quint-essenz

Brainstorming

Use

Brainstorming is a method for developing ideas and is used most effectively in a group. Brainstorming helps the group to break out of logical thinking patterns into new ways of looking at things and to find creative solutions. Brainstorming is a useful tool in many stages of a project. In the drafting phase it will help to collect and generate ideas, in the implementation phase it can free the mind for new ideas when it is blocked by practical day-to-day problems, in the end phase it can help to prepare the concluding actions creatively.

Instructions

1.   Choose a chairperson for the brainstorming session

A brainstorming session needs to be chaired quite tightly. Appoint an external expert or a member of the team. He or she will note down all the ideas that are generated by the group and will then lead the process of ordering, evaluating and interpreting these ideas.

2.   Define the problem clearly

Define the problem you want solved clearly and lay out any criteria to be met. This can be done together with the participants.

3.   Collect ideas

Participants (maximum 15) are encouraged to express briefly all that comes to mind concerning the theme/problem in question. The chairperson notes down each idea on a card and will then display the card on the floor or on a wall. At this point no comments, critical remarks or questions are allowed in regard to the ideas that are being put forward. However, thoughts provoked by the formulated ideas are welcome.
The brainstorming comes to an end when no more ideas are being proposed or after about 15 minutes. It is quite useful to record this phase of the session in order to listen to the process one more time.

4.   Order and evaluate

After the creative phase, the ideas on the cards will be put into a certain order. This is the time when questions can be asked or when individual ideas can be criticized, praised and discussed in detail.
In a next step, ideas and propositions will be linked together and put into a framework and a hierarchy can be established.

5. Conclude

The last step consists in drawing conclusions from the collected ideas, to decide on further action and to formulate recommendations or measures.

Variation

If the group is very large or separated geographically, the participants can write down their ideas individually (10 – 15 min.) and then present them to each other. Depending on the communication mode, the ideas can then be shared in a plenary session and the cards be pinned on a wall; or else they can be communicated orally on the telephone or per email or online via the internet.