
Wholonomy Consulting: Tips and techniques

Introductions:

Purpose: At some point you want to activate positivity within the group, the earlier this can be done the better. Begin your presentation with an activity that helps people clear their minds and focus on the learning.

Strategy A: Use cards like the Group Works Card Deck or Inspired Mastery's Pause: 52 Ways to Shift Any Outcome in Less Than a Minute Cards. There are many possible card sets on the market. Many bookstores carry a selection. Invite people to take a card, read it, and make a connection between the words on the card and the subject of the meeting/event. People can then introduce themselves and share a connection as a whole group, small group, or in pairs.

Strategy B: Have participants interview each other in pairs using an Appreciative Question. Appreciative Questions help people connect to a positive experience and success. For example, an appreciative question on the topic of presenting might be:

“Describe an experience when you felt that your presentation really made a difference to the people in the audience. A time when participants left feeling inspired by what they learned. What happened? What about this experience was different?”

For a list of Appreciative Questions you can look at Appreciative team building: Positive questions to bring out the best of your team.

Strategy C—Have people share a quality they are bringing to the presentation. We have heard people say openness, flexibility, courage, joy. The list is endless.

Learning Goals:

Purpose: Have participants learn what is planned, reflect on their own goals for the meeting/event, hear other participant's goals, and see how what the group wants to learn compares with what was planned for the meeting/event.

1. Put your goals on a flip chart and go over with group
2. Have the group write their own learning goal for the meeting/event – ask each person to write on an index card a goal they have for the meeting/event.
3. Have people share at tables what their goal is after they have written it.
4. Hear a goal from each table – flip chart.
5. **Respond to Goals:**
 - If they align with the planned goals say so
 - If there are a couple things that weren't planned but you think we can adjust say so
 - If there is something that we hadn't planned and won't get to – can't adjust – say what it is and why it won't be covered, and who will make sure it will be addressed in the future

Gallery Walk:

Purpose: To provide an alternative to the traditional report-out format.

1. Introduce the Gallery Walk. This is a way for people to receive information by walking around the room, reading posters, and posting their comments and questions.
2. This is something that allows for visual and kinesthetic learning AND allows people to learn information and how others are responding to it.
3. Participants take stickees and a pen with them as they walk around the room and read the posters. They write down comments or questions on stickees and put on posters. Give an example or two, you might write, I wonder about this, or I really like this.
4. Participants will have time to review what others have written.
5. Facilitators will read what people write on stickees to help get an idea of how people are thinking about the material.
6. Facilitators could facilitate small group discussions and sharing with whole group afterwards – depends on time.

Appreciative Interviews:

Purpose: Provides a strengths based format for learning about what exists in any organization and community and begins the process of building upon this to develop a dream for the future. Description of activity:

1. Participants each receive an Appreciative Inquiry question/series of questions
2. People form pairs – (may be a trio if there is an odd number)
3. One person goes first – they answer the question(s). The other person listens.
4. Then – they switch roles
5. Poster activities: group the pairs into small groups of 4. Have them share highlights of what they **HEARD**. Groups synthesize for each question and track themes.

Examples of appreciative questions are listed in the following books: Encyclopedia of Positive Questions, and Appreciative Teambuilding.

World Café:

The World Café is a process used to structure small group discussions about questions that matter. Before you begin describe the process a little:

1. **World Café is based on the following assumptions:**
 - The knowledge and wisdom we need is **already present** and accessible
 - There's a **deeper intelligence**. Our job is to get at it.
 - **Collective insight evolves from:**
 - Honoring unique contributions
 - Connecting Ideas
 - Noticing **deeper themes and questions**
 - **Intelligence emerges** as the system **connects to itself in diverse and creative ways**
2. The major premise here is that the **questions we ask and the way we ask them will focus** us in a particular manner and will greatly affect the outcome of our inquiry.
3. **If we ask: What is wrong and who is to blame?** We set up a certain dynamic of **problem solving and blame assigning**. While there may be instances where such an approach is desirable, we have found it much more effective to **ask people questions that invite the exploration of possibilities** and to **connect people with why they care**.
4. In World Café, we are hoping to get to "**shared meaning**", which does not mean that we all share the **same perspective** on what is true, but rather, that each participant has the opportunity to **share what is true and meaningful for them**. This in turn will allow us all to see our **collective situation in a different light**, hopefully enlarging our individual views of truth along the way.

Guidelines For Café

As we enter into our World Café conversations, there are a few things that we need to keep in mind:

- Offer your **individual perspectives** and listen for what is **emerging "in the middle of the table"**.
- Use the tablecloths and markers to create a "**shared visual space**" through drawing the emerging ideas. Sometimes the co-created pictures can really be worth a thousand words in showing the relationships between ideas.
- **Our conversation will consist of several discussion rounds**. You will change tables between rounds to allow for a web of connections to be woven in a short period of time. Each time you travel to a new table you are bringing with you the **threads of the last round and interweaving** them with those brought by other travelers.
- One person will remain at the table to act as the **table host**. This person will **summarize the conversation** of the previous round and encourage guests to summarize the conversations at their prior tables. **The host is not a facilitator**. They are the custodians of the information generated in

discussions at each table. They help to connect ideas and thread the conversations together.

Underlying principles

- This is not a place to form an **action group or committee**
- **This is not a place to argue your point, force your agenda, it is a place to explore what possibilities we have before us as a group**
- **All voices** will be heard. And are encouraged to be heard
- What's said is **not owned** by anyone

Before we begin—your job here—Café Etiquette (to be put on the wall):

- Focus on what really matters
- Contribute your thinking
- Speak your mind, Share your heart
- Listen to understand
- Link and connect ideas (what connects the web of ideas—synapses in the social brain)
- Listen together for insights, patterns and deeper questions
- Play, doodle, draw, use the tablecloths
- Have Fun
- Check for Agreement from group
- Listen Together and Notice Patterns—**Listening is a gift** we give to one another. The **quality** of our listening is perhaps the most important factor determining the **success of a Café**. When **jazz** musicians get together to jam, the best listener ends up contributing the most to the music, because they are able to **play off of whatever is being offered by the other** cats in the band. Café conversations share that jazz element, of **inviting each person to express him or herself authentically**, and those who listen skillfully are able to easily **build on what is being shared**.

Open Space Technology:

Open Space Technology allows all types of people, in all sorts of organizations, to create inspired meetings and events. Interested in using Open Space Technology?

Frequent results of Open Space Technology are:

- Improved communication
- A recognition of the value of diverse voices and opinions
- Creative solutions
- Increased collaboration

Although Open Space Technology may appear to be very unstructured, it follows a process. The process works because it allows:

- Self-managed discussion or work groups to form

- Shared leadership
- Diversity
- Opportunities to think creatively

Here's the Open Space Technology process:

- 1) Ask participants to either sit or stand in a circle; welcome them.
 - Introduce Open Space Technology. It is a process used all over the world with large and small groups. It allows participants to select what they are most interested in discussing at that time.
 - There is a guiding question that is posed to the group as the overarching theme of discussion.
- 2) Explain the process:
 - Five principals
 - Whoever comes are the right people
 - Whatever happens is the only thing that could
 - Whenever it starts it starts
 - Whenever it is over it is over
 - Wherever it is, is the right place
 - One law – law of 2 feet – if you aren't learning or contributing take yourself somewhere that you will.
 - Butterflies – don't go to any sessions.
 - Bumblebees – jump from session to session – cross-pollination.
 - Hosts – call a session by stating a question or topic and agreeing to report out – not a facilitator.
 - If no one comes to your session you can either: stay put and think about the topic, wait and see if others join later, or cancel the session and join another group.
 - Reporting out – have forms to fill out to capture discussion, and if time have groups present to the large group highlights from their session.
 - Finally, be prepared to be surprised.
- 3) Starting – Opening the Space:
 - Invite anyone who wants to pose a topic or question for discussion in a small group to write the topic/question on a sheet of paper in the middle of the room and announce it to the group with their name. After this they will post it on a wall.
 - Proposing an idea does not mean that you will make a formal presentation on it or even agree to facilitate; it means that you take responsibility for hosting a group discussion, are committed to being in that group and write up key points.
 - If no idea comes to you, that's fine.
- 4) The market place:
 - Have the hosts (and the group):

- Discuss whether they want to combine any sessions or cancel any sessions. If doing more than one round of discussion, hosts can change their proposed time slot if they want to.
 - Decide where the groups will meet—have the hosts choose or assign the groups a table or place to meet. Post the information on the board for all participants to see.
- 5) Open the sessions:
- People leave their seats, go to the wall where the meeting times and places are posted and sign up for sessions.
 - Sessions begin.
 - For each conversation/session there is a report-out form.
 - Give a few minutes “warning” before the close of each to sum up conversation for report out forms.
- 6) Report out:
- If there is time - each group has the opportunity to present something significant that came out of the discussions, such as an “aha” moment, next steps, etc.
- 7) Closing Circle:
- Reconvene in a circle. Allow each person the opportunity to share something from his or her experience or learning. Pass an object, whoever has it has the opportunity to speak. If you don’t want to speak, pass the object.
- 8) Book of proceedings
- Every participant gets mailed/emailed a copy of all the report out forms for all the discussions.
- 9) Assumptions of Open Space Technology:
- All knowledge and wisdom that we need are present and accessible here today.
 - Intelligence emerges as we connect our wisdom and experience. This means that within the process we work to:
 - Honor the unique contributions of others.
 - Listen to understand and connect ideas.
 - Listen together for patterns and knowledge emerging.

Liberating Structures: <http://www.liberatingstructures.com/>

This website offers thirty-three guides to facilitation techniques that can be used in community engagement processes.