each small group presents the suggestions to the large group. The large group ranks them as a whole. The alternatives are discussed, and a decision follows.

### **Why brainstorming works:**

1. Brainstorming will be more productive if ideas are not evaluated or discussed at the time they are proposed. This is important because education and experience have trained most of us to think judicially rather than creatively. By deferring judgment on the ideas, there can be more alternatives from which to choose.
2. Group production of ideas can be more productive than separate, individual production of ideas. Experiments in group thinking have demonstrated that the average participant in this kind of creative collaboration can think of twice as many possible solutions as when working alone.