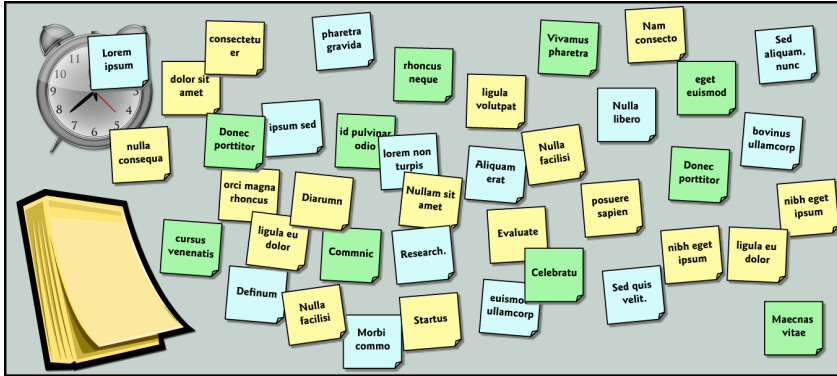


Brainstorming — Double-reverse variation



A problem with classic brainstorming is that during the first part the process people are still in some kind of 'standard process mode'. The ideas and contributions put forward tend to be the well-worn and obvious ones. The silent brainstorming technique keeps the shouters from over-contributing, and it helps the more thoughtful contributions to make it through to the ideas board.

However some problems are surrounded by the same old and tired and tested solutions that more considered or innovative ideas never get an outing.

For example, suppose the object of the brainstorm is care-home security. The first ideas are likely to be to do with window and door locks, chains, and video cameras. These are old ideas that consume valuable minutes of brainstorming time.

This is where the double reverse method can really help. Instead of framing the question as 'How can we improve security?' Reverse the objective so it becomes 'How can we help the burglars to steal even more?' This encourages the group to take the side of the thief: Leave a ladder out, leave a window open; place the alarm beacon out of sight, and so on. Once the brain-drizzle stage is reached, and the normal process of grouping ideas, sifting and sorting, refine and testing has concluded and you're left with two really good ways to help the burglar, it is time for the second reverse. Then it is time to invert the idea (by adding negations such as 'not' and don't. Or apply substitutions for example 'open' becomes 'close', or 'hide' becomes 'make visible'. And so on.

You should then have a small number of high-quality results from the brainstorming session.

The double reverse

- ◆ Reverse the objective.
- ◆ Follow the normal brainstorming method.
- ◆ At the brain-drizzle stage – group and filter ideas as usual.
- ◆ When the finalist ideas are ready, the apply a second reverse to reveal the potential solutions to the original objective.
- ◆ All ideas have some value – especially after the first reverse!

Reversing:

- ◆ Do becomes don't.
- ◆ Help, becomes hinder/ obstruct.
- ◆ Hide becomes leave out/ reveal.

Each reverse can operate in either direction eg Don't becomes Do.