

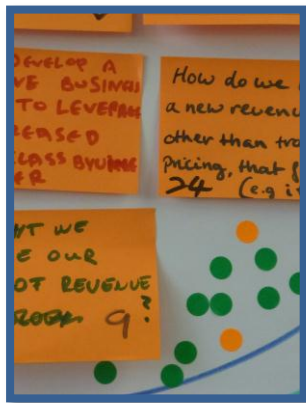
YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 134

How you can make better choices...

Make Decisions Through Discussion...

"The difference between a democracy and a dictatorship is that in a democracy you vote first and take orders later; in a dictatorship you don't have to waste your time voting."

Charles Bukowski (1920 - 1994) American Poet and Novelist



"Dot Choice example"

Would you like to make better choices?

Imagine you are facilitating a meeting with a group and you have to choose from a range of options. One way you can do this is to explain each option briefly and take a vote. You count the votes for each item and choose the one with the most votes to move forward.

Many people do this because it is quick. Another reason is that people sense "One person, one vote" is fair and democratic.

"Taking a vote" happens quite often in organisations... and is quite often an unsatisfactory way of proceeding. In this article I will explain my reason for saying so and will also describe a tool I use a great deal when facilitating.

WORDS HAVE MEANING!

The term "voting" seems to bring out the competitive spirit in some people, so voting on an option becomes a win or lose scenario for them. To overcome this issue avoid saying, "Let's

take a vote". Alternatively say, "Let's choose how to move forward." (I confess even after many years of facilitating, the word "vote" does pop out of my mouth now and again, so don't feel despondent if this happens to you!).

THE "DOT CHOICE" TOOL

When making a choice, rather than vote by hand, have the group use sticky coloured dots to identify their choice. (I use Avery 12mm round dots No. 32-281 in different colours.)

The dots enable you to control the number of choices each person receives (a 10:4 or 5:2 ratio of options to dots is one way to do this).

If there is a simple choice with only one criteria, one colour suffices. However, often you will need a number of criteria to sift the options. In this case have the group use one colour for the first criteria (e.g. benefits) and have them use another colour for the second criteria, choosing only from those options already selected.

SO

At this point you may be thinking, "So what? Use your hand, use a dot, what difference does it make?" That is where we introduce another facet of the "Dot Choice" tool. When using it, you start with the premise that making a choice is an opportunity to enrich the group's understanding of different options. This is where you introduce the...

DISCUSSION

Use the number of dots against an item as an indicator of priority. Use the option with the most dots as the starting point for discussion. Ask

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the people who chose that option the reason for their choice. After each person has spoken, ask the group, "Does anyone else who voted for this have a different reason?" Continue until you have discussed all of the choices with dots against them. Why do this?

1. In the group there may be some people with more knowledge and experience. Their viewpoint helps enrich the understanding of those people with less experience and knowledge. However, the latter people often provide a fresh perspective and new insights for those with more experience and knowledge. So you end up where the whole group has a richer understanding and fresh perspectives.

For example, a colleague and I ran an innovation workshop recently. At an early point in the process we used "Dot Choice". After we had discussed one of the items, two participants said, "I didn't choose that, but if I had heard the reasoning before I would have done." As a result the group used the dots again to make a final choice.

2. Every person has a chance to explain his or her choice. When people are heard in this way they are more likely to accept the decision of the group. This leads to more unity as you move forward.

EFFICIENCY

Now you might say, "If discussing the choices helps, why not have each person explain their thoughts on every option before using "Dot Choice?"

You could, but it can take a long time to do and people might lose interest if there are many options. Waiting until after you have chosen your options is a compromise but is much more efficient.

ACTION

Try "Dot Choice" and see if it works for you.

TO CLOSE

"Dot choice" does not always go smoothly. At one meeting an attendee raided the envelope containing my dots. I watched amused as he discreetly added an additional twenty dots to his choice. On reviewing the dots, the rest of the group looked puzzled at such a large number on one choice. I asked the attendee to explain his reasoning. He was quite open about it. He explained that he really wanted this to happen and that he would take responsibility for moving this choice forward. The rest of the group agreed but selected another choice as well. It's all in the discussion.

Have a great week.

John Brooker | Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.



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