



Brainstorming Guidelines for Problem-Solving

When it comes to solving problems, two or more heads are definitely better than one. But problem-solving sessions can be unproductive if the group loses focus or is dominated by one or two members. Use the following guidelines to keep group problem-solving sessions productive:

1. Define the problem to be worked on.
2. Define the success criteria for the session: What needs to be accomplished in order for the results of the session to be satisfactory?
3. Determine how the results of the problem-solving session will be used.
4. Limit the session to one hour. Allow five minutes for an introductory statement, 20 minutes for brainstorming and 10 minutes for a summary or prioritizing exercise. During the session:
 - Ask each participant to present two to three ideas.
 - Allow no criticism of ideas.
 - Encourage “free-wheeling.”
 - Go for quantity and diversity of ideas.
 - Combine and improve on ideas.
5. Assign next-step tasks and accountabilities for further review of information.
6. Summarize the session.
7. Communicate the results to others if appropriate.
8. Evaluate the results and use them to build follow-up sessions dealing with similar issues.