

**AD420 • ME444 • MKTG594 Elkay Project**  
Fall Semester, 2007**Stephen Melamed**, Industrial Design, College of Architecture+Arts  
**Michael J. Scott**, Engineering, College of Engineering  
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<b>Topic</b>	<b>Creative Session (aka Brainstorming) Guidelines</b> Ground Rules for Running a Creative Meeting
<b>Guidelines</b>	<p>Meetings among colleagues can serve a variety of purposes: keeping everyone informed; making announcements; reviewing projects; generating new ideas; etc.</p> <p>The sole purpose of a <b>brainstorming</b> session is to generate new ideas... to encourage participants to keep coming up with ideas, no matter how outrageous, until the participants have exhausted all the possibilities they can conceive of in the session (as time and energy allow). This method rests on the assumption that people are more productive when working together as a group than alone as individuals. Interactions gives rise to synergy and the flow of ideas. <b>“The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”</b></p> <p>At a subsequent meeting, the ideas generated will be reviewed, and recommendations for the ones with the most potential for development will be selected.</p> <p>To improve the odds of success and enhance the value of a creative session, four basic criteria need to be meet:</p>
<b>4 Criteria</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Create the right expectations<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quantity of ideas, not quality is the goal</li><li>• “The best way to get a great idea is to generate lots of ideas, then throw away the bad ones.” - Linus Pauling</li></ul></li><li>2. Define the right focus<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on one specific problem</li><li>• Information provided in advance, designed to provoke thinking</li></ul></li><li>3. Select the right participants<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 – 8 diverse individuals and an experienced facilitator</li></ul></li><li>4. Create an environment for the right group dynamics<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Off-site, comfortable, with lots of toys, props and art supplies</li></ul></li></ol>
<b>No. 1 rule</b>	<b>The single most fundamental rule of a brainstorming session is not to criticize any idea or comment of another participant.</b> Negative comments, however warranted, squelch creativity, and may lead to debate and arguments. Evaluation and synthesis of ideas <i>must</i> take place at a subsequent meeting.
<b>Freewheeling</b>	<b>Freewheeling is welcomed.</b> The wilder the idea the better. It is always easier to tone down an idea rather than to build up.

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<b>Guidelines</b>	<b>Combining and improving ideas is strongly encouraged.</b> Participants should build upon the ideas of others, or suggest how several ideas could be combined into yet another new concept. Positive thinking must be encouraged and maintained throughout the entire session.	
<b>Expectations</b>	Before the actual session starts, it is extremely important for the right expectations to be stated and that they are realistic. No 'magic' ideas will be discovered. Every idea should be recorded (in some manner) during the session. Any idea, determined at a later date worthy of development, will involve risk, investment and change.  A creative session needs to begin with a firm understanding that the realistic outcome is a great deal of information, some insights, some solid ideas, and some potential concepts for the future. Much work will be needed in subsequent meetings to extract the potential benefits.	
<b>Focus</b>	Creative sessions can be <i>idea-based</i> , or <i>information-based</i> . Idea-based is what is most often referred to as brainstorming --- a session in which the objective is to generate a large quantity of ideas. An information-based meeting can occur when only parts of the knowledge needed to tackle a problem are known, other people with other types of knowledge are brought in to help generate the necessary information. Often times, a creative session could be the combination of both formats. In either case, a statement of intent is recommended in order to start everyone off in the same direction.	
<b>Participants</b>	Generally speaking, a minimum of four in order to create the necessary energy level, and not more than eight, in order to provide sufficient 'air time' for all participants. Combine people with different expertise from both inside and outside of the organization. Generating ideas that deal with a recognized problem or need, and possibly being involved in the development of the eventual solution, will create a sense of 'ownership.'	
<b>Group Dynamics</b>	Everyone participating must realize that the primary goal of the session is to generate a large quantity of ideas, allowing other participants to build upon ideas being thrown out will usually lead to quality. All participants should offer positive feedback to one another. They must be reassured that there will be no personal criticism; fear of personal criticism dramatically inhibits creativity.	

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Ground Rules for Running a Creative Meeting

- Do\_s**
- Defer judgment & think positive (Evaluation will take place at a later date)
  - A new idea is a combination of known elements
  - Let your imagination go... The quality of a session is a function of the quantity of ideas generated
  - Feel free to sketch an idea on a card, add a few words (initials & date)
  - Expose your ideas to others and contribute/build upon other's ideas
  - There are many right answers
  - Be a good listener. Let others have their say before responding.
  - Go as far out as possible
  - Talk to the subject, not to the person
  - Relax, stay loose, laugh a lot, enjoy yourself

- Don't\_s**
- Don't criticize
  - Don't seek the answer
  - Don't be shy
  - Don't dismiss or ignore others' contributions
  - Don't be boring
  - Don't over-work an idea
  - Don't be constrained by convention
  - Don't whisper to your neighbor
  - Don't interrupt
  - Don't be careful

**References**      Included in this brief on creative sessions are excerpts from the following:

- The Creativity Infusion by- R. Donald Gamache (Harper & Row, 1989)
- "Running A Creative Session" by- Kurt W. Eastman