

**Brainstorming!**  
**Guidelines for Successful Ideation**

Brainstorming has been around for quite awhile but it is often done without putting any guidelines in place. I cringe every time someone says: Let's have a brainstorming session! For one thing, brainstorming implies that you are caught up in the wind of ideas and that you have no control over the storm of ideation. For a couple of years now, the terminology has changed from brainstorming to brainsailing. Do you see it? Brainsailing is a much friendlier word, which involves being caught by the wind of the ideas as things move forward toward a goal. I like it.

There are just a few guidelines that should be put in place for the most effective brainsailing session. First of all, do not criticize or react negatively to any ideas that are proposed. You want a quantity of ideas, which will later be qualified. It is much easier to tame down wild ideas than it is to generate new ideas. Besides, it is possible that one of those wild ideas just may be the right thing to hitchhike upon to the one, very great idea.

Second, only one person talks at a time. While this seems rather obvious, the guideline is often overlooked. When people are talking over and around each other, the result is often frustration. This is where many people come to the conclusion that brainsailing is a bad idea and doesn't work.

Third, the person who owns the problem has the privilege of critiquing the ideas, selecting, improving, modifying and communicating the results.

Here are a few other suggestions. Have someone come up with ideas from the viewpoint of nature or the perspective of a mob boss. By changing your perspective, new ideas are bound to happen. Have someone challenge the writing of the problem itself. Someone has wisely said that a problem well defined is a problem half solved.

Finally, consider having a separate board on which to write "brain bulges" which occur normally in any brainsailing session. Put these seemingly invading ideas aside so that you can concentrate solely on the problem at hand.

So the next time your boss wants to have a brainstorming session, put this sheet of paper in his/her hands. Offer to help keep the guidelines proposed here in check. I promise when you leave at the end of the day you will be energized and invigorated as opposed to tired and used.

To creative problem solving,  
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Come join Dr. Karen for one of her exciting daylong creativity workshops on creative problem solving for your personal and professional life. Dr. Karen can be contacted for her next seminar details. Cost for the seminar is \$395.00