

> // THIS CHECKLIST IS PART  
OF THE INNOVATION EXPEDITION,  
BY GIJS VAN WULFEN.  
CHECK IT OUT ON AMAZON.COM



> RAISE IDEAS

# 25 RULES

## FOR PERFECT BRAINSTORMING

Every one of us has experienced failed brainstorming sessions. It could have been because one of your vice presidents disapproved of every idea until after a short while everybody kept his mouth shut. Or because 250 ideas were posted on a wall and nobody knew what move to take next. Or because at the end of a long day at the office you could only recycle old ideas and nothing new was unveiled. But do not get discouraged. The perfect brainstorm does exist - just like the perfect storm.

So, what finally gives that feeling of WOW? I've discovered that this simple question cannot be answered easily. I do not think there is one dominant success factor. It is much more the right interplay of many small factors. It's all in the details. Perhaps the metaphor of a puzzle is most fitting. There are many small pieces needed, and if you lose one, the puzzle is worthless. In my innovation practice, I have found 25 pieces needed to create perfect brainstorming:

### HIGHLY RELEVANT

1. Define a relevant subject, which is a challenge for the organization and the people you invite.
2. Create with the sponsor a concrete and s.m.a.r.t. brainstorming or innovation assignment.
3. Create momentum for brainstorming. Something important must happen now!

### DIVERSE GROUP OF PARTICIPANTS

4. Invite people for whom the assignment is personally relevant.
5. Invite people for both content as well as decision-making capabilities.
6. Include outsiders and outside-the-box thinkers.
7. Include an even mix of men and women, young & old, et cetera.
8. Invite the internal senior problem-owner (CEO or vice president) to participate.

## SPECIAL SETTING

10. Create an (emotionally) safe environment where you can be yourself.
11. Don't allow iPhones and iPads to ring or flash.
12. Never - and I really mean never do any brainstorming at the office.

## FACILITATED BY A PROFESSIONAL

21. Appoint an (internal) expert facilitator, who stays in the background and exercises light control.
22. The facilitator should reflect the opposite energy of the group. If the group is too active: exert calmness.
23. The facilitator mustn't lose sight of subgroups; closely monitor their progress.

## EFFECTIVELY STRUCTURED PROCESS

13. Allow at least two days for effective brainstorming to reach concrete new concepts.
14. Spend twice as much time on the convergence process as on the divergence process.
15. Plan and prepare an effective combination of idea-generating techniques.
16. Be open to suggestions from the group to adapt the process.
17. Make sure it is enjoyable. Fun promotes good results.
18. Time box. Make sure everybody is aware of the time limits- and sticks to them.
19. Hire a storyboard artist or cartoonist to visualize the results
20. Keep up the pace; otherwise it becomes long-winded and boring.

## CONCRETE OUTPUT

24. Make the output very concrete and clear to anybody.
25. Creating concepts together with your colleagues generates maximum internal support.

