

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 101

When running creative workshops you need to balance quality of outcome against time. Keeping it simple is one way to do this ...

Make Meetings More Efficient...

"So much to do, if I only had time," – Lyric by P Delano, Jack Fishman & Michel Fugai



"If I only had time"

Do you want to achieve more in your meetings?

Recently, I spent some time with a client to review an agenda they had designed for a creative idea generation and evaluation workshop. I was not facilitating but they asked for feedback.

The design had very clear outputs, with good ideas to ensure participation. However, instinctively I sensed that they would not achieve all they wanted to because the design was too complex for the time available.

We therefore spent time looking at ways to simplify the design, so they could achieve the desired outcomes.

SO

In essence you can simplify three factors in a workshop, (although reducing the number of people attending is another option):

- The Input - The information that people require before they can start the creative thinking session

- The Activities – What the group does to process the information and achieve the output
- The Output – What the group produces at the end of the activity, e.g. a set of evaluated ideas

Here are some suggestions for ways you can simplify them. Treat these as general principles as there are always exceptions.

Input

- Identify work that could be done beforehand so that you do not waste time in the meeting e.g. (A). Before a process redesign meeting, draft the current process and validate it during the meeting. (B). Before an evaluation session, identify the criteria that you will use to evaluate ideas
- Distribute briefing information beforehand so that the workshop involves discussion not information dumping
- Avoid presentations; unless short and simple, they are not efficient use of time. If you are unable to deliver information before the meeting, provide people with the presentation document, have them review it in small groups and then ask questions of the expert or experts

Activities

- Have clear written instructions so people do not have to waste time asking for clarification
- Make exercises simpler, e.g. have fewer idea generation techniques, use fewer

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criteria when evaluating, have fewer stages in an exercise

Output

- Reduce the number of outcomes (as a general rule, any more than three outcomes in a day starts to make my warning antenna twitch). Alternatively, grade the importance of outcomes so that you only tackle “Desirable” outcomes if time
- Look for simple measures, e.g. High, Medium, Low, rather than specifics. For example, can you accurately measure the cost of a project during the meeting?

By doing the above you should be able to achieve higher quality outcomes in a shorter time.

ACTION

When planning your next meeting or workshop, consider how you might simplify the Inputs, the Activities or the Outputs. I would be delighted to hear of any successful ways you have found to do this.

TO CLOSE

During the holiday, I took my children to Go Ape, www.goape.co.uk, one of a network of high ropes activity centres in Britain. This is a recommended activity for family, colleagues and naturally, Creative Gorillas.

Being ten metres up a tree on a small platform tends to focus the mind but does make some people nervous, so there is a big focus on safety during the briefing.

What impressed me about the briefing was the thought that had gone in to making it very simple.

“Clip the red rope on to the red cable. Clip the blue rope on to the blue metal pulley. Close and oppose the karabiners. Always clip on.” A small number of instructions simply delivered and easily remembered.

If you can design your workshop in a similar simple way, you should have fewer problems achieving a great outcome. I say fewer, because one of our team still managed to unclip both safety ropes whilst trying to untangle them. Like workshops, you have to accept that humans are involved and no matter how simple you make the instructions, things can go awry!

Have a simple week..

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