



Pre-Session Planner for More Productive Brainstorms

SmartStorming LLC
245 East 19th Street, Suite 14M
New York, NY 10003
212-614-1444

SmartStorming.com / SmartStorming-blog.com

7 Secrets for Supercharging Your Brainstorms

1. Preplan your sessions to boost yield of ideas

Pre-planning your session can provide the structure you and your team needs to stay productive and on-course, yet provide plenty of freedom for inspired thinking.

2. Get your group off to a fast start

The faster you get your group inspired and in the creative flow of generating ideas, the greater the range and number of ideas you will have by the end of your session. Don't waste a minute!

3. Proactively manage and balance personalities

Disruptive personalities create distractions that pull your session off course. Establish firm rules of conduct BEFORE the session begins; enlist your group in a playful way to help enforce rules.

4. Engage the silent thinkers

A big game-changing idea can come from anyone, at any time, so create a safe environment for introverts, young, or inexperienced participants to share their ideas.

5. Keep the energy high and ideas flowing

The goal of a good brainstorm leader is to keep the idea generation momentum as high as possible—for as long as possible. When the group's energy begins to plateau, ask provocative questions to make leaps to new directions to explore. Fuel your group's enthusiasm and imagination!

6. The single most powerful idea technique

Idea Sprinting is simple, yet highly effective technique for generating a large number of ideas very quickly. See page 5 for instructions on how to facilitate this fun, fast & furious technique.

7. Never select ideas without pre-determined criteria

The idea selection process can become emotionally charged with different opinions and politics. An effective way to minimize subjectivity and ego battles is to determine your evaluation criteria for selecting idea BEFORE entering your session...and has everyone agree to it.

The SmartStorming® Pre-Session Planner

One of the easiest and most effective things you can do to dramatically improve the “creative yield” of your brainstorms is pre-plan your sessions. Surprisingly, though, hardly anyone ever does.

This step-by-step pre-planning checklist will help you organize and structure your sessions easily and quickly, by clarifying your goals and objectives, determining the best icebreaker activity and ideation techniques to use with your group, and providing the background information your group needs to be well prepared in advance of your brainstorm.

Helping Your Team Prepare for the Session

Providing participants with all important background information prior to the session gives them the opportunity to fully familiarize themselves with your goals and objectives, and review any helpful background information.

By taking this simple step, you will help your group begin to formulate ideas long before the session takes place, and come to the session better prepared to make contributions. In fact, many brainstorm facilitators ask group members to come to the session with several ideas already formulated and ready to share, guaranteeing a fast, productive start.

What to Do Before Your Brainstorm

- Send out first invite 24 to 48 hours prior to your meeting
- Include the following attachments:
 - Concisely stated goals and objectives for the session
 - Approved creative/strategic brief
 - Helpful references materials and background information
 - Invitation to participants to come prepared with five rough ideas
 - Mention of fun incentives for participating (i.e., M&Ms, beverages, etc.)
- Send out a reminder invite early on the morning of the meeting
- Always use the SmartStorming Pre-Session Planner to organize your brainstorm in advance.

The SmartStorming[®] Pre-Session Planner

1. Goal/Objective: What specific outcome/end-product you wish to achieve from this session?

2. Participants: Who are the best people (knowledge & experience) to help you succeed?
Invite diversity.

3. Background information: What knowledge/resources does your group need to succeed?

4. Icebreaker: What is the best activity to stimulate creativity and collaboration this group?

5. Ideation Techniques: What are the best idea-generating methodology(s) to achieve your goals?

6. Selection criteria: What is my strategic/creative yardstick for evaluating ideas?

7. Next steps: What follow-through activities need to happen immediately after this session?
Who are the best people to assign responsibilities to?

Idea Generation: Idea Sprinting

What is it?

Idea Sprinting is a highly effective technique for originating a large volume of ideas in a very short period of time. The goal is to have your group go for quantity over quality.

To facilitate:

1. Divide your group into smaller teams of 3–4 participants.
2. The Pilot states the problem to be solved as a provocative question.
3. Challenge teams to write down as many ideas as possible in a 3-to-5 minute period.
4. Each group takes a turn reading through their best ideas.
5. The Scribe writes down ideas from each group on a large pad.
6. Repeat the process with another challenge, or by reorganizing participants into different groups of 3–4. Strive for three rounds per session.

Piloting Tips:

Here are so thought provoking questions to ask your group:

- What's the most obvious ideas we can think of?
- What's the opposite of that?
- What is similar/different?
- What are some "worst ideas"?
- How do we make them good ideas?
- What else haven't we thought of?
- What are 2 or 3 other ways/variations/options...?
- What if...?
- What is the most outrageous thing we can think of?
- What would solve this problem instantly?
- What would Apple or Nike do?
- If we knew we couldn't fail, what would we do?

About SmartStorming

SmartStorming helps organizations solve tough business challenges in new, more innovative ways than they ever imagined possible.

We provide the expertise, structure, and proven tools organizations need to think more creatively, change behaviors and generate the kinds of groundbreaking ideas that drive innovation.

Our work isn't "ivory tower" theory, but proven, practical methods that help our clients...

- Master powerful techniques for generating new, game-changing ideas. Our methods can be easily learned and applied throughout your organization, to solve any business challenge – marketing, product development, sales, production, operations, etc.
- Develop critical leadership skills in the areas of group idea generation and creative problem solving.
- Learn to confidently and persuasively communicate and present ideas, both to internal teams and management, and externally, to clients and customers.
- Implement innovation strategies to establish more innovative organizational cultures, enthusiastically embrace new thinking, implement positive change, ramp up individual and team productivity, and inspire excellence.

SmartStorming services include...

- Idea generation and innovative thinking consulting
- Innovation assessment and strategy
- Executive and team coaching
- SmartStorm facilitation
- Corporate and Public Workshops
 - SmartStorming® Brainstorm Leadership Training
 - 3-D Ideation® Triple-Strength Creative Problem Solving
 - The SuperSkill® Communication and Presentation Skills

To learn more about SmartStorming, visit us at <http://SmartStorming.com>, or at our blog, <http://SmartStorming-blog.com> – or contact us by email at info@SmartStorming.com.