

HEEDGROUP

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

***RUNNING A HIGH-IMPACT
BRAINSTORMING SESSION***

A well-run brainstorming session sparks creativity, keeps discussions focused, and leads to actionable ideas. This guide ensures you're prepared, your participants are engaged, and your session drives real results.

(60-90 MIN)

SESSION OVERVIEW & IDEAL TIMING

Phase	Time (min)	Goal
Icebreaker (Optional)	5-7	Warm up creativity and lower inhibitions.
Framing the Challenge	10	Ensure clarity and alignment before ideation begins.
Idea Generation	20-30	Capture as many diverse ideas as possible.
Refining & Prioritization	15-20	Identify the best ideas and focus efforts.
Actionable Next Steps	10-15	Turn ideas into a clear execution plan.
Closing & Summary	5	Reinforce accountability and wrap up effectively.

(5-7 MIN, OPTIONAL)

PRE-SESSION PREPARATION & ICEBREAKER

STEP 1

SETTING UP THE ROOM OR VIRTUAL SPACE

- Arrange chairs in a circle or around a whiteboard for open discussion.
- Write the challenge statement clearly on a whiteboard or flip chart.
- Gather materials: markers, sticky notes, voting stickers, and a timer.
- If virtual, set up a Google Doc, Miro, or MURAL board and ensure participants have access.
- Send out the challenge statement and session expectations in advance so participants come prepared.

OPTIONAL ICEBREAKER: THE 30-SECOND DOODLE CHALLENGE

- Distribute index cards or sticky notes.
- Set a 30-second timer for everyone to sketch a fun object (e.g., a rocket-powered bike or a dog wearing sunglasses or a cat having a picnic).
- Pass the doodle to the right. Each person adds to it in another 30 seconds. Repeat 3-4 rounds.
- Share and discuss the unexpected final drawings.

(10 MIN)

FRAMING THE CHALLENGE CLEARLY

STEP 2

BEFORE THE SESSION BEGINS

- Ensure the challenge statement is visible (on a whiteboard, printed handouts, or a shared screen for virtual teams).
- Prepare a slide deck with the challenge statement as the first slide if running the session virtually.
- Communicate why the session matters and what success looks like.
- Frame the brainstorming question to be specific and actionable.

HOW TO FRAME AN EFFECTIVE BRAINSTORMING QUESTION

- Avoid vague questions like: “How can we improve our product?”
- Use specific, goal-driven questions:
 1. “How can we reduce onboarding time by 50% for new users?”
 2. “What are five innovative ways to increase customer engagement without increasing budget?”

COMMON PITFALLS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

- If the challenge is too broad, add a constraint (e.g., If we had to solve this in two weeks, what would we do?).
- If participants hesitate to speak up, allow anonymous sticky note submissions first.
- If the discussion gets sidetracked, use a “Parking Lot” section on the whiteboard for unrelated ideas.

(20-30 MIN)

GUIDE IDEA GENERATION

BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES

STEP 3

RAPID IDEATION

- Set a five-minute timer.
- Have each participant write as many ideas as possible on sticky notes or in a shared doc.
- No talking during this phase—just writing.

REVERSE THINKING

(Flipping the Problem)

- Instead of asking “How can we solve this?”, ask “How could we make this worse?”.
- Flip those answers into solutions.

ROLE STORMING

- Have participants pretend they are different people solving the problem (e.g., “How would Elon Musk/Oprah/Steve Jobs solve this?”).

(15-20 MIN)

REFINE & PRIORITIZE IDEAS PRIORITIZATION METHODS

DOT VOTING

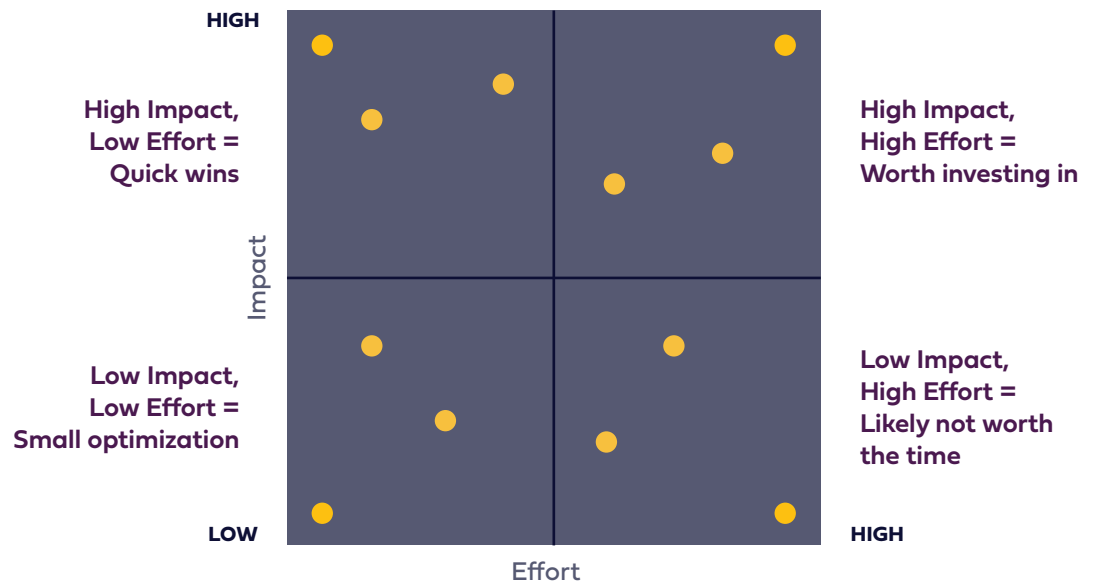
- Each person gets three to five voting dots and places them on their favorite ideas.
- The ideas with the most votes move forward.

IDEA MASHUP

- Take two unrelated ideas and combine them into a hybrid concept.

STEP 4

EFFORT VS. IMPACT MATRIX



STEP 5

(10-15 MIN)

DEFINE ACTIONABLE NEXT STEPS

TURNING IDEAS INTO AN ACTION PLAN

- Assign an owner to each prioritized idea.
- Set deadlines for follow-up or implementation.
- Capture everything in a shared document or digital whiteboard.

EXAMPLE ACTION PLAN FORMAT

Idea	Owner	Next Step	Deadline
New user onboarding flow redesign	Alex	Create a prototype	Feb 20
Customer engagement survey	Taylor	Draft survey questions	Feb 15

(5 MIN)

CLOSE THE SESSION EFFECTIVELY

HOW TO FRAME AN EFFECTIVE BRAINSTORMING QUESTION

- Recap key takeaways and next steps.
- Thank participants for their input.
- Send a follow-up email within 24 hours summarizing:
 1. Finalized top ideas
 2. Assigned action items and owners
 3. The next meeting or check-in date

STEP 6

BONUS

QUICK ROUNDTABLE REFLECTION

- "What was the most valuable part of today's session?"
- "Any feedback to improve future brainstorming sessions?"

FACILITATOR'S ESSENTIALS: MATERIALS CHECKLIST

FOR IN-PERSON SESSIONS

- Whiteboard or large sticky notes** – To capture and display ideas visibly.
- Markers and pens** – Multiple colors help categorize and highlight key points.
- Sticky notes** – Useful for anonymous idea submissions and clustering ideas.
- Timer** – Keeps each phase structured and focused.
- Dot stickers** – For voting and prioritization exercises.

FOR VIRTUAL SESSIONS

- Digital whiteboard tools** – Google Jamboard, Miro, MURAL, or FigJam for real-time idea collaboration.
- Shared document tools** – Google Docs or Notion for capturing and organizing ideas.
- Polling or voting tools** – Slido, Mentimeter, Miro's voting feature, or Zoom polls for prioritization.
- Breakout rooms** (if applicable) – Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet breakout rooms for smaller group discussions.
- Screen-sharing setup** – Ensure the facilitator can display the brainstorming question, ideas, and next steps clearly.
- Timer app or built-in meeting timer** – To keep each phase structured (e.g., Meeting Timer in Zoom, online countdown timers).
- Pre-prepared slide deck** – Display challenge statement, brainstorming techniques, and next steps to guide participants.

This ensures that whether in-person or virtual, the session remains structured, engaging, and productive. Let me know if you need any further refinements!



FINAL TAKEAWAY:
**WHAT MAKES A
GREAT FACILITATOR?**

**Keeps the session
structured yet dynamic.**

**Encourages all
voices to be heard.**

**Ensures ideas turn
into real action.**

With this guide, you can lead
brainstorming sessions that drive
innovation and get results.



HEEDGROUP