

Collaborative Strategies

Jigsaw

When discussion of new information is desired but time is limited, try this:

1. Select 4 articles on the topic or divide a long work into sections.
2. Ask participants to get into groups of 4. The small groups are called the *home groups*. In the *home groups*, assign each member a number from 1-4. Give each group a large sheet of chart paper, which they tear into 5 pieces. Each member is given a piece, and the facilitator collects the 5th one.
3. Instruct all *home groups* to split up and take their torn sheets of paper with them. All 1s sit together, as do all 2s, all 3s and all 4s. These new groups are the *expert groups*. Give each *expert group* a set of four of the same articles or sections of information.
4. Allow 10-15 minutes for each *expert group* to read and discuss the article assigned to them, looking for an overview and key concepts. The *expert group* members take notes on their torn paper.
5. *Expert group* members return to their *home groups*. Allow 10-15 minutes for experts to share and discuss information from their articles. The *home groups* tape their chart paper back together, and then brainstorm conclusions and/or recommendations on the 5th piece, which has been returned.
6. Reassemble as a large group and share out thought and responses as recorded on the 5th piece of chart paper.

Using the jigsaw, you can share information without lecturing and without appearing to be advocating or pressuring for a particular change.

Carousel Brainstorming

Gathering information from participants during a meeting can be both time-consuming and dull. To take advantage of synergy to help you gather lots of data in a very short time, try this:

1. Select 3-5 subtopics under the major topic for which you need data.
Example: the major topic: How is money wasted?
subtopics: supplies, travel, personnel, communications, equipment
2. Write subtopic headings on chart papers. Place easels or taped chart paper around the room.
3. Divide the room into equal-sized groups. The number of groups should match the number of subtopics.
4. Give each group a different color pen and send each to a chart. Allow five minutes of brainstorming at each chart, moving groups clockwise from chart to chart.
5. After all groups have written on each chart, do a *Gallery Walk* to allow each group to see what was added after they wrote.

Not only does this allow you to collect lots of data and to do it in an active and invigorating manner, it also allows the entire group to know immediately all the information that has been generated.

Pair Share

When small group discussion of individual issues on a single topic would be helpful, try this:

1. Instruct each participant to find a partner.
2. One partner at a time takes 3-4 minutes to outline the problematic circumstances. The other partner listens silently.
3. The silent partner now responds with questions for clarification or with suggestions for resolving the issues. Allow only 3-4 minutes for responding.
4. Now the process is repeated as the second partner describes the problematic circumstances. The same time limits apply.
5. The large group reassembles and creates a chart of the issues in the room related to the topic.

This process is especially helpful for two reasons. First, it focuses each participant on how the topic at hand is personally relevant to him or her, and it provides for a list of issues to be resolved by the end of the session. It is an effective process for achieving each individual's engagement in the objectives of the meeting, and therefore makes a great opener.

Issue Bin (Parking Lot)

To be certain that the agenda doesn't jump the track but at the same time to assure that all issues are recognized, institute an "Issue Bin" (or Parking Lot) and provide participants with sticky-pads on which to write their concerns or unanswered questions. These can be placed in the issue bin chart at any time throughout the meeting. The facilitator will check the bin at breaks or before the meeting closes to respond to all slips placed in the bin.

Consultants

If the meeting is scheduled to address a number of small issues rather than one large one, allow the participants to divide into several interest groups and to serve as consultants to each other on the topic of their choice. They can be instructed to report out briefly at the end of the activity to let the others know what was discussed and to solicit additional short feedback from the larger group.

Round Robin

To warm up a group with a shared interest who have not met before or who have not met for a while, go around the room with each participant providing one *success* and one *concern* related to the topic of the meeting. The *success* gives everyone a chance to be positive and proud. The *concern* breaks the ice and opens discussion.

Slips

This is a quick, anonymous, and comfortable way to gather information or questions or votes. Each participant writes his or her vote, questions, or idea on a 3x5 card and hands it to the facilitator. These are then counted or discussed by the large group, as appropriate.