

Launch Hack: BRAINSTORMING

“ To produce an idea or way of solving a problem by holding a spontaneous group discussion. ”

The best ideas are built from the minds of many. Take advantage of the different experiences, viewpoints, and brains of the people you are working with.

Rules for Brainstorming:

*While brainstorming is meant to be spontaneous and free-thinking, you **MUST** lay some groundwork to avoid frustration and wasted time.*



Assign a Moderator.

1

This person keeps the conversation on track by easing, not forcing, people back to the original goal. This person allows everyone to feel comfortable sharing their ideas (however wacky) but offering kind reminders to stay on track.

Set SMART Goals.

2

Without a goal, you will be wasting time. Goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound. Write down your goal as a group, for example, “Come up with 4 viable business ideas in one hour.”

Set a time limit.

3

This is self-explanatory but be respectful of everyone's time. Having a finite amount of time will keep you focused and make sure you don't burn out.

Record everything.

4

Be prepared at the start of the meeting with sketchpads, Post-its, and/or a large amount of whiteboard space. Remember that every idea, good or bad, should be written or sketched out. Never imagine that you'll simply remember the things that were said (you won't!)

Embrace the crazy.

5

The best ideas are often born from the worst. Once you have a large number of ideas, start discussions of those that seem really over the top. Examine what makes them great and how you can strip away the unrealistic aspects until you arrive at something unique but achievable.

Positive feedback only.

6

This is the cardinal rule of brainstorming. You are going for quantity over quality at the beginning of a brainstorming session, so remember that every idea is a good idea. Decide as a team what to do if someone in the group keeps saying judgmental and negative remarks. Some ideas: having to do 20 sit ups, only speaking in a high pitched voice, or being in a 10-minute “timeout.”

Start General, End Specific.

7

The initial ideas should be numerous and widespread. If the moderator hears too many similar ideas, encourage participants to stray from that topic by suggesting something completely unrelated or doing a creativity-boosting activity. The point at the beginning is diverse ideas, not uniform. As the meeting progresses, start to focus in on some of the strongest ideas.

Build off of other people's ideas.

8

YES, AND... Do not shut down any idea because every idea holds some sort of value. Create a new post-it for each new idea. Discuss ways to combine entire ideas or to selectively mix elements of two or more weaker ideas to form a stronger whole.

Avoid Groupthink.

9

Groupthink occurs in groups that seek to eliminate conflict entirely. Members tend to follow the lead of one or more individuals without any discussion. It's great to have positive conversations and agreements within the group, but not at the expense of critical thinking, creativity and ultimately, quality. The moderator can look out for groupthink and play devil's-advocate when needed.

How to Brainstorm Business Ideas:

Start with what you know.

What industry would you be interested in creating a business? Have you had any ideas about starting a business in the past? If you picture yourself as an entrepreneur - what type of a business are you running?

Fix what bugs you.

Picture a day in your typical life and walk through all of your activities. Are there any pain points? Can you never find your shoes? Struggle to find parking at the mall? Hate your school uniform? Maybe you can come up with a business to fix these.

Ask yourself, what's next?

What's new that I keep hearing about? Brainstorm ideas AROUND that. Personal drones are becoming really popular - could you create a repair business, cool carrying cases, a drone airport etc.?

Make a cheaper version of an existing product.

Casper didn't invent the bed, but they made high-quality beds much more affordable. Same for Warby Parker in the eyeglasses industry.

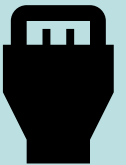
Talk to shoppers.

Interested in a specific industry, say surfboards? Go to a surfboard shop and ask shoppers what they love most about the board and what would they change. What about the EXPERIENCE of surfing do they wish was easier or better?

Look for new niches.

Interested in ice skating but wish there were more styles of skates to choose from? Maybe others wish the same thing...

Need a Creativity Recharge?



Change things up.

Get out of your chair. Flip it upside down. Flip your post-its upside down and see if new words pop into your head. Build on those new words and come up with a business idea.

Play the mix and match game.

Go to a store and take 2 random products and try mixing them into a new concept

Take a walk & make notes of your surroundings.

Bring your notes back to the group and mix and match

Phone a friend.

Ask any of the following questions:

1. What products or experiences do you find really annoying in day to day life?
2. What product do you swear by and get a lot of use out of?
3. What type of business do you think I would be good at running?



Launch Hack: Facilitator's Guide BRAINSTORMING

THE GOAL

1. To practice the rules of brainstorming.
2. Be inspired by the creativity in a group setting
3. Come up with unique business ideas

THE LOGISTICS

This session is best done in small groups of 2-5 people.

Time frames listed will vary based on the full amount of time you have available.

- 1) If you have more than 2 - 5 people, randomly assign teams by counting off or another creative method (ex: drawing number from a hat). If you're working with an individual, partner with them!
- 2) If you have multiple groups, assign each group a space where they may work and ask them to split into their teams
- 3) Give each participant or group their "Trash to Treasure" bag or box full of random items
- 4) Allow 20-40 minutes to brainstorm a product to create out of the materials. Instruct them to be creative as possible and try to create a product that will solve a problem.
- 5) Provide time-check warnings at 20, 10, and 5 minutes remaining
- 6) If working in groups, provide each group with 2-4 minutes to pitch their business ideas followed by 2-5 minutes for questions

THE ITEMS

One copy per person of the Launch Guide, one Trash to Treasure* kit per group, several colors of post-its, paper, pens. Optional: flip charts, markers.

*You can assemble a Trash to Treasure kit by filling large envelopes or small cardboard boxes with random household or school items such as paper clips, straws, pieces of fabric, popsicle sticks, stickers, wire, yarn, old photographs, cheap jewelry, old Cd's or floppy disks, fake flowers, jars or sand or dirt...get creative!! You can pretty much put anything in there as long as it is clean and safe.

Tip - many towns have shops that sell recycled goods, scraps, and crafts. Do a Google search in your area.

THE WRAP UP

Ask each participant or group to share what surprised them most about this session and what they learned. Ask questions such as, "Was it difficult to decide on a business idea? How did you make a decision if there was more than one idea? What could you do differently next time you hold a brainstorm session? Would you be excited to start this business?" Document these ideas on a large piece of paper or have each person write theirs on post-its to be collected.

Note: if you have time constraints, the wrap up portion can be done at a later time, just be sure to have each person jot down notes for 2-3 minutes before they leave while their ideas are fresh.

Optional: If applicable, one person can compile these learnings and follow up to the group with an email, or these can be saved as an ongoing document that is revisited at a later time.

Optional: If working in a large group, have the whole group vote on which pitch was best!