

Brainwriting a Mission Statement

1. Divide your group into three smaller groups of no more than 8 people (if you have a very large group, break them into six or nine smaller groups), all seated around tables.
2. Label three sheets of flipchart paper (or large pieces of butcher paper) with one of the following:
 - AIM: What are we here to do?
 - ACTION: How will we accomplish our aim?
 - AUDIENCE: Who do we exist to serve?
3. Review the rules of brainstorming.
4. Give each table one of the three papers and a colored marker (a different color for each group). Tell them they have two minutes to generate responses to the question on their page. They should write brief phrases or words and number them as they go.
5. At the end of two minutes say “switch.” The groups pass their paper (not their markers) to another table. Be sure that once the rotation starts, all papers go in the same direction each time. Give the groups one minute to review what the previous group wrote and two minutes to add more ideas.
6. The process of switching and timing continues until each group ends up with its original paper. (That is, each group has worked on all three sheets.)
7. Have the groups review the final lists together. People may ask questions for clarification wherever they do not understand what another group meant (or can’t read their writing). Here’s where the different colors are useful—if there is a question about something written in blue, the group knows where to find the answer. If you are working with more than three small groups, those groups with the same question (all papers labeled “AIM,” for example) should work together to reduce duplications and come up with one list that includes all ideas. Once the lists are “cleaned up” the papers are posted on the wall for everyone to see.
8. The group will choose a number of ideas to use in its mission statement. The goal is to match the group’s sense of what their mission should be. Use multivoting with sticky dots, inviting people to vote on 1/3 of the number of ideas on each list. From this pool of ideas, a sub-group can then craft the actual mission statement.
9. Develop draft mission statements. Since group writing can be time consuming, divide the whole group into two or more smaller groups. Have each group write a statement, using the words and phrases from the list.
10. Share and compare statements as a whole group. Frequently, one or two emerge as clear favorites or there are parts of one or two that everyone likes.

Sometimes it’s useful to provide a structure or a framework for people to complete during this exercise. Not only does having a framework assure that essential parts of the statement are included, it’s also a

way of getting commonality among the groups so that the different statements can be compared and merged. Here's an example:

Mission Statement Format
Our mission as a group is _____.
AIM
We do this by _____.
ACTIONS
We do this so that
_____.
REASON or PURPOSE

You will find more on mission statements and brainwriting on pages 245 through 251 of *The Handbook for SMART School Teams (Second Edition): Revitalizing Best Practices for Collaboration*.

