



Why all The Questions?

Brainstorming is a commonly used technique for generating ideas and solutions to problems. However, the traditional approach to brainstorming involves participants barking ideas and potential solutions at a facilitator in a free-form, unstructured way. While this can be effective in some cases, there is evidence to suggest that brainstorming with questions, rather than answers, can be a more effective method for idea generation. Ideating with questions is often referred to as questionstorming. In this quick tip, we will explore the benefits of questionstorming and provide some tips for implementing this approach.

The benefits of Questionstorming

One of the major benefits of questionstorming is that it encourages participants to think more deeply about the problem at hand. By asking thought-provoking questions, participants are forced to examine the problem from different angles and consider a wider range of possibilities. As a result, they may be more likely to come up with innovative solutions.

Another benefit of questionstorming is that this practice can help to prevent groupthink. When participants are asked to offer up ideas in a free-form way, there is a risk that they may simply adopt the ideas of others, rather than thinking for themselves. By contrast, when participants are asked to answer specific questions, they are more likely to think independently and come up with their own ideas.

Questionstorming can also be a more efficient method of idea generation. When participants are asked to offer up ideas in a traditional brainstorming event, there is frequently a lot of duplication and repetition. By contrast, when participants are asked to answer specific questions generated through the questionstorming process, the resulting ideas are likely to be more novel and diverse.

Tips for brainstorming with questions

If you are interested in trying brainstorming with questions, here are some tips to help you get started:

1. Start with a defining statement. Your defining statement will be used to guide the group through the questionstorming process. It should be bold and thought-provoking. An example might be “Our department needs to improve our lackluster communications”.

2. Ask good questions. The questions generated should be related to the defining statement, open-ended, actionable, and should encourage participants to think in new and creative ways.
3. Encourage participation. Make sure that everyone has an opportunity to share their ideas, and that no one dominates the discussion. Have participants develop all their questions first and then share. The [brainwriting process](#) works well to ensure that all the introverts in the room get an equal opportunity to participate.
4. Build on each other's ideas. Encourage participants to build on each other's ideas rather than simply offering up their own. This can help to create a more collaborative and creative environment. After the questions are presented, invite the group to read the other questions generated in the exercise. Then, encourage them to make their peer's questions better and /or more actionable.

What questions should you ask? In his book, *Questions are the Answer*, Hal Gregersen notes, "If you ask a question that starts with 'why,' you'll often uncover the root cause of a problem. If you ask a question that starts with 'what if,' you will generate new ideas and possibilities. If you ask a question that starts with 'how,' you will uncover the steps necessary to implement a solution" (Gregersen, 2018, p. 4).

Once you have developed all these great questions, start answering them. You will find that you will generate significantly better answers after you take the time to develop the right questions.

Conclusion

Questionstorming can be a highly effective method for generating ideas and solutions. By encouraging participants to use this method to think deeply about the problem at hand, the answer to the question "why all the questions" will be at your fingertips.

Questionstorming is just one of the ideation tools utilized in the LLD workshop, Resolve to Solve. If you are interested in engaging your team and leveraging their creativity, please contact Scot Bolz for more information and/or to schedule the workshop.

-Scot

References:

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