



What you need to know - Brainstorming a Motion Graphics Project

design – direction – graphics – animation – cgi – visual effects

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Advice and Tips on Brainstorming for Motion Graphics Design and Animation

Things to consider, resources and techniques to employ to get the most from your brainstorming sessions

You've no doubt heard the word 'Brainstorming' many times, but it can be used for every type of business and concept across a whole range of industries. It certainly isn't an exclusively secret technique for 'creative arty types' or those 'designers' which again, encompasses all kinds of people and professions, who come up with the concepts that change our lives in some way. This article is written with Motion Graphics Designers in mind and those wanting to develop visual effects shots, script ideas for tv, video and film, or graphic Channel branding, the list goes on. Of course all the techniques and tips here can be applied to anyone wanting to develop their ideas individually or with other people in any constructive way.

What you need

All you really need is a place to brainstorm, somewhere relaxed and quiet, Yourself, some friends or colleagues, maybe the client, and or others. Some paper and pens, Tea, Coffee and water rounds off the essentials, but there are all kinds of gadgets that can help inspire, speed up, record and document your brainstorming session. A laptop connected to the internet is obviously great for sourcing reference and examples raised during the meeting, but ensure you have a fast internet connection, there is nothing more likely to bog down your inspiration and flow of ideas than having to wait more than a few seconds to start smoothly streaming a vimeo clip. There may be a need for music reference, so ensure everyone can hear the music properly, ideally through decent speakers. You might also consider a camera or your phone camera, even a video camera to document the meeting and be able to refer back to later. Likewise an audio recorder could be used if visuals aren't needed, a microphone is less intrusive than a camera and the important part of the brainstorm, voice, is captured clearly.

What you don't need

You don't need your mobile phone ringing - put phones in silent mode or turn them off, a call will always interrupt proceedings. Also any other phones ringing or disturbing noise should try and be avoided, headphones are a no no when people are trying to converse in a group, negativity should be left at the door, every idea that is voiced should be heard even if it is crap.

Superiority or hierarchy is best dropped for the meeting to ensure that no one feels self conscious to voice their thoughts. Food or cigarettes also don't aid the process, focus and collective thought are the key to beginning the process of your finished masterpiece. The longer you can sustain the group focus, or your own concentration, the more developed your ideas will become.

Who to brainstorm with

Brainstorm with anyone who you feel can assist the process, anyone whose opinion you respect, or whoever you are thrust into working with. An initial brainstorm with your clients or work colleagues can go so far, but consider many more little brainstorm sessions with the target audiences and people with a different view of an idea, other designers, kids, your Mum, whoever. If the client is not attending the meeting it might be wise to select someone to think with the clients view in mind as regards branding, image and the like.

In a brainstorm session, encourage others to want to contribute to show their knowledge and understanding. Make others feel involved and get passionate. Don't allow one person to dominate the meeting, and encourage everyone to have no fear of sounding stupid and let the ideas pour out.

Working On Your Own

When you are solo, try and create a good relaxed environment for yourself to look through books or magazines, surf the internet where you can concentrate on the task at hand and try not to get sidetracked by something else online. Often the best way to develop an initial idea if you are unable to bounce thoughts off of colleagues is to just start working, drawing, writing, shooting, photoshop, flash, or after effects, whatever you are using, as you create, your mind is continually concentrating on how to improve and develop the idea. You can always ask other people's opinions online by posting your images in a secure place.

Keep the brief in Mind

Always ensure a copy of the brief is at hand, and use a list of key words highlighted from the brief to refer back to, so not to stray too far from what the client actually wants. Show your brainstorming colleagues any client references at the start of the session, look at the company brand, logo, colours and fonts. Keep your ideas within the boundaries of what is possible for the format and budget you are working to, determine whether the result is for tv, cinema or web as this will also shape your ideas to be better suited to the medium.

Tips & Sharing

Use a camera or camera phone to snap sketches or notes that others make during the brainstorming session and grab images or videos you find online and save on a memory stick. Use your camera wherever you go looking for inspiration. On your way home from the meeting you might see the side of a bus or a poster on the tube platform that grabs your eye or seems relevant in some way. Scour books and magazines new and old for inspiration, scan the images or snap them with your camera phone. Collect all your photos and scanned images and place them in a cloud storage folder using [dropbox](#) or other file sharing service, then invite all your collaborators and brainstorming colleagues to share the folder, so that they can all look and upload their own material. Create another folder with developing artwork, script drafts or whatever is relevant to you.

Sources of Inspiration

Everything around you is a source of inspiration for something, so let your mind wander when you are out and about. When focussing on sourcing material and looking for style references look at other designers and studios work, check out classic posters, film title, animation, vintage imagery and film, check out sites such as [Vimeo](#), [Motionographer](#), and [Stash](#). Keep your sketchbook and camera with you at all times and document anything you find interesting that you could use on your current or future projects.

Other techniques

Think in opposites or mirrors and see if other ideas materialise. Try thinking about an idea from the opinion of a different person, gender, race, animal or being, someone very big or very small, young or old. Always look for angles from your core idea but keep your central theme intact.

Summary

Key points to bear in mind before brainstorming a new brief:

- Find a good quiet place to brainstorm
- Have your pen, paper and devices to document
- Use all the resources for inspiration available to you
- Look at the client brief, product or company brand and any supplied reference material
- Encourage all the participants to get involved and contribute ideas however dumb they may seem when they are said
- Keep your mind open to new ideas even after the brainstorm session has finished and continue developing the strongest concepts while they are fresh in the mind
- Collate all the material and share it online with others to continue development