

NEGATIVE BRAINSTORMING AND TEAM MANAGEMENT

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Abstract:

Team management is the process by which companies delegate people that are well experienced, to manage important projects or tasks through team work. Team management refers to the establishment and regular summary of common objectives, to roles of team members and the team's structure, as well as providing formal feedback on work.

Negative, or reverse, brainstorming is another way to brainstorm. The same basic rules apply as in regular brainstorming, but here you try to see things in a different light.

Key words: team management, negative brainstorming, types of teams, negative brainstorming stages

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1. TEAM MANAGEMENT

Team management refers to the establishment and regular summary of common objectives, to roles of team members and the team's structure, as well as providing formal feedback on work. Also, the manager should examine whether individuals are aware of their performance level.

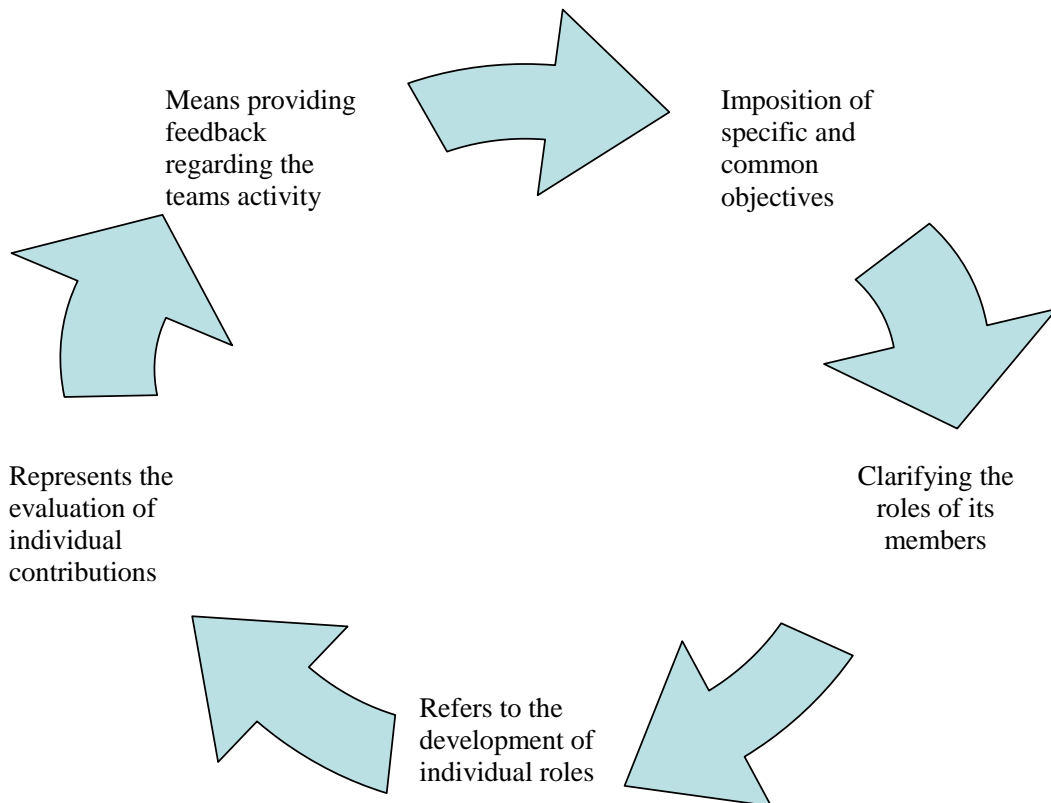


Figure 1 Representation of the meanings of team management

a. Team management means imposition of specific and common objectives

The team must negotiate individual goals against the mandatory general directions set by the leader. The manager must ensure a high degree of adequacy and consistency between the organizational goals, team orientation and its purpose. A report drafting is required to clarify these elements in the group and organization, making it possible to evaluate the success of the team.

b. Team management means clarifying the roles of its members

The leader must ensure that everyone knows which tasks are assigned to each member. It is important that each role to be - even partially - unique for a person and it's important for the rest of the group and for achieving goals.

c. Team management refers to the development of individual roles

To function effectively, the individual roles and tasks should be seen as something complete and meaningful, giving members the chance to progress, develop and practice skills. To maintain motivation, enthusiasm and dedication, people need interesting tasks that challenge them to stimulate their creativity and make them become more efficient. Manager must help individuals to establish annual objectives that cultivate their skills, knowledge and generates interest.

d. Team management represents the evaluation of individual contributions

A leader's role is to ensure that individual contribution to the overall objective of the team is assessed formally, so that people receive clear feedback on acute work. Feedback is given, usually once a year, though it would be better to do this more often.

e. Team management means providing feedback regarding the team's activity

Following the granting of a clear and constructive feedback considerable benefits are obtained, although sometimes the opinions of members are neglected. They can get feedback on their achievements, but team performance is rarely evaluated systematically. An organization composed of teams should establish a set of criteria for this purpose. Thus, groups can be assessed according to:

- ◆ Team results - Team performance, whether we are talking about manufacturing products, speaking to clients or providing customer service - is defined and measured best by its "customers" (members).

- ◆ Team Sustainability - the members' sustained capacity to work well together. If some of them refuse to work with another colleague, is more likely that the team wasn't productive. The lack of communication between individuals does not announce a happy future, especially when we refer to big companies where you depend on your colleagues in order to fulfill your tasks.

- ◆ Progress and welfare of team members – in this case, the accumulation of knowledge, progress and satisfaction of members is pursued and assessed periodically. In the case of a proper functioning, people learn more from each other.

- ◆ Mental health of team members - Stress or self-satisfaction as a direct result of teamwork. These are the main factors that can affect quite serious the mental health of team members, and even of any employee.

- ◆ Team Innovations - introducing new and improved ways of working. This is the best tool for measuring the functional group. By definition, teams must be the source of creativity and innovation, while bringing together individuals with diverse knowledge, guidance, skills, abilities, attitudes and experiences in a joint project, creating ideal conditions for ingenuity.

◆ Relations between teams - refers to cooperation with other teams and departments within organizations. Teams must not only be united, but they must cooperate with other teams and departments. Otherwise, the cohesion only increases isolation within the organization, undermining the collective efforts to achieve organizational goals.

2. NEGATIVE BRAINSTORMING

Negative brainstorming is also called reverse brainstorming and it is another way to brainstorm. The same basic rules apply as in regular brainstorming, but in this case you try to see things differently, we try to identify the negative aspects of a problem or more precisely the negative results of a product or an important decision. In a regular brainstorming session we would try to identify different solutions for a problem, but in the case of negative brainstorming we try to identify the problems that may occur in the case of a product or an important decision, for example if we choose to start a new partnership.

A negative brainstorming session could start out by turning the problem upside down, meaning if we want to produce a new product in the case of brainstorming we would try to figure out what new product we should create and every member of the team would come up with different ideas. In the case of negative brainstorming every member of the team would focus on finding ideas regarding the products that we shouldn't create or produce for various reasons.

Negative brainstorming is mainly used as a strategy to promote critical thinking and to focus on the tasks. It is useful to verify a new proposal or to evaluate tactics, practices, and it can be used in any situation, not only when we talk about difficult or important decisions or products.

By using the negative, or reverse, brainstorming we become more conscious of the negative aspect of the problem, especially of the risk that may occur during the process (a new product, a new partnership) we want to start.

Using the negative brainstorming method involves three stages:

First stage

After issuing a promising ideas (or clarify an existing practice or strategy), the team searches for issues or negative consequences. Brainstorming should be as bold as its positive alternative from the classical approach. The intention is to get a list of all the negative elements of the idea or strategy, no matter how unfounded or exaggerated they may seem.

Second stage

The team's members choose four or five of the strongest criticisms and examine them in detail. At least one of them would prove to be unfounded or exaggerated.

Third stage

The team examines how the idea or existing practice could be modified to resist, in turn, to each higher criticism. This stage is essentially constructive, as the group tries to shape the strategy to prevent major shortcomings.

It can happen to identify but a difficulty or a fundamental disadvantage which the group can not discard. In this case the idea or the practice should be abandoned. However such a story is good, helping us to discover in time the negative aspects of an approach or proposal.

Reverse brainstorming is useful when an idea has reached the stage of adoption and implementation in the decision making process. In addition to reporting weaknesses

of the project, before the implementation of the strategy, encourages the trial design.

Often people are afraid not to offend anyone and therefore retain their criticisms. The mentioned approach clarifies that members criticize ideas and practices and not other individuals. As a result of the common practice of this method, people come to accept the idea that "expressing criticism is a manner to improve different views and opinions that sometimes might be incorrect, and so a fresh mind can help.

3. IN WHAT TYPE OF TEAMS IS IT INDICATED TO USE REVERSE BRAINSTORMING?

In order to determine in what type of teams is indicate to use reverse (negative) brainstorming we have to establish what is a team and under what forms we meet them in companies. There are six major types of teams that can be found in companies.

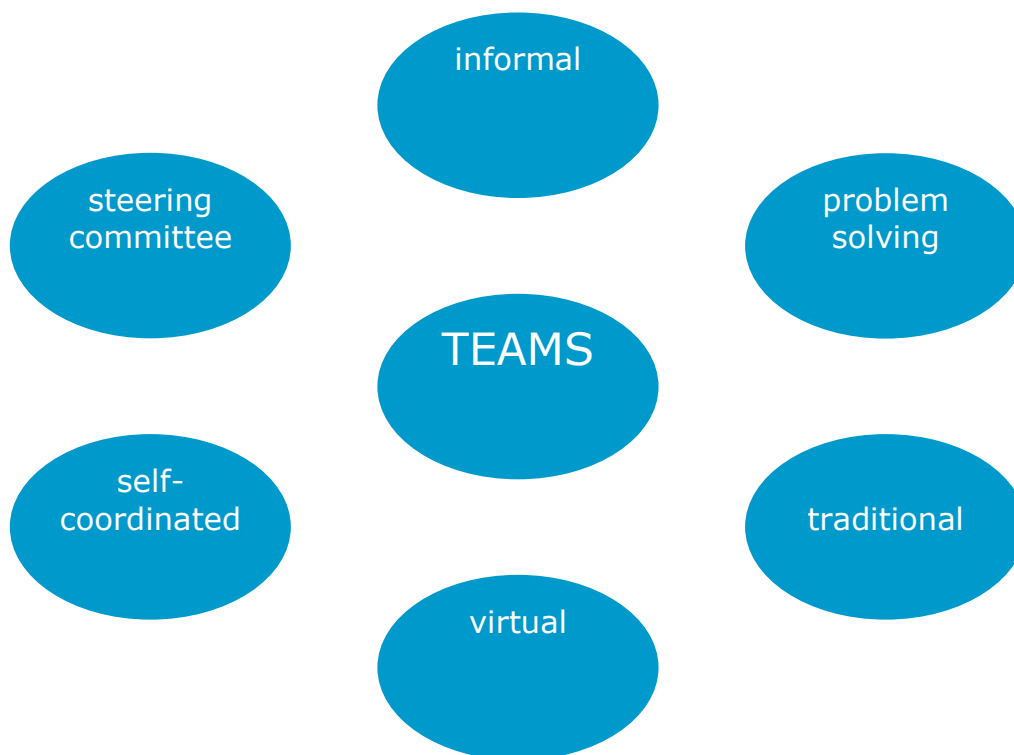


Figure 2 Types of teams inside a company

1. Informal teams

- Usually formed for social purposes;
- They are formed from a set of concerns and common interests, which may or may not be identical to those of the organization which includes the team members;
- Leaders of these teams appear from the members and they are not appointed by anyone from inside the organization;
- The negative brainstorming method could be applied successfully in these teams.

2. Traditional teams

- These are the organizational groups usually considered departments or functional areas;

- It is expected from the team to produce a product, to provide a service or to fulfill a function that the organization mandated;
- Such team leaders or managers are appointed by the organization and they have legitimate power within the team.
- Applying negative brainstorming in these teams isn't indicated because it may cause failure.

3. "Problem solving" teams

- They are also called task forces and they are formed when a problem arises that can not be solved in the standard organizational structure;
- Are usually cross-functional, this means that members come from different areas / parts of the organization and they are responsible with finding a solution for that problem;
- These are the most indicated types of teams in which to use the reverse brainstorming method.

4. Virtual teams

- The development of communication technologies has resulted in the emergence of virtual teams;
- Virtual teams are groups of people engaged in interacting with shared purposes across space, time and organizational boundaries using technology to communicate and collaborate;
- The members of virtual teams can be located anywhere in world, they rarely meet face to face and they may belong to different cultures.
- The negative brainstorming method isn't indicated in this case due to the distance between the partners, this may cause loss of information or misinterpretation of data.

5. Self- coordinated teams

- These teams are given autonomy over the decision on how a given task will be carried out;
- The organization sends / sets a goal, and they determine the path by which to achieve that purpose;
- Most times there is no manager or leader appointed for this team, and the status differences between the members of the team;
- Reverse brainstorming is likely to be used in these teams because this in this type of team the members are too independent and free spirited.

6. Steering committee

- Are usually called leader teams and they are composed of managers brought together to overcome the boundaries between different functions and features of the organization;
- At the top management level, these teams are also used to develop goals and strategic directions of the firm / company as a unit;
- The reverse brainstorming method can be successfully used in these teams; especially given the experience of the members (they have management positions)

CONCLUSIONS

Negative brainstorming is an old method with a relatively new name. Managers often used it but they didn't define it as negative or reverse brainstorming.

The positive aspect in the business field is that the managers and especially the personnel from a company are beginning to realize the importance of team work. Team work can be very good for a company regarding the difficult and important tasks, but at the same time if we are speaking of a dysfunctional team that may cause real problems to the company. And we all know that the most difficult thing is working with people, especially when we are dealing with "small people" (people that have just started to work in a company and they are very willing to progress ... using any means).

In conclusion, negative brainstorming is important and beneficial for a company as long as the manager knows how to control it and he is willing to accept the consequences if the method reveals some negative and unsolvable aspects.

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