



## CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING AND PROBLEM SOLVING



530.802.2075  
2036 Grass Valley Hwy. #265 • Grass Valley, CA 95945  
[ruth@highperformanceadvocates.com](mailto:ruth@highperformanceadvocates.com)  
[www.highperformanceadvocates.com](http://www.highperformanceadvocates.com)

# CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is an excellent tool for identifying problems, tapping into your creativity and providing many alternatives for solving problems.

## RULES FOR CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING

- Be as creative and imaginative as possible.
- Generate ideas spontaneously .
- Involve everyone. If people aren't engaged, rotate round-robin style.
- Build on others' ideas. Feel free to see where you can creatively go, together.
- Write all your ideas in a way that everyone can see them.
- Go for high volume of ideas.
- No evaluation or criticism permitted.
- No discussion permitted; clarify later.

## IMAGINATION KILLERS

Watch that you aren't saying or notice when you are thinking anything like this:

- It's a good idea but...
- Yeah, but...
- It will cost too much.
- It's not part of our job.
- The boss, staff, board, etc. won't go for it.
- Let's form a committee.
- It sounds good in theory.
- It needs more study.
- Let's think about it later.
- Why hasn't someone suggested it before?

# THE SIX STEPS TO SOLVING A PROBLEM

## Some reasons why problems don't get solved?

- One person is trying to solve a problem for a group.
- Someone is uncooperative.
- No one person sees the whole picture.
- Team members are working independently rather than cooperatively.

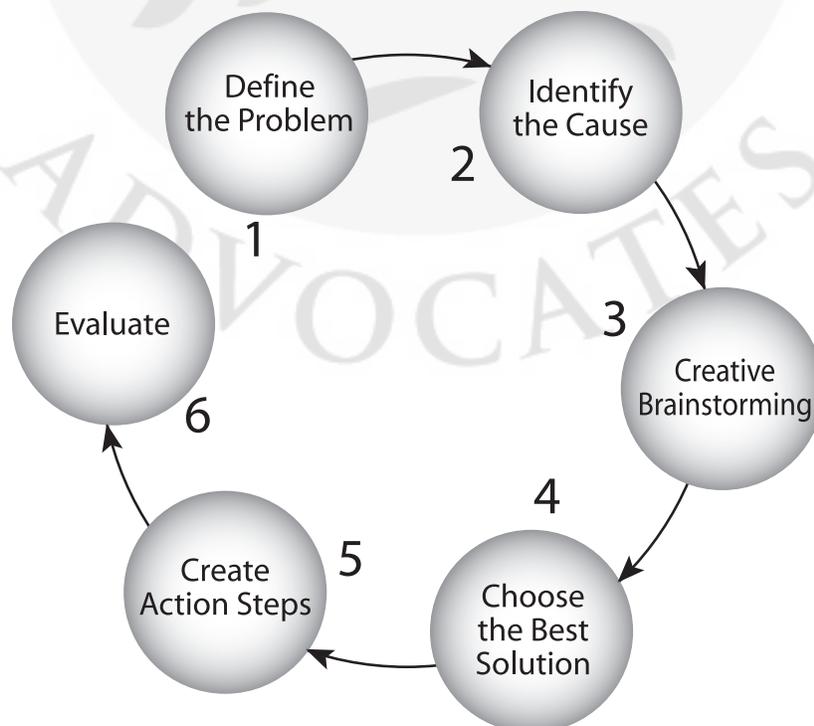
There are many problem solving tools of which this is one. This tool as with any problem solving tool should be used in two kinds of situations:

1. When things have gone wrong or out of control and the solution is not obvious.
2. When making on going and continuous improvements to processes and performance.

## The Model

- This model is simple.
- It can be used in large and small groups.
- It assumes that problem solving is a process not an event.
- It will help you develop discipline to follow a sequence of events to solve persistent problems and make continuous performance improvements.

### SIX STEPS TO SOLVING A PROBLEM



## **Step One      Define the Problem**

Define the problem first. Though not always easy, do not rush into thinking that you have already identified it. You will not get the results you want if you are not solving the right problem.

## **Step Two      Identify the Cause**

You can treat symptoms again and again but the problem will persist. It is only when the primary cause is identified and eliminated at the source that the problem will disappear.

## **Step Three      Creative Brainstorming**

There is a strong temptation to choose the first solution that looks like it might solve a problem. This is the time to utilize creative brainstorming and not stop until you have exhausted all the possibilities and creative power you have.

## **Step Four      Choose the Best Solution**

If you don't explore several alternatives, considering the trade offs and resources required, it is unlikely that you will find the best alternative for your situation. Think, analyze and evaluate all your creative ideas narrowing them down to the top candidates.

## **Step Five      Create Action Steps**

Even if you have defined the problem correctly, identified the cause(s) and selected a good solution, if you don't plan how to implement the solution nothing will change. Especially at a team level where a number of people may be involved in the solution, it is important to know who will be doing what by when.

## **Step Six      Evaluate the Results**

The importance of evaluation and follow up is often overlooked and underestimated. You often don't know a problem hasn't been solved until evaluation and follow-up have been done. It is only then, when you have feedback that you realize if you must go through the problem solving cycle again to eliminate the problem.

## **Notes:      Moving too Fast**

This is a major trap in the problem solving process. If you skip any one step it can undermine or destroy efforts to solve the problem. Sometimes we speed up, skipping steps and select the first option that might work, don't thoroughly plan our action steps and then wonder why our problem persists.

# TEAM PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHEET

Step 1 What is the problem? \_\_\_\_\_

Step 2 What is the Cause? \_\_\_\_\_

Where does it happen? \_\_\_\_\_

When does it happen? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is Involved? \_\_\_\_\_

Step 3 Creative brainstorming \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4 What is the best solution? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has info? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has authority? \_\_\_\_\_

Who has knowledge? \_\_\_\_\_

Action Step \_\_\_\_\_

Step 5 Evaluation - What worked? \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation - What didn't work? \_\_\_\_\_

# MOVING YOUR TEAM FORWARD

## Participation

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

How Much? \_\_\_\_\_

## Influence

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

How Much? \_\_\_\_\_

## Influence Style

Autocratic? \_\_\_\_\_

Peacemaking? \_\_\_\_\_

Democratic? \_\_\_\_\_

Withdrawn? \_\_\_\_\_

Other? \_\_\_\_\_

## Decision Making

Who is involved? \_\_\_\_\_

How is it done? \_\_\_\_\_

## Atmosphere

Congenial? \_\_\_\_\_

Argumentative? \_\_\_\_\_

Fun? \_\_\_\_\_

Focused? \_\_\_\_\_

Who set the tone? \_\_\_\_\_

## Membership

Who is involved? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is withdrawn? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there cliques? \_\_\_\_\_

## Feelings

Excitement? \_\_\_\_\_

Defensiveness? \_\_\_\_\_

Competitiveness? \_\_\_\_\_

Warmth? \_\_\_\_\_

Irritation? \_\_\_\_\_

## Atmosphere

Congenial? \_\_\_\_\_

Argumentative? \_\_\_\_\_

Fun? \_\_\_\_\_

Focused? \_\_\_\_\_

Boredom? \_\_\_\_\_

Who set the tone? \_\_\_\_\_

## Common Obstacles

Don't know where to go.

Don't know how to get there.

Group is stuck.

Strayed from objectives.

Not executing plans.

No one cares about moving forward.

Don't have resources.

## Common Cures

Define objectives.

Identify where you are now.

Solve conflict.

Create milestones.

Reevaluate milestones.

Solve conflict.

Clarify needs.

Identify priorities.

Create plans.

Identify root causes.

Reevaluate solution.

Create dates.

Reassess commitment.

Assess group abilities.

Create action steps.

Find agreement.

Reassess authority.

Create payoffs.

Brainstorm solutions.