

DIAMOND BRAINSTORMING METHOD: A TOOL FOR IDEA GENERATION

Any group attempting to create great things must first start with small ideas and build upon them. **A**Odyssey teams often need to learn how to brainstorm ideas, then how to discuss them, and, finally, how to narrow them down to ones that are practical. At the same time, they must learn to respect each other's ideas and be willing to give up individual ideas for the success of the group.

The Diamond Brainstorming Method is a visual method that encourages as many ideas as possible. Teams build one idea from another, and all ideas are listed as they "pop out" of the team members' heads, no matter how "impossible" they seem. Also, by building up ideas one at a time and narrowing them down one at a time, the method encourages team members to relinquish ownership of ideas, so no one's feelings are hurt by rejection during later discussion. The visual quality of this appeals particularly to younger teams who can "see" their ideas taking shape.

MATERIALS: A large chart, newsprint pad, blackboard, or white board; markers or pens; and eager team members wanting to share ideas.

FORMAT: Team members sit in chairs or on the floor, with one person recording ideas. (The coach may record the ideas, but he/she must write down the teams' exact words.)

PROCEDURE:

1. Team members pose a question, such as, What would be the best way to do 'X', or, How can we make 'Y', or, What should 'Z' look like? Note: The team members must generate the questions themselves, and the questions should be general and open-ended. A coach may help the team determine exactly what it is they want to brainstorm by asking questions such as, What is the problem you are trying to figure out?
2. All the team members brainstorm answers to the question, and someone suggests his/her idea, and the recorder writes it down on the board or chart.
3. A second member gives an idea, and it is written down with the first one just below the first idea, so that the ideas begin to fill in the top half of the diamond shape (see Row A). Ideas are repeated on each line; the widest part of the diamond displays ALL the team's ideas.
4. After the team members come up with all possible ideas (as few as 4 or 5, or as many as 10 or 15) they then begin, through discussion, to narrow down the possibilities by eliminating one at a time as shown in Row B. They could even combine two or more separate ideas to determine the final one. Hopefully, they'll come to an agreement on their favorite idea without voting -- and without argument!

Remember: Only constructive criticism is ever allowed!

Row A: Idea Generation

