"No Facilitator" Facilitation

How groups can solve problems and gain perspectives even when the CEO runs the meeting

When the CEO acts as facilitator you lose objective feedback from the group. No matter how well intended the facilitation, it never works effectively. Here is a technique that virtually eliminates the influence of a non-neutral facilitator while drawing ideas out of even the most reluctant participant.

Set the stage

- Highlight the question to be discussed.
- Outline the process and the timeline.
- Ask warm-up questions to start people thinking and talking about the topic.

Brainstorm

- Restate the question.
- Each person individually brainstorms possible answers to the question.
  - Instruct them to simply write down every idea that pops into their head without thinking critically.
- Each individual reviews their ideas and highlights their best three to five ideas.
- Form teams of three to five people. Each team member presents his/her best ideas to the team.
- Each team selects their overall best five to seven ideas and records them on large post-it notes.
  - Note: Your goal is to have about 35 – 45 post-its in total. You should set the team size and the number of ideas each team will generate accordingly.

Organize

- Ask each team to give you the post-it notes with their two best ideas/answers.
- Read the post-its as you put them on the chart.

- Ask for explanations of ideas whose meanings are not clear but do not make nor allow anyone else to make judgmental comments.

- **When you have all the post-its on the chart, ask the group to pair up ideas that are related.**

  - At this stage, you wan to form pairs only.

  - Be careful not to influence the group's decisions!

- **Ask each team to give you two more notes that are different from those already on the chart.**

- **Read the post-its as you place them on the chart.**

- **Using all the post-its on the chart, begin to form larger clusters of related ideas.**

- **Ask the teams for two more ideas and continue to form clusters.**

- **Continue until you have all the post-its from the teams on the chart sorted into related clusters. Then determine if you can merge any of the existing clusters.**

- **For each cluster, read the post-it notes and ask the group, "What are we saying with the cards in this cluster? What is important about this cluster?"**

- **Name each cluster in turn beginning with the largest grouping and moving down the line to the smallest group.**

Action Steps

- **Lead the group in a general discussion of the implications of the results.**

- **Ask questions like:**

  - Where are you most excited or intrigued?

  - Where are you uneasy?

  - What breakthroughs did we achieve?

  - What is the significance of our work?

- **Discuss implementation steps that need to be taken.**

- **Determine who will be responsible for each action items (or set a follow-up meeting to make these assignments).**

- **Set the date for the next follow-up meeting.**