
QuickTip - Visioning

Visioning is a highly participative approach to developing a shared description of a desired future state. It is a variation of the Talk Circuit technique tuned especially for visioning.

When to Use

Use this technique when the group must identify and get alignment on a goal. It helps participants clarify their thoughts, put forward their ideas, and hear perspectives from everyone. It increases buy-in to the future state because the group's direction is coming from all of its members. Visioning often creates a high energy level in the room.

Procedure

1. Identify the area at hand, for example, patient satisfaction. Pose a series of questions about what participants desire that area to look like at a point in the future. For example, "Two years from now, how are front office employees behaving differently when they interact with customers?" or "What problems have we solved in order to reduce patient waiting times?"
2. Ask each participant to silently write responses to the questions.
3. Ask each participant to partner with someone they work with the least, or who has a significantly different area of expertise. One person in the pair shares their vision for three to five minutes, then they switch and the other person shares.
4. When time is up, have participants switch partners and repeat, but for a shorter time. Encourage participants to incorporate good ideas they have heard during previous rounds. Continue this for as many rounds as desired but limit each round to 1 – 3 minutes per person to nudge participants to prioritize sharing key points. It is not necessary to do so many rounds that everyone speaks to everyone else.
5. Have the group gather back together. Facilitate a discussion to consolidate the ideas that emerged during the rounds. Typically, by this point there will be a lot of commonality.

Considerations

1. This technique involves everyone. It is a good way to involve quiet voice and minority opinions.
2. It may be helpful to describe the current state at the start of the exercise, before starting to get the group working on the desired future state. For example, if the topic is customer satisfaction, summarize data on the current level of satisfaction, major reasons for dissatisfaction, and trends or changes. This will help the participants generate more informed ideas, especially if they are not personally deeply familiar with the area.
3. Think carefully about what initial questions to pose, since they influence the direction of subsequent conversation. However, don't require that people stick to those questions.
4. Encourage people, as they go through the rounds, to incorporate good ideas they hear into their own vision for the next round.