



Keyword: Brainstorming Approaches

Different Brainstorming Approaches: How They are Different and When Each One is Most Helpful

by Kevin Eikenberry

While most people's experience with brainstorming is the traditional free wheeling approach where everyone contributes thoughts immediately as they think of them, there are other ways to conduct brainstorming in a group.

The goal of this Bonus Byte is to outline several ways to do group brainstorming and to share some of the pros and cons of each approach.

Free Wheeling (the traditional approach people are used to)

- Team members call out their ideas spontaneously.
- The recorder records the ideas as they are suggested.

Round Robin

- The facilitator or recorder asks each team member, in turn, for an idea.
- Team members may pass on any round.
- The session continues until all team members have passed during the same round.
- Ideas are recorded as in free wheeling.

Slip Method

- The facilitator asks group members to write down their ideas on small slips of paper, index cards, or sticky notes.
- The facilitator then collects and organizes the ideas - either re-writing them or posting the cards/notes for all to read.

Hybrid Approach

- This can take different forms, combining the personal brainstorming step of the slip method with one of the other two options.
- This can take place with the with the personal brainstorming immediately before the recording of the ideas, or the personal brainstorming can be done "offline" before the meeting, during a break, etc.



Different Brainstorming Approaches: How They Are Different and When Each One is Most Helpful (continued)

Choosing a Brainstorming Method

Type	Benefits	Potential Problems
Free wheeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very spontaneous• What people are used to• Easy to build on others' ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confusion can occur• Ideas may be lost if people talk at the same time• Strong individuals may dominate the session/some people may be intimidated and not share
Round Robin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assures equal participation• Discussion tends to be more focused• Provides a structure for those who like structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficult to build on the ideas of others• People wait for their turn• More formal style• Loss of spontaneity/energy• People may feel intimidated if they don't have something to share and have to 'pass'
Slip Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows for anonymity when addressing sensitive topics• Orderly, well-suited to larger groups• Everyone can express a viewpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not possible to build on the ideas of others• Slower – time is required to record the ideas• Difficult to clarify ideas• Some ideas may not be legible or understandable
Hybrid Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capitalizes on advantages of various approaches• Can give people more time to think about the creative challenge or problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May require some education so participants understand the approach• Multiple steps may require additional time



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