

THE INCLUSIVE BRAINSTORM

FOR WHOM?

Suitable for all employees.

WHAT?

This brainstorming exercise can be used to come up with ideas about any strategic, human or business-related challenge.

It is also an exercise in inclusive team building.

A team should ideally consist of a maximum of 12 participants, to make it as interactive as possible. Also try to make sure everyone feels involved.

REQUIRED

- Minimum 1 hour (if the group is on the bigger side, plan 90 minutes)
- Meet in real life or do the brainstorm online. In case of an online brainstorm, make sure everyone is comfortable. Cameras will need to be on (good to tell everyone in advance)
- Post-its or writing materials
- facilitator (can be someone other than the manager)

HOW DO YOU START?

Phase 1: The groups tries to identify what all participants have in common

Each participant tries for a few minutes to write down what all the team members have in common.

This should often not be too farfetched:

- It can be obvious (e.g. we are all Dutch or French speaking, we are all between 32 and 58 years old...)
- It can be about interests (e.g. we all like travelling, Italian food, and a glass of champagne)
- About the job (e.g. we are all very risk-aware, as we all work in this risk service).

Phase 2: The group discovers the unique strengths that each member brings to the team

Each participant explains what they think they uniquely bring to the team. The group challenges this (only in a positive way) by expressing their opinion.

Ex :

“Johan, you are always there for us when we have problems with our computers”.

“Martine, you’re the youngest here, maybe the less experienced one, but you challenge us quite a bit, and that’s excellent for us”...

Phase 3: the brainstorming itself

Not all employees are used to a real brainstorm, where everyone can share any idea without being censored.

Start by explaining as clearly as possible what the goal is.

“Ex : we are now going to have a brainstorm about our reorganisation. As everyone knows, due to the departure of Peter, who will not be replaced, we may experience some difficulties to meet deadlines. How can we solve this? Are there things we can do differently, delegate, stop doing? Is there other help available?”

SOME RULES

- **Everyone must express themselves** (this will normally go quite smoothly. Thanks to the two previous phases, everyone will have a stronger sense of belonging to the team).
- **All ideas are welcome.** So avoid saying “yes, but...”, encourage colleagues to build on the ideas of others, not to contradict them.
- **Show curiosity, and show appreciation for all suggestions.**

This may seem like just another brainstorm, but the exercise done beforehand will strengthen inclusion in the team, and encourage everyone to participate much more.

Over 90% of the teams that tried this saw an increase in participation from every team member.



MORE INFORMATION?

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