

Collection of Brainstorming Techniques

General comments and ideas:

- Forget about brainstorming and go directly to account management
 - Companies that had moved from brainstorming to disciplined account planning showed significant increases in revenue and more importantly increases in market share within their key clients. Oracle, Cisco, Dell, HP, Citigroup, B of A don't use brainstorming to manage their global accounts. They have a VERY structured way of doing account planning.
 - Disciplined, deliberative, evidence-based planning is what distinguishes the best firms from the mediocre firms.
- Use wine and food
- Reframe as “Strategy Sessions” rather than brainstorming
- Use “if, then” constructions
 - If we want “x” to occur, then what steps should we take to make that happen.

Engage major rainmakers, thought leaders and opinion leaders

- Meet in advance, one-on-one
- Discuss their practice, their clients, industry and trade sectors, move toward cross-selling
- Use this to gather information that wouldn't come up in a group meeting

Small Groups (5-7)

- Pose a question and give 5 – 10 minutes to respond
- Spokesperson from each group reports to the larger group
- Could provide a small prize to the group that comes up with the largest number of legitimate responses

Vision Mapping

- Uses a technique known as the Balanced Scorecard to identify the full range of issues inside a firm
- Break firm into 4 areas
 - Financial
 - Clients
 - Internal Operations
 - People Development
- Determine the current reality in each area
- Develop a vision for each area
- Break into groups to determine the steps that need to be taken to move from current reality to achieve the vision

Refresh Button

- If you could start from scratch, rebuild the firm from the ground up, what would your fantasy firm look like from each of these points of view:
 - Clients, Partners, Associates, Staff

Silent Brainstorming

- Silently write one idea per post-it
- Go around room reading the ideas
- Post them on the wall and cluster into similar areas

Strawman

- Develop a first draft of a plan
- Invite lawyers to participate in an add, change, and delete process to refine the plan

Best Practices

- Look at other law firms and businesses and discuss what they like and don't like about them

Speed Brainstorming

- Put questions on top of flip chart pages
- Invite everyone to go up to the charts and write answers to the questions
 - Allows everyone to provide input
 - Use sticky dots to “vote” on responses they feel are most important
- Engage group in discussion on the highest priority areas
- After session, collect responses and send to lawyers to receive additional feedback
- Develop final report with action items

Memory Maps

- Have a central idea in the middle of a flip chart
- Generate word associations from that idea
- Draw line from idea to the associated word
- From the new word, draw new associations
- When completed, group discusses what they see and make suggestions about what should be done

100 Day Plan

- Identify best opportunities for new business
- Develop concrete tasks, assign people to be responsible, set deadlines
- Put initiatives on big posters around a conference room
- Launch party (with food and beverages)
- People added comments (e.g. who they knew, introductions they could make...)
- Collected info and posted on the intranet
- Followed up to make sure people knew what they committed to do
- After 100 days, had “100 Day Plan Roundup”, reported on many successes

LEGOS - Grouped exercise

- Build a structure that represents client service
- Create a vehicle that shows how you drive value to a client
- Design something you like or dislike about business development
- Make something that indicates what your practice group can accomplish in 2010
- Provide small prizes for “winners”

SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

1) What is the current state of the practice?

Strengths:

What do we do well?

What unique resources can we draw on?

What do others see as our strengths?

Weaknesses:

What could we improve?

Where do we have fewer resources or less experience than other law firms?

What do others see as our weaknesses either real or perceived?

Opportunities:

What good opportunities are open to us?

What trends could we take advantage of?

How can we turn our strengths and weaknesses into opportunities?

Threats:

What trends could harm us?

What is our competition doing that we are not?

What threats do our weaknesses expose us to?

2) What are our major successes in this area?

3) What are our marketing goals?

4) What are we selling?

5) What types of matters do (can) we handle?

6) Who are our targets?

7) What are the characteristics of our ideal client?

8) Who are our competitors?

9) What are the differentiators (value proposition)

10) Where are our best possibilities for growth?

11) What is our message?

Six Thinking Hats” - Useful for groups that are stuck

"Six Thinking Hats" is a powerful technique that helps you look at important decisions from a number of different perspectives. It helps you make better decisions by pushing you to move outside your habitual ways of thinking. As such, it helps you understand the full complexity of a decision, and spot issues and opportunities which you might otherwise not notice.

White Hat:

With this thinking hat, you focus on the data available. Look at the information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge, and either try to fill them or take account of them. This is where you analyze past trends, and try to extrapolate from historical data.

Red Hat:

Wearing the red hat, you look at the decision using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion. Also try to think how other people will react emotionally, and try to understand the intuitive responses of people who do not fully know your reasoning.

Black Hat:

When using black hat thinking, look at things pessimistically, cautiously and defensively. Try to see why ideas and approaches might not work. This is important because it highlights the weak points in a plan or course of action. It allows you to eliminate them, alter your approach, or prepare contingency plans to counter problems that arise.

Black Hat thinking helps to make your plans tougher and more resilient. It can also help you to spot fatal flaws and risks before you embark on a course of action. Black Hat thinking is one of the real benefits of this technique, as many successful people get so used to thinking positively that often they cannot see problems in advance, leaving them under-prepared for difficulties.

Yellow Hat:

The yellow hat helps you to think positively. It is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and the value in it, and spot the opportunities that arise from it. Yellow Hat thinking helps you to keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.

Green Hat:

The Green Hat stands for creativity. This is where you can develop creative solutions to a problem. It is a freewheeling way of thinking, in which there is little criticism of ideas.

Blue Hat:

The Blue Hat stands for process control. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings. When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, they may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, they will ask for Black Hat thinking, and so on.