

QuickTip – Tossed Salad

Tossed Salad combines elements of brainstorming and small group work. It helps a large group draw out everyone’s best ideas, refine them, and select a few for further action.

When to Use

Use this technique when you want to make sure that the group considers ideas from all participants. It requires some supplies – small cards to write on and a container (the “salad bowl”) to collect them.

Procedure

1. Provide each person with a stack of blank cards, such as index cards.
2. Ask everyone to write down their best ideas, one per card, and place their cards into the “salad bowl.”
3. Mix up the cards in the bowl - “toss the salad.”
4. Pass the bowl and draw. Typically, each person draws as many cards as they put into the bowl.
5. Break into small groups. Give the groups time to discuss and evaluate the ideas on the cards that the group members drew.
6. Get back together as a large group. Have a representative from each small group verbally summarize their evaluation, then facilitate a large group discussion that further refines and selects the most promising ideas for further action.

Considerations

1. Consider limiting the number of cards that each person can put in the bowl so that they focus on writing down their best ideas.
2. This is a good technique to use when some participants are more comfortable expressing their ideas in writing rather than speaking about them.
3. It also can provide some degree of anonymity about the initial ideas.