

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



# 9 Elements OF EFFECTIVE CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING MEETINGS

BEN STAPLEY

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We're honored to have Ben Stapley guest writing for us today. He is the Video Director at [Liquid Church](#) — and he's a fantastic, multi-talented leader! Ben provides oversight and leadership for a wide variety of areas at his church.

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The creative process can feel like capturing lightning in a bottle. Below are some ideas that will help you release the creative talent on your team and leverage your brainstorming meetings to the max.

- **Communicate the Scope Beforehand //** A lot of creatives are quick on their feet and love to spitball ideas. But not every creative person is wired this way. Not everyone develops their best ideas in the midst of a brainstorming meeting. Some people thrive with time and thought. Communicate the scope of the discussion beforehand to aid folks who like to mull over ideas.
- **Think Aspirationally Before Practically //** Start the meeting by asking your team what they want to do — not what they can do. This helps them aim for the moon before your budget pulls them back to earth. When you do come up with that cosmic idea, it will have so much energy and enthusiasm around it that your team will find a way to pull it off.
- **Remove the Pressure //** Pressure is the greatest roadblock to releasing creativity. Identify and remove every avenue of pressure.
- **Acknowledge the 9:1 Ratio //** If 10 ideas are suggested, 9 will suck and 1 will be good. Acknowledging this ratio upfront empowers people to voice their many bad ideas to help them find their limited good ideas. I'll often start this process with a couple of terrible ideas to model a safe environment for all ideas.
- **Write Down Ideas //** This simple suggestion has a few benefits. It ensures no idea is missed during the meeting. It allows visual learners to keep track of what's been said. It enables you to cluster concepts and start developing themes. It honors participation and shows people that you value their ideas when they see you write them down.

• **Get a Transcriber** // Ideas in a brainstorming meeting are similar to popcorn in the microwave. At first, they pop up slowly, but as the creative temperature rises, the ideas start to explode at a quicker pace. A transcriber can record this frenzy of ideas. This releases you from taking notes and allows you to keep the creative conversation at a heated level.

• **Generate Ideas Through Rewards** // Capitalize on the desire to be rewarded in your brainstorming meetings. When you reward an idea, it generates new ones. Reward every idea by vocalizing praise and tossing out fun-sized candy bars. Reward great ideas with a high five. It may feel juvenile running around a conference table high-fiving folks, but people crave this validation. At every meeting, I reward the most outlandish idea with a \$5 gift card to Starbucks.

• **Meet Earlier Than Needed** // You don't want folks thinking about what's after the meeting during the meeting. If your team is thinking about executing ideas, they won't be suggesting ideas. Schedule your brainstorming with extra time to deliver the concepts that get generated. If you think meeting in October is fine, then meet in September.

• **Crockpot Not Microwave** // The creative process is similar to serving up a delicious dish. Slow cooking your ideas brings out the fullest flavors. Yes, you could microwave your concepts, but that just gets them warm and rubbery. Instead, crockpot them by giving your meeting enough time to circle back and unpack concepts.

Don't turn off the idea tap once the meeting ends. You may feel as if you've squeezed the lemon dry by the end of your meeting. You haven't. The potential for ideas is limitless, so encourage folks to send in post-meeting concepts.



**About Ben** // Over the past 15 years, I have created and captured memorable moments and media for individuals, non-profits and corporations around the globe. Some of the fields that I have worked in include teaching, videography, photography, stage design, radio, reporting and producing. I received a B.A. in Video Communication from MBI in Chicago. After graduating, I worked in Toronto as a television reporter and producer for Context, a national news program. In 2011, I received my M.Div. from Biblical Theological Seminary. In 2016, I began working for [Liquid Church in New Jersey](#) as the Video Director. I live in beautiful Hunterdon County, NJ, with my wonderful wife, Rose, and our lovely daughters, Violet and Scarlet.

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