

TRAINING FOR CHANGE

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Kinds of Lists

Elicitive Tools for Facilitation

HARVESTING

Typical use: small groups have been assigned a task. You "harvest" the learnings/ insights by recording them on newsprint or chalkboard, accepting one per small group and going around until all are harvested. (*Don't* ask each group to report its whole work at once - boring!)

DISCOVERY

Ask an elicitive question that challenges the group, and write down their "discoveries" as they say them. Interact with them, ask follow-up, or probing questions if their responses to your question are truisms or obvious.

MAXIMIZING/ MINIMIZING THE VALUE OF...

A specific kind of discovery list. The facilitator first asks "How, in your experience, do you maximize the value of . . .?" (For example, your staff meetings, your demonstrations, your fundraising dinners, your board meetings, your lobbying visits with legislators, your learning.) List the ideas, and interact, ask for an example or two, ask for hands on how many others have found that a way of maximizing the value, ask for surprising ideas that might not already be Conventional Wisdom in the group. When they are with you (and no need to make this an exhaustive list -- who has enough time to exhaust the group?) -- switch to "How, in your experience, do you *minimize* the value of . . .?" Smile, assure them this is honesty time, give permission for them to do self-disclosure. Interact a lot with them after the first one or two (not at the outset). Ask them for examples at first, then ask them how that might show up in this workshop. You have options after this list is up, like forming buddies to talk about how to handle these discoveries ("What support do you need?"), or small groups to take different ones of the Minimizing list and do problem-solving, etc. etc.

BRAINGSTORM

Sometimes all lists are called "brainstorms," which is incorrect. The brainstorm is a tool specifically invented to generate creativity. The facilitator does not interact or probe -- the facilitator's job is simply to scribe as rapidly as possible. (With a large group, get someone to write on another easel beside you, so two of you are capturing the spontaneous, perhaps rapid-fire ideas.) Comments from others are not allowed. The facilitator explains the goal of generativity, and sets up the rules: (1) a limited time (say, five minutes), (2) don't censor yourself but let anything that occurs to you, however fanciful or silly, to be expressed, (3) don't comment on others' ideas, (4) after the brainstorm time is over we will sift the list and see whether something has emerged that is useful for our group at this time.

AMBIVALENCE CHART

Acknowledge that a topic or idea (e.g. "diversity," "nonviolence," "coalition-building"), like everything, has its up side and its down side. Explain that we'll take a minute to explore what those two sides are before proceeding. Put the topic in the middle of the top of the newsprint, and on one side a plus sign and on the other a minus sign. Invite thoughts and feelings. Be ready for both minuses and pluses to come forward, and reward both. The challenge here for the facilitator is to give maximum permission. After enough has been listed on both sides, you have many options, including agreeing to cancel the rest of the workshop, use the minus side as material for problem-solving, etc. The most powerful use of this tool is to force a decision in the group -- do we *really* want to proceed to learn how to build coalitions, or are we going through the motions to satisfy our funders?, etc.

GENERALIZATION

In experiential learning we first introduce an *experience*, then ask people to *reflect*, then *generalize*, and finally *apply*. A list can be the tool for *experiencing*, e.g. a brainstorm, or discovery. A list can also be used to harvest *reflections*. But it can also be a way of teasing out generalizations. Especially after a roleplay, when debriefing/unpacking is usually done without listing, (and therefore the reflecting just goes out into the air and into ears of the auditory learners), it can be essential for thorough learning to make a list next in order to facilitate generalization. As participants review their reflections/learnings/insights, it's often easy for the facilitator to move the group a next step, into the realm of integration and generalization. While making that generalizing list, stories become particularly useful, and statistics if you have them or authors to point to or scholarly studies or whatever.

Note that it's a rare list that can't bear a bit of study. If you ask participants to look at the list as a whole, not only is it a *review* of the discovery, harvesting, etc., but people may have additional insights, see gaps that are quite revealing, or see generalizations or themes. Use of a list is like working with the unconscious as well as the conscious part of group life. Enjoy!

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