

Ideas Are the Answer

The Ultimate IDEA SYSTEM & Technique



You'll gather valuable ideas
from your work team
like never before!

LEADER'S GUIDE

- Cut Costs
- Drive Innovation
- Improve Services
- Increase Employee Morale

WELCOME

Welcome to the **Brain Writing Leader's Guide**. With this simple guide you will be a pro at conducting your own brain writing sessions and establishing an idea cultivation and implementation system.

- Review the text part of this document (pages 1-3)

Print out and use:

- Brain writing summary sheet (pages 4-5)
- Characteristics of a good idea cultivation and implementation system (pages 6-7)
- Strategic planning worksheet (page 8)

You are then ready to go.

NEED FOR BRAIN WRITING

These processes will contribute to your organization, because in the 21st century, ideas are the answer. By establishing an idea system that ongoingly stimulates, captures, evaluates, and implements the best ideas from everyone in the organization, your organization will grow and prosper.

Don't forget people want to work for people who will listen to their ideas. By asking people for their ideas, morale, commitment, and involvement, improves at all levels.

By getting your people together and consistently asking them for ideas you will encourage creativity and productivity. After all who knows better how to improve the nitty-gritty things than the people that have to deal with them everyday?

Refer to the Brain Writing Summary Sheet to conduct your brain writing session.

BEFORE

Get your materials together and check the meeting space. There seems to be no perfect meeting spaces but do the best job possible. You will probably use a conference room. Make sure it's big enough to handle the number of participants that will be attending. Double check to make sure that the temperature is reasonable. If you turn on the AC when you enter the room, the room may stay too hot for most of the meeting.

Make sure you have materials for each participant, pads, pens, post-its and red dots. Start the meeting on time. At the very least you be on time.

BEGINNING

When you start explain to the participants that you will be doing a brain writing exercise to open up creativity and gather new ideas to improve the processes in your organization.

You can start the session by asking some of the following questions:

- What are some ways we can improve our business?
- How can we maximize the customer experience?
- What ideas do you have for eliminating waste, or saving money?

ACTUAL EXERCISE

After you set up the context for the sharing of ideas, get everyone to write down 2 or 3 ideas on their yellow legal pad, and then have them hand their pad to the person on their right, and take the pad from the person on their left. Each participant reads the other person's ideas and adds three additional ideas.

Ask the participants to begin sorting for the best ideas of the group. Instruct them to pass the pad again, to the person on their right. Now everyone will have six or seven ideas in front of them.

Invite them to study those six or seven ideas, and choose 3 or 4 they think are the best. Ask them to write the ideas they've chosen on the post-it note pads, one idea per sheet. Then go to the flip chart and start with a blank page. Ask everyone to get up and stick their 3 or 4 ideas written on the post-it notes on the flip chart.

Everyone is doing this kind of helter-skelter, and gathered around the flip chart at the same time generating a lot of playful, exciting energy. As they're sticking their post-it notes on the flip chart, ask them to group the ideas by category. Some of the ideas may be similar in design or type.

VOTING FOR BEST IDEAS

Invite them to take their red dots, go back to the flip chart, read every idea, and vote for the three best ideas by sticking a red dot on that post-it note.

After everyone does that, and everyone has voted by sticking their red dots on the idea post-it notes of their choice, the best ideas will visually stand out.

ACTION STEPS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Take those ideas and write them on a new page of the flip chart. Begin the process again, this time concentrating on action items and ideas for implementation. Organize these ideas into a sequence for execution, and you'll have a strategic action plan that everyone is committed to, because everyone has participated in the process.

Use the Strategic planning worksheet for assigning responsibility & deadlines, like you do with any action plan.

Some of the ideas, of course, will be very simple, and a single action can accomplish them. These are some of the best kinds of ideas. And it's best to assign them to the person who originated that idea. More complex ideas, which require a series of actions, can easily be developed for implementation with this process.

HELPFUL HINTS:

Be playful when you are generating ideas. Creativity and playfulness go hand in hand. As your team becomes experienced in completing the entire cycle from generating the ideas to successfully implementing them, the energy and confidence of your team will increase.

The next time you conduct the brain writing process, they will be more engaged, and if you do this ongoingly, you can continue to improve every area of your enterprise.

If there is an initial hesitancy you can ask, "What do you wish we could do to serve our customers better? If you could have a genie pop out of a magic lamp, or you could have a magic wand and tap it and anything you wished would happen, would actually take place, what do you wish we could do?" This is a simple, effective way to stimulate creative thinking when it just doesn't seem to be happening for some people. And you'll find that everyone will start writing ideas.

CONCLUSION

That's all there is to it. As you use this process in your organization you will foster creativity and generate many new ideas to improve the processes in your organization.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- yellow legal pads – 1 per participant
- pens – 1 per participant
- post-it note pads – 1 pad per participant
- red stick on dots - 9 dots per participant
- 1 flip chart plus working markers

1	Discuss brain writing	Facilitate discussion of the value of brain writing to encourage the submission of ideas
2	Clarify purpose of meeting	Write on flip-chart specifically what you want to collect ideas about, i.e. ways to improve customer service
3	Ask for ideas	Have everyone write down 2 or 3 ideas on their yellow legal pad
4	Share ideas	Have participants pass their pad to the person on their right, and take the pad from the person on their left
5	Refine ideas	Ask them to read those ideas, and use them to stimulate variations on those ideas, and write them down 3 or 4 more ideas on the pad
6	Repeat Steps 4 and 5 if wanted	Repeat steps to generate even more refined ideas by passing the pads to the right one more time
7	Select best ideas	Have participants choose 3 or 4 of the ideas that they think are the best off their pad. Ask them to write the ideas they've chosen on the Post-It notes, one idea per sheet
8	Post ideas on flip chart	Participants then place their Post-It notes on the flip chart all at once, generating excitement and playfulness. Ask them to group the ideas, because some are variations on each other

9	Vote for best ideas	Participants get to vote by putting the red-dots next to the ideas that they think are best.
10	Choose best ideas	These are the ones with the most red-dots beside them. Write them on the flip chart
11	Brain writing for ideas to implement	Take the best ideas (most red dots) and go through the process again (steps 4, 5 & 6) to generate ideas for implementation and execution.
12	Vote on implementation	Participants get to vote on the best ways to implement using the red-dots.
13	Decide on Action Items	Either go through process again or facilitate discussion to decide on action items for implementation
14	Strategic Plan	Organize the action ideas into a strategic plan, assigning responsibilities & deadlines.
15	Summary and Close	Close meeting by summarizing the strategic plan clarifying responsibilities and deadlines.

Characteristics of an Effective Idea Cultivation and Implementation System.

Characteristic #1 - Ideas are requested, encouraged and welcome

Start asking people to come to the regular meetings with an idea or two... and be sure to tell them that small ideas count.

Characteristic #2 - The submission process is easy & natural

Make it part of your regular meetings. Make ideas welcome. Make it easy to submit ideas.

Characteristic #3 - Evaluation of the ideas is quick, and happens at the level of implementation

Making decisions about ideas should be done by the people who have the most knowledge and day to day awareness of the issue involved. Some ideas will need to be moved upward for evaluation & approval, but most of them will be small enough to warrant evaluation and a move to action right on the spot.

Characteristic #4 - Swift action to implement the chosen ideas is critical

The most powerful motivation for offering an idea is knowing that it will be heard, considered, and implemented quickly. Implementing quickly stimulates participation, creates value and drives the idea system.

Characteristic #5 - Implemented ideas are re-examined for additional value

Many good ideas can be expanded, with a little more creative thought. If an idea gets implemented and works... run it through the brain-writing process again looking for ways to expand on the idea. Ask the questions: How could we expand on this idea? Where else can this idea be used?

Characteristic #6 - Contributors are sincerely & joyfully recognized and success is celebrated

Recognition and celebration will fuel the process emotionally. The best form of recognition for ideas is to use them! Recognizing people is simple if it is sincere, and celebrating the success of implemented ideas that work, can be a natural way to energize the next brain-writing session.

Characteristic #7 - The ideas system is measured for performance improvement using three primary metrics

Measurement is important to sustain and improve on the idea. The three basic metrics you want to track, to strengthen your idea system are quantity of ideas, source of the ideas, and speed of implementation.

PROJECT _____

DATE ORIGINATED _____

	TASK	COMPLETION DATE	RESPONSIBILITY
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			

COMMENTS:
