

Brainstorming can gather raw ideas that can be built into solutions

The word brainstorm can conjure up all kinds of reactions from people. Ranging from cynicism to utter disbelief to reaching for the telephone intent on committing the heretic. However, as a critical piece in the creative and innovative company battle plan they do work and play a role and perform a function not done by any other.

 By [Richard Clarke](#) 19 Apr 2004

Complaints about brainstorm sessions vary but most focus on the time that could be spent on other more critical stuff and the fact that it should be limited to the 'creatives'.

Brainstorm sessions that go on forever are a sure sign that they are not being managed properly. A session should be limited in time and also focused on the issue that needs solving with ideas building from there.

'Creatives' are not the only people that should attend, in fact many great ideas have come from the non 'creatives, who tend to be more uninhibited and can move with the flow in the session without being bogged down on detail.

The weakness with designated 'creatives' is that they can take ownership of an idea before it is a couple of seconds old and build fortifications around it. If there is no proper management of the session then this is the time when it all goes pear shaped.

Skilled management of a session also involves making sure that participants and players stick to the rules of the game. The basic rules are no criticising or analysing as these factors move into the equation later when the ideas are moved through the evaluation process.

Creativity and innovation are critical and essential in any company and brainstorm sessions are a forum where they should be encouraged and allowed to run.

Any member of a company can contribute to a session as everyone has different backgrounds, qualifications and interests which add up to different perceptions. Seeing the world from a different angle can be all it takes to spot a great idea.

Many companies that have given up on these sessions have tried to run them with employees that either didn't want to or stifled the process.

Successful brainstorming needs nurturing from a skilled instigator capable of keeping the process moving forward and also kick starting it when momentum starts to waver.

Companies have skilled IT staff, accountants, HR department and yet one of the most valuable forums for maintaining a creative and innovative process is deemed non essential.

ABOUT RICHARD CLARKE

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