Brainstorming - Template

Throughout the mapping and assessment of the process(es) of your target activity, you may have discovered changes necessary to refine or streamline the process. Use this opportunity to also explore changes you had not considered but want to.

Begin your exploration by freeing yourself from any restrictions you may have. Craft an ambitious plan — you can always narrow it down later. Throughout this exercise it is important that you document any and all changes to your processes that you believe would benefit your organization.

Here are examples of **brainstorming activities and templates you can use to identify aspirational goals** with your team members. Feel free to use which one seems most suitable for you and your team members. No matter which brainstorming template you choose, we suggest putting a time limit to your chosen brainstorming activity to encourage focus.

**1. Mind Mapping**

Mind mapping allows you to visually identify linkages between your aspirations. Write each activity that you have identified on the center of a board, then write each of your team members’ aspiration as a branch off that activity. Explore how each aspiration inspires new ideas from your team.



Zen Flowchart. (2024). Mind Map Diagram Template (Word). Retrieved February 21, 2024, from <https://www.zenflowchart.com/mind-map-examples-templates>

**2. Brainwriting**

Brainwriting prevents anchoring and personality bias by providing private space for coming up with your list of aspirations.

You may use the instructions and template below as a guide for conducting your brainwriting session either remotely or in person.

**Members:**

| Person 1 | Person 2 | Person 3 | Person 4 | Person 5 | Person 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |

**[Start Person 1] Idea Tab**

| Idea 1 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Idea 2 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| Idea 3 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |

**[Start Person 2] Idea Tab**

| Idea 1 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Idea 2 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| Idea 3 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |

**[Start Person 3] Idea Tab**

| Idea 1 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Idea 2 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| Idea 3 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |

**[Start Person 4] Idea Tab**

| Idea 1 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Idea 2 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| Idea 3 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |

**[Start Person 5] Idea Tab**

| Idea 1 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Idea 2 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| Idea 3 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |

**[Start Person 6] Idea Tab**

| Idea 1 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Idea 2 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |
| Idea 3 | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea | Added Idea |

Instructions if conducting **Remotely** via Google Sheets:

**For the Facilitator:**

1. Create a Google Sheet with individual tabs named '[Start Person X] Idea Tab' for each participant (see above for sample template which you may simply copy paste and tweak as needed).
2. Set up a table in each tab with columns for 'Idea 1', 'Idea 2', 'Idea 3', and several 'Added Idea' columns corresponding to the number of team members.
3. Assign a unique color to each participant for their 'Added Idea' columns.
4. Inform participants which tab they start with and their assigned color for anonymity.
5. Instruct participants to fill out 'Idea 1', 'Idea 2', and 'Idea 3' in their starting tab within a set time (3-5 minutes).
6. After the time, direct them to move to the next tab to their left and find their color-coded 'Added Idea' column to build on the ideas.
7. Continue the process until each participant has contributed to all tabs and returns to their original starting tab.
8. Review the ideas in each tab and prepare for a group discussion. You may organize a virtual meeting or use the chat feature within Google Sheets for a group discussion.

**For the Team Members:**

1. Open the shared Google Sheet in incognito or anonymous mode.
2. Start in your assigned '[Start Person X] Idea Tab' and fill out 'Idea 1', 'Idea 2', and 'Idea 3'.
3. After each round, move to the next tab to the left and add to the 'Added Idea' columns in your color.
4. Aim to expand upon or complement the ideas already noted by previous participants in each tab.

Instructions if conducting **In Person**:

1. The facilitator introduces the topic and explains the brainwriting process.
2. Participants are given blank sheets of paper or index cards.
3. Each participant independently writes down their ideas on the topic (one idea per sheet/card or multiple ideas per sheet/card, as per the facilitator's instruction).
4. A set time limit (usually 5 minutes) is given for this round.
5. At the end of Round 1, participants anonymously submit their sheets/cards.
6. The facilitator collects and displays these ideas on a whiteboard or a large area, ensuring anonymity.
7. In each subsequent round, participants are either given new blank sheets/cards to write additional ideas, or they are asked to build upon the ideas already displayed.
8. Participants can draw inspiration from the ideas displayed, creating a dynamic and evolving pool of concepts.
9. At the end of each round, new ideas are collected and added to the display area.
10. The facilitator ensures that the flow of ideas continues and that new submissions are integrated seamlessly.
11. After a predetermined number of rounds (typically 5 or 6), the facilitator concludes the idea generation phase.
12. A group discussion is then held to review all the ideas. Participants can discuss, combine, and expand upon the ideas presented.
13. The session ends with a summary of key ideas and potential action plans or further steps to be taken.

**3. Question Storming**

When question storming, instead of brainstorming aspirations, brainstorm questions. Ask all the members in your team to come up with as many questions as they can around your organization’s processes within the area of focus. You may learn that you have not been asking the right questions to inform your aspirations.

Feel free to use this space to document ideas in your brainstorming activity. We highly encourage you and your team to think of at least 40-50 questions before stopping.

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After generating a comprehensive list of questions, categorize and assign a priority to the questions. This will help in identifying the most critical areas for focus.

| **Question** | **Category** | **Priority** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | High |
|  |  | Medium |
|  |  | Low |
|  |  | High |
|  |  | Medium |
|  |  | Low |
|  |  | High |
|  |  | Medium |

Lastly, identify the questions marked as 'High' priority. These are the ones your team should focus on answering collectively. Plan a session or discussion to delve into these high-priority questions, aiming to find actionable solutions or deeper insights.