QuickTip – Multivoting

Multivoting is a way to quantify the positions and preferences of a group by allowing each member to decide how much an option is worth to them. Each member's votes are recorded, but a decision is not necessarily reached. Multivoting gives the group information about where individual members stand and the strength of their positions. The votes are used as a springboard for identifying consensus, surfacing disagreements, and identifying the size of gaps.

When to Use

- "Taking the temperature" of a group as it is moving toward agreement.
- Identifying areas of disagreement, misunderstanding, or differing priorities.
- There are fewer than ten options under consideration.
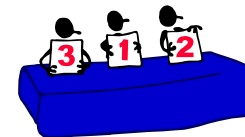
Procedure

Set up a grid of names and options on a flip chart.   Give each member a number of votes to distribute across the options according to their preferences.   Members distribute their votes across the options to indicate their relative preferences. Use these voting guidelines:

	A	B	C	D
Tom	3	1	1	1
Mary	1	1	2	2
John	1	1	3	1
Karen	1	1	2	2

- Encourage members to spread their votes across all options to express their relative feelings about all of them. Don't lump all votes on a single favorite.
- Each person should decide how to distribute votes before recording them on the chart, to avoid being influenced by how others vote.
- Ask for and record votes by option, not by person.   For each option, members should vote simultaneously by raising fingers, showing a scorecard, or similar method.
- Allow votes of "zero" only when a person can't live with that option.

Considerations

1. The number of votes available to each member should be about 1.5 times the number of options.
2. The biggest value of multivoting is the discussion that follows. Facilitate a discussion of large gaps, extreme positions, and area of agreement.
3. A variation of multivoting is "red dot" voting.   All options are listed on a flipchart. Members have adhesive dots corresponding to their votes.   All members simultaneously distribute their dots next to the options.   The resulting visual cluster gives a picture of the group's preference for each option.   The method is fast and works well with a large group, but does not allow follow up discussion on individual disagreements because individual votes

are not recorded. Thus it is good for fast sensing of the temperature, but less effective at closing gaps and building commitment.

4. To use meeting time most effectively, schedule a multivote just before a break. Allow people to finish voting during the break.

5. See the Fist ot Five technique for a quick variation of this technique that is optimized for voting on just one issue.

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