

THE THREE ROUND METHOD OF BRAINSTORMING

The **Three Round Method of Brainstorming** is an exceptionally powerful and effective approach to problem solving and creative thinking. The process empowers a group of individuals to actively participate in a co-creative process that encourages everyone to contribute their best thinking on whatever problem or issue the group is attempting to resolve. It enables the group to discover their shared concerns and perspectives, it encourages positive thinking and generates a sense of community.

10 STEPS IN THE THREE ROUND METHOD OF BRAINSTORMING:

1. Review the **Rules of Creativity in Brainstorming**:
 - (1) Seek the greatest possible quantity of ideas (the most important rule)
 - (2) Defer judgment (until the time set aside for evaluating ideas)
 - (3) Freewheel (be as creative, innovative and "far out" as possible)
 - (4) Hitchhike (to generate more ideas, modify or combine other ideas)
2. Participants are divided into at least three small groups of 3-12 people each.
3. The entire group practices a brainstorming exercise to relax and ensure that everyone is familiar with and comfortable with the process. The Coordinator injects outrageous ideas to help participants be creative and uninhibited.
4. Each group appoints a Facilitator who encourages everyone to participate and refers to the Rules of Creativity if they get stuck generating ideas and a Recorder who writes all their ideas on flip chart paper.
5. The First Round consists of each group addressing the problem statement, issue or question which the Coordinator presents for brainstorming within a designated amount of time.
6. The Second Round consists of each group trading their list for another group's list. Each group reviews their new list, deleting any lower priority ideas, concerns or options contained on the list by drawing a single line through the idea to leave it legible for future reference.*
7. The Third Round consists of another trading of lists. The assignment in this round is to identify the top 3 or 4 most important ideas left on the list before them and then to record those priorities on a clean sheet of flip chart paper.

THREE ROUND BRAINSTORMING METHOD 10 STEPS CONTINUED:

8. The new lists of 3-4 priority ideas from each group are posted somewhere where all the participants can see them. The Coordinator asks for input from participants in terms of any similarities contained on the different lists, their observations on the process or the output. As ideas appear on more than one list, they are circled to help identify the top 1 or 2 priority ideas.
9. The Coordinator helps develop a new question designed to identify possible ways the top 1 or 2 priority issues can be positively addressed such as:
"In what ways can we address the issue of ..."
10. The small groups reassemble and start the process over with Step 5, focusing on the question related to finding positive ways to address the problems or concerns identified in the earlier exercise. They continue through Step 9.

The **Three Round Method of Brainstorming** process begins with addressing the negative factor, the problem, concern or question, and then it evolves into exploring what positive actions can be taken to address or resolve the "problem". The fact that everyone is encouraged to participate and share their input builds a sense of community and appreciation for diversity. The fact that the judgment or evaluation of an individual's ideas occurs in a different group eliminates the negative emotions that could otherwise interfere with the co-creative and community-building process.

The **Three Round Method of Brainstorming** generates a positive, cooperative atmosphere that can lead to continuing participation in a co-creative process of seeking solutions rather than just airing concerns or talking about problems. The successful application of this process on a regular basis in an organization or community can facilitate personal, organizational and community empowerment.

*The reason for ensuring that all ideas listed on the flip chart paper are legible even after they have been eliminated in Round 2 is to be able to retrieve all input from the exercises for later review and evaluation. Ironically, the most valuable ideas or concepts frequently get eliminated in the small group process because the idea or concept was too creative or innovative for its significance to be realized by the group during the exercise. The Coordinator or manager of the organization or group that conducts the process can realize significant benefits from reviewing all input captured during the **Three Round Method of Brainstorming** at a later time.

For more information on how your business, organization, or community can benefit from using the Three Round Method of Brainstorming, contact Charles Betterton at SEDONA CENTER SPACE, PO Box 20072, Sedona, AZ 86341. Telephone 760-212-9931.

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