

# CREATE YOUR BRAINSTRUST

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## COLLABORATION AND WORKING IN GROUPS

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### THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU TO:

- ★ create a brainstrust of experts to draw input and inspirations from
- ★ create a better project than you or your team could do alone.

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### HOW TO:

Like it or not, no one knows everything. We all have biases, assumptions and there are 'unknown unknowns' that limit our perspectives on the task at hand. By harnessing the insight of well chosen experts and stakeholders, you can make your project better. Two heads are better than one. But a brainstrust is even better.

#### Choosing your brainstrust

- 1 Ask the following questions:
  - Who can help with this project?
  - Who does this project affect?
  - What experience and knowledge do we need?
  - Who is an expert in this field?
  - Who are the key stakeholders?
- 2 Based on your above answers, brainstorm a list of people who would have useful insights for your project.
- 3 From your brainstormed list of people, use the Decide with Dotmocracy tool to pick the top 10 people.

#### Contacting your brainstrust

- 1 Contact each brainstrustee via your chosen medium. Email with a follow up call is often good. Explain why you are contacting them and that you would value their expertise, suggestions and guidance on this project.
- 2 Concisely describe the what, why and how of your project. Elevator Pitch Your Project. Attach a project brief, flyer or website, if suitable.
- 3 Explain what you are asking from them and what is involved such as meetings, informal chats, expected frequency of contact etc. If you want you can leave this open to them, suggesting you check in with a frequency and manner to suit their needs.

#### Using your brainstrust

You'll need to consult at various times throughout your project with these people, either individually or as a group. Figure out the most strategic times to draw on your brainstrust's expertise. This may be early on in formative stage of the project, or it may be timed around specific tasks you want their input on. Be sure to update you brainstrust from time to time if contact is rare. Always let them know your value them and show how you are using their input.



## BRING IT TO A MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN MEETING

### Report back

Describe the process of using this tool on your project. What insights did you gain? What changes will you make to your project as a result? Did you have any difficulties your Make Change Happen group could advise on? What tips on the tool do you have for your Make Change Happen group?

### Practice run

Use your Make Change Happen meeting as an opportunity to crowdsource suggestions for a few 'braintrustees' and the best way to contact them. Role play contacting the person you would like most in the braintrust.

Perhaps you start with an email, then phone and then meet face-to-face. No matter how you contact them, or who is chosen to progress the relationship, role play out loud so your Make Change Happen group can give you feedback.

## CREATE YOUR BRAINTRUST

BY HARNESSING THE INSIGHT OF WELL CHOSEN EXPERTS AND STAKEHOLDERS, YOU CAN MAKE YOUR PROJECT BETTER.

### COMBINE THIS TOOL WITH:

Decide with Dotmocracy  
Elevator Pitch Your Project  
Map Your Stakeholders  
Set Forces for Success  
Map Your Political Power

### NOTES

*Inspired by: Les Robinson, Enabling Change ([www.enablingchange.com.au](http://www.enablingchange.com.au)).*