

## Question-Storming

Prepared by Max A. van Balgooy, President, Engaging Places LLC, February 4, 2018

“In the business world these days, brainstorming has a mixed reputation. Increasingly, it’s understood that people tend to do their best creative thinking—particularly in coming up with fresh insights and random associations by way of connective inquiry—in informal, relaxed settings, when they’re not really trying. A brainstorming session runs counter to that: Everyone is stuck in a room trying desperately to come up with original ideas. . . . One solution to this conundrum may be to shift the nature of brainstorming so that it’s about generating questions instead of ideas. . . . The Right Question Institute has found that groups of students (whether children or adults) seem to think more freely and creatively using the ‘question-storming’ method, in which the focus is on generating questions. . . . Answers tend to be judged more harshly than questions.”

Warren Berger, *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 152-3.

## Question Formulation Technique

Developed by the Right Question Institute. See *Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions* by Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2011).

1. Provide a focus for questions, e.g., topic, location, and/or time period.
2. Produce questions. Rules for producing questions:
  - Ask as many questions as you can. Minimum of 25; aim for 50!
  - Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer any question. We’ll do that later.
  - Write down every question exactly as it is stated. Variants or additions to previous questions should be treated as new questions.
  - Change any statement into a question.
3. Categorize the questions
  - Identify open and closed questions.
4. Improve the questions
  - Convert open questions to closed and vice versa.
5. Prioritize the questions
  - Delete those that you can readily or easily answer.
  - Choose the three questions that most interest you.
  - Choose the three questions that will address a current project or assignment.
  - Choose the three questions that will most intrigue or engage the typical visitor.
6. Next steps?
  - Guide research.
  - Inform planning.