

Reverse Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a great way to help people see that there may be different solutions to problems than they have ever considered before. In a typical brainstorming session, the problem or challenge is written down on a piece of paper and people are given 10 to 15 minutes to write down uncensored possible solutions to the problem. The solutions are then reviewed, and each solution is discussed until the most viable one becomes apparent.

Reverse brainstorming adds a new twist to this process. Instead of asking, "How do I solve or prevent this problem?" ask, "How could I possibly cause the problem?" Instead of asking "How do I achieve these results?" ask, "How could I possibly achieve the opposite effect?"

While the worksheet on the next page can be used with individuals, this problem solving process works best in groups of 3-12 people.

Reverse Brainstorming Worksheet

Clearly identify the problem or challenge.

Reverse the problem or challenge by asking, "How could I possibly cause the problem?" Allow the brainstorm ideas to flow freely. Do not reject anything at this stage.

Once you have brainstormed all the ideas to solve the reverse problem, now reverse these into solution ideas for the original problem or challenge and write them below.

Evaluate these ideas. Can you see a potential realistic solution? Write down the best solution you can think of at this time.
