

Problem Solving

All businesses experience a variety of problems throughout their day-to-day existence. Some can be solved in seconds, while others will require a more formal problem solving process. Following is a step-by-step process using the brainstorming method that may aid you in solving some of those problems:

1. **State what appears to be the problem.** Involve employees in the discussion.
2. **Gather information.** Find out the who, what, where, when and how of the problem. Get all the facts. The more information you have, the easier it will be to solve the problem.
3. **Now is the time to brainstorm for solutions.** Brainstorming is a method for developing creative solutions to problems. It works by focusing on a problem, and then deliberately coming up with as many deliberately unusual solutions as possible and by pushing the ideas as far as possible.

One approach to brainstorming is to 'seed' the session with a word pulled randomly from a dictionary. This word can be used as a starting point in the process of generating ideas.

Brainstorming Tips

- Clearly define what the problem is at the beginning of the session.
 - Allow no criticism. If employees fear ridicule, they will be much less likely to be creative.
 - Strongly encourage that all employees participate in the session.
 - Set a fixed time limit.
 - Try to make the process enjoyable.
 - Keep detailed notes, or better yet, use a whiteboard.
4. **Evaluate the solutions** - Decide which factors are important to your business and evaluate each idea based on these factors.
 5. **Implement your decision**
 6. **Evaluate the results** - Determine what worked and what didn't. This will help you to improve the process the next time a problem needs to be solved.

For More Information

Internet: www.mindtools.com

Book: Creative Problem Solving

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