



Conducting a Brainstorm

TOPIC	TIME [35 MIN]	FACILITATOR'S NOTES
<p>Prepare your brainstorming template and invite a diverse group of participants</p>	<p>Prepare</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare (up to 5) brainstorming questions and begin populating them into the Mural template provided (or an alternative shared document of your choosing). We recommend using a "How Might We..." framework, as this approach communicates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, there are potential solutions out there • Yes, we will find them together • And yes, we'll even try them out <p>Some guidelines for a creating a good question are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Frame your questions in a positive way. 2. Do not assume a specific solution within the question itself. 3. Work on the right "level" of question. For example, if you want to increase access to online gaming in rural communities, frame the question in a couple of different ways to help you determine the right scope (either broad, or more focused), such as: "How might we make it easy to keep teens connected and entertained in rural communities?" (Phrasing the question this way does not assume that online games are the answer, so your ideas will become more about "why" teens might play games, for example—to be connected and entertained.) Or, "How might we increase the number of teens playing online games after school in rural communities?" (This phrasing makes the question more specific about "how" by making assumptions about the entertainment being online games and when and where it will occur.) To help you right-size the focus level of your brainstorming question like this example, consider using the Ladder of Abstraction tool. 2. Invite a diverse group of participants. Traditionally, brainstorms happen amongst the core project team only, but that can sometimes lead to tunnel vision. To avoid this, consider looping in colleagues outside of your core team that can bring a diversity of experience and insight into the brainstorming process. Consider sharing some of the brainstorm questions in advance of the meeting as not everyone works their best by being reactive in the moment.



Conducting a Brainstorm

TOPIC	TIME	FACILITATOR'S NOTES
<p>Choose your best "How Might We" questions</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Share the provided template with the the team and review the brainstorm topic and goals you are trying to achieve. Introduce the participants if they do not all know each other (try to keep out introductions that focus on hierarchy as they sets up a power dynamic and reduces participation).</p> <p>Discuss the top five brainstorm questions that were created ahead of time and let the group determine where to begin based on what seems to be the most promising for generating the most ideas. Do this by asking everyone to type into the video conference chat box or share out verbally their top 1-2 selects. If a new (even better) question emerges, that's great too.</p> <p>Facilitation tip: play music in the background during all "silent" activities to help set a mood of fun and creativity.</p>
<p>Set the stage</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>Introduce the brainstorming rules verbally or by zooming in on this portion of the Mural:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage wild ideas. (If none of the ideas sound a bit ridiculous, then you are filtering yourself too much.) 2. Defer judgment. (This can be as direct as harsh words or as subtle as a condescending tone or talking over one another.) 3. Build on the ideas of others. ("I want to build on that idea" or the use of "Yes, and...") 4. Stay focused on the topic at hand. 5. Have one conversation at a time. 6. Be visual. (Draw and upload and/or show ideas whenever possible.) 7. Go for quantity. <p>Facilitation Tip: If your group is over 10 people, consider placing individuals into smaller groups via breakout rooms for the next activity. You can give them the same question and see what differences emerge, or give them different questions to address if you prefer to tackle a few areas simultaneously. It's not a hard rule, but a good brainstorm group size for solid participation and good energy is 5-7 people.</p>



Conducting a Brainstorm

TOPIC	TIME	FACILITATOR'S NOTES
Start out solo	5	<p>Have each participant begin by silently brainstorming ideas and placing them into the "solo brainstorm space" within the template provided. If you are unable to access the Mural template, have a look at the PDF version and recreate the outline using a shared spreadsheet or document.</p> <p>If using Mural, have everyone choose their own virtual post-it color. If using a shared document, have everyone use a different font color or area of the document.</p> <p>Set a timer for five minutes and have participants start to write down their ideas (one per sticky note if using Mural) without talking or referencing others' ideas. Encourage the team to go for quantity and wild ideas.</p>
Brainstorm as a group	10	<p>Ask people to share their favorite ideas, quickly and succinctly so that there's enough time to get to everyone.</p> <p>Encourage people to build on each other's ideas (using "Yes/And" or "I want to build on that idea..." phrasing). Have people add additional ideas as they emerge directly into the template.</p> <p>Facilitation tip: Assign 1-2 people to help sort similar ideas together into themes or like ideas as they are being shared. This grouping will make voting on ideas much more clear, so the votes are not distributed across ideas or intentions that may actually be very alike.</p>
Vote and determine next steps	10	<p>Use a voting approach such as dot voting to select the ideas that seem most promising based on the teams criteria.</p> <p>As a team, decide what the best next steps should be. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do additional people need to be in the room? • Did we get what we needed? Are there additional brainstorming questions to ask or should they be reframed with the Ladder of Abstraction? Do we need more time or another round? • Are there ideas to push our thinking further in a specific area using the Crazy 8s exercise, or an opportunity to get some quick prototypes into others' hands using the Rapid Experimentation exercise?