Top 10 Tips for Virtual Brainstorming
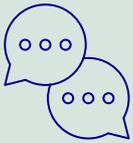
1. Share information in advance – explain the topic, the purpose and share any additional resources. Explain how the session will run to allow individuals to prepare and brainstorm individually.

2. Replace the whiteboard with a digital brainstorming tool – such as Trello, Miro or Slack. Allow your team to post their ideas to the virtual whiteboard in advance - this can help shape the agenda for the day and allows more introverted employees to contribute.

3. Consider group size – too many participants can make it difficult for everyone to share their ideas (and can lead to everyone talking over each other). If your topic is meaty, consider breaking it down into separate sessions.

4. Use video conferencing and screen share – it's difficult to read the room in a virtual setting, so this can be helped by use of video conferencing. Screen sharing can help to keep everyone focused.

5. Facilitate – in an ideal world, we would all have time to brainstorm on a regular basis but in reality, this isn't the case. To ensure you get the most out of your session, appoint a facilitator to keep an eye on the time and pull the conversation back if it starts going off on a tangent.

6. Make it a safe space – set the tone from the outset and advise that all ideas are welcome and ban the word no! This helps to encourage full participation and real blue-sky thinking as sometimes it's watered-down versions of the most off-the-wall ideas that make the final cut.

7. Make it inclusive – not everyone is comfortable participating in a group session and trying to force your introverted team members to join in can actually make them retreat further. Give people the opportunity to send ideas via email or instant messaging, if available.

8. Allow time for reflection – sometimes the best ideas come when you're reflecting on the session. You could hold a mini follow-up session a few days later to try to capture these.

9. Explain next steps and follow-up – brainstorming is a great way to create excitement and engagement within your team but if no action is taken as a result of the session it can degrade trust. Let your team know what the next steps are and keep them informed of any progress made.

10. Ask for feedback – practice makes perfect, so ask for feedback after your sessions to identify ways in which you can increase their effectiveness going forward.