

Iterative Imagination

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FORMAT:

Whole group process.
Duration: 30 minutes

PURPOSE:

A multiple iteration creation, design and problem solving process which rapidly utilizes the full generative potential of a group's intellectual capital.

SETUP:

Chairs are set up in big circle. People use blank papers on the walls. Process is done standing. Iterate in dyads, Synthesize in 4, then Iterate in 4, Synthesize in 8, then Iterate in 8, Synthesize in half of the group, then Iterate in half of the group, Synthesize in the whole group.

INTRO / BACKGROUND:

By COLLECTING IMAGINATION we awaken the frequently underused wealth of wisdom naturally inherent in group intelligence. Collecting Imagination is often more effective than standard meeting formats which use discussion, argument, voting, reports, etc., and where some people are dominant and talk, and the rest are submissive and tend not to contribute.

COLLECTING IMAGINATION is particularly useful in open-ended or complex problem situations which need to be addressed in a ridiculously limited time period. In addition to fully collecting a group's imagination, this process creates tremendous support and agreement from the whole group because the result is a group creation.

INSTRUCTIONS / PROCEDURE:

Facilitator explains that this is a multiple iteration process which goes through several cycles of Iterate and Synthesis.

"Iterate" means to make an attempt, to move ahead with insufficient information, knowing that what you are doing is not perfect and not the final result, knowing that you will get a chance to do it again. You just use your imagination and Go!

"Synthesize" means to assemble the different viewpoints and ideas into one whole. It is a process of understanding, digesting, collecting what was imagined, and integrating it all into a new starting point.

COLLECTING IMAGINATION gives us several chances to do the same thing over and over again. Each time we start the cycle at a higher level of information, with new perspectives discovered by other teams tackling the same problem.

What has been found is that if you let people iterate and synthesize their work through a few generations, the quality of the result improves 1,000 fold.

The process:

Facilitator writes the problem or questions to be answered (3 maximum) in large letters clearly for all to see.

For example:

"Create a simple elegant model for rapid learning based on the Boxes Game."

ITERATE AS 2:

Find a partner and work as pairs to create a result using both of your imaginations. (5 min)

SYNTHESIZE AS 4:

Find another pair, and explain to each other what you created as 2 until they understand what you created. Synthesize both creations into a more complete result. (5 min)

ITERATE AS 4:

Repartner with one of the people in your 4 who was not your original partner. Go find another pair and work as a group of 4 to produce a new result. (5 min)

SYNTHESIZE AS 8:

Find another group of 4 and explain to each other what you created as 4 until they understand what you created. Synthesize both creations into a more complete result. (5 min)

CONTINUE:

Continue to use this pattern until all that is left is the whole group with a finished model or solution, or answers to the question.

Write this result clearly for everyone to refer to.

CHECK-IN FOR DISSENT:

Ask if we left out anything crucial, or if anyone seriously disagrees with this result.

If someone does, ask them to share their ideas or feelings.

See if their ideas can be easily included in the present model or solution.

If not, ask them if they could accept and use this model or solution.

DEBRIEF: