



BRAIN WRITING

“The ego has landed!” That’s often the sentiment one has when entering a ‘Brainstorming’ session with a motor-mouthed creative whose interest in selling their ideas threatens to overwhelm an exploration of all others... And it’s one of the main reasons that people feel Brainstorming doesn’t work: personality so often trumps productivity. So... You might be pleased to hear how does ‘Brain *writing*’ change that?

In a nutshell, Brainwriting negates a great deal of the egotistical and extrovert behavior that so often compromises group creativity. How? By putting the ideas on paper! The system asks participants – ideally no more than six* – to think on a challenge or problem. Each person then has a few minutes in which to write down three thoughts, solutions or ideas on the topic. These are then passed to the next person where they are expanded upon.

In more detail, here are the steps to running a Brainwriting session.

- Clearly identify the goal or problem to be solved
- Print a sheet, like the one shown, for each person
- Add in people’s names and write a summary of the issue at the top of the paper
- Ask every participant to write three ideas to address the issue
- Start a five-minute timer!
- Each participant works alone and fills in the sheets using words, drawings or numbers
- When time’s up, each person passes their sheet to the person on their right
- Each participant finds inspiration by reading the sheet they receive...
- ...and then expands on them, taking them in new directions or, indeed, ignoring them and just adding three more ideas instead!
- This process repeats until the sheet is complete
- At the end, remove duplicate ideas and begin evaluating what remains!

This system is based on the original Brainwriting article by Bernd Rohrbach, first published in a 1968 edition of Germany’s Absatzwirtschaft magazine. One of its main selling points is that it increases efficiency: with six rounds – taking a total of 30 minutes – the system produces 108 thoughts, ideas or solutions. Sessions with teams of four, five or seven generate 72, 90 and 126 thoughts respectively. Here are some of the other advantages. Brainwriting...

- Is a simple system – easy to understand and implement
- Requires no special expertise to facilitate
- Gives all participants equal opportunities
- Removes a great deal of ego and ‘sales’ from the creative process!
- Promotes sharing and idea building
- Eliminates the schism between introverts and extroverts
- Thoughts are recorded by individuals so there’s less filtering by the facilitator

“DMI were amazingly supportive and collaborative.” Kirsten Galvin, Marketing manager, Ben Automotive

Critics of Brainwriting cite a few disadvantages to it though; specifically:

- Writing ideas takes more time than saying them
- Some people find it harder to express themselves clearly in the written word
- Handwriting can be illegible
- The time pressure causes some people to 'dry up'
- The possibility of idea duplication remains an issue throughout

*six of them, not six years of age!

Brainwriting Sheet - 3 x 6

	Idea 1	Idea 2	Idea 3
Person 1			
Person 2			
Person 3			
Person 4			
Person 5			
Person 6			

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