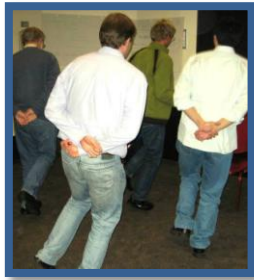


YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 63

If you are flexible about meeting outcomes, you can be much more successful...

Focus Workshops...

"I have left orders to be awakened at any time in case of national emergency, even if I'm in a cabinet meeting." – Ronald Reagan, former President of the USA



"If the group turn their back, you may have an issue"

Are you flexible enough in your meetings?

Recently, I ran a workshop for a team of engineering managers. The team had a number of issues to discuss and we had designed a very full agenda. At the end of the first day, it became clear that some of the early issues required more discussion than anticipated and needed to be resolved.

We could have shelved this discussion in order to achieve the planned outcomes. Instead, I sat down with the senior manager in the evening and we redesigned day two to develop and resolve the issues that really concerned the team.

Yes, we had to shelve some of the other issues; however, the workshop ended with lots of energy and had a 96% satisfaction rating, which would have been unlikely if we had pressed on with the original design.

SO

What tips might you gain from this about designing and running workshops? Here are my thoughts:

- Involve the group in the workshop design. Often the sponsor sets the agenda alone and the group has no ownership. Involving the group can help you avoid changes to the agenda during the workshop
- Limit agenda items to key issues and leave time for more discussion on these. You can always have a couple of discussion ideas ready if the meeting looks like it will finish too soon (funnily enough, I have never had a complaint about a meeting finishing early!). Alternatively, prioritise the outcomes in advance so you can drop the least important
- Maintain a constant dialogue between the sponsor and facilitator during the workshop to confirm the meeting is on track and highlight issues. This does put some pressure on the sponsor but is preferable to arriving at the end with a group that is dissatisfied. If you are the sponsor and the facilitator (not recommended but it happens) don't talk to yourself, identify someone else in the meeting with whom you can discuss issues

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 63

- If things are getting difficult, take a break and give yourself time to think
- As a facilitator, tune in to the needs of the group and balance the desire to achieve the set outcomes with the group's desire to resolve underlying issues – be flexible without letting the workshop go off course
- Lay the issues out to the group and ask the group what they think is the best thing to do (if it is a large group, split them in to small teams and then extract the ideas)

ACTION

Consider a meeting you have coming up.

- Have you got sufficient time to cover all the outcomes required?
- Have you involved the participants in the design?
- Have you got a “Plan B” if things start to go awry?
- Have you a camp bed for the boring moments?

TO CLOSE

My apologies for the delay in this article reaching you. I have been a POW (prisoner of work) for the last few weeks. Or to use an appropriate analogy, my life agenda has been too full, although involved in the design I need to drop a few items, reset priorities, focus on the important issues and discuss some changes with the sponsor.

Have some interesting meetings this week...

.John Brooker | Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.



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