

The Nominal Group Technique

PURPOSE

To reduce the pro/con nature typical of conflicts during interactive sessions; To generate as many different ideas as possible for solutions, proposals; To increase individual participation and ensure that each individual's ideas are a part of the team's frame of reference; To demonstrate a more elaborate form of brainstorming.

TIP

Some Good Ideas

Step 1. Illustrate level of detail required as an example response. Ask them not to talk.

Step 2. Use person's words. Person decides if it is a duplicate. Ask them to shorten. Write quick, large, alternate between two dark colors, not red. Leave space for clarification. Make entire list visible. Number ideas. Have someone else read the recorder's list.

Step 3. Record key words that are more specific. Ask another to paraphrase key words for recorder. Pace group so all ideas receive enough time. Stop the author from defining the item.

Step 4. Watch for a desire to categorize or group the items so that the group avoids the task of prioritizing by simply choosing all the items to work on; Demonstrate how to rank the items. Circle the item number and then put a rank near it. Three is best or most important. Put the ranks next to each item.

Pre-work. Prepare Question To Be Asked

Develop and decide on a question that will generate possible solutions to deal with selective issues. Pilot test the question by generating a few illustrative responses to see if the question elicits items at the right level of abstraction and scope.

Step 1. Silent Generation of Ideas in Writing

A 5 minute brainstorm silently with self to form a list of items in response to the question.

Step 2. Round Robin Recording

Decide whether to switch and read or for the authors to read their own items.

Take items one at a time going around the table.

Step 3. Serial Discussion for Clarification

Purpose: Clarify meanings, answer groups questions about items, get at logic or analysis behind item; Not to win arguments or come to consensus, that will come later. Disagreements are OK and will be noted. These are group items now so it is up to the group to define what they see as the meaning: "What does that mean to us?"

Step 4. Vote on Importance

Look over the list and decide which items are so similar that they are really parts of the same thing. Renumber them with a, b, etc. Each member select 3 items from the list that are probable most important, that might create significant movement in resolving the problem, that we seem ready and able to talk about, and that we might immediately act on. Rank order your list by first choosing the one of that seems most important. Rank that a 3. Of the two remaining, choose the one that seems least important and give that a rank of 1. The remaining item gets a rank of 2. Record the ranks from each person. Report and discuss any themes, inconsistencies, surprises or differences.

Step 5. Debriefing

1. How did this process work?
2. What were the easy/hard parts?
3. How well did we manage the process?
4. How much were people able to express what was needed to be said?
5. How well did team members listen to each other's real concerns?
6. Where might you apply NGT?