

CONSENSUS WORKSHOP FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Setup: you need a large wall that all can see, markers for each small group (see below) and a bunch of large post-it notes as well as a way to post your focus question for all to see.

1. **Decide on, and post, a “Focus Question.”**

Should not be overly complex or layered. Should be clear. Should be on point to drive to your desired outcomes

2. **Get individual braindump. Require a large # of personal responses.**

“Everyone, please write AT LEAST ten answers to our focus question on your paper. Don’t share (yet).”

3. **Ask each individual to sort through his or her own ideas.**

“Please put an asterisk next to your five best ideas.”

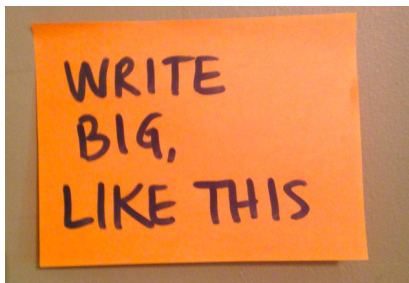
4. **Pair/Share leading to mini-consensus**

Get people into small groups (3-6) and ask them to share their starred ideas. Ask them to agree on a certain number that they, as a team, can all support going forward. Important: note that they, as a team, must have consensus on any ideas they put forward.

Additionally, you will want 30-40 ideas in total on the wall. Figure out, based on how many people you have, how many ideas they can put forward. For example, a group of 40 people, divided into groups of 4 for mini-consensus will leave you with 10 groups. So you may want to limit them to 4 shared ideas going forward (total of 40 to be in the group discussion)

Give each group the right number of big post its to put their ideas on.

Technical note: when they put the ideas forward, make sure they follow three rules: Write big, in all caps. Use 3-5 words per idea. Put only 1 idea on each post-it.



5. **Get the ideas on the wall**

Start by asking for two clearest ideas. It is helpful to have the group in full, easy understanding with each other on these. Then ask for 1-2 more that are different. Make

sure you read them out so that people can ask clarifying questions. Make sure each idea is crystal clear.

6. Start clustering ideas

Ask group to identify pairs of ideas that are complementary. Some may be duplicates, fine to remove one if they are identical (do not remove if they are similar but not identical, as the nuance will matter to someone). The clusters should be complementary in that each idea supports or strengthens the other. I often use the example of coffee/donuts or peanut butter/jelly to talk about complementary ideas. They're much different but much better together.

Cluster as many as you can.

Then get the rest of the ideas up and continue clustering. You can ask people to hand them up, or you can ask people to get up and put their own where they want.

Give each cluster a symbol at the top. Symbols should be as neutral/meaningless as possible. Clusters can be put into columns.



7. Naming

When all the ideas are up, ask the group to name each column. Look for informal consensus. Don't take the first suggestion. This is a "popcorn-style" discussion, be sure to listen for all the voices. If you see a lot of nodding or hear a bunch of mm-hmms after a particular suggestion then that is the one you want. If you have an objection, go back to discussing it.

8. Moving Forward

Read through the named clusters out loud and then have a discussion to reflect on the workshop, using focused conversation questions. Talk with the group about next steps, and results.

You may want to ask people to turn the names into goal statements. For example, you may have a column called "Communication." What would you need in order to make it a goal? A statement like this might work: "We will improve our frequency and quality of communication with the other division." Then the ideas under it are likely to be the objectives. They might say something like, "update blog weekly," or "attend each other's staff meetings."

To make the plan most useful, use this last element to confirm the consensus, celebrate the common ground and make the names into truly actionable, measurable goals.

To confirm consensus:

- 1) Is there anything up here we shouldn't do?
- 2) If we do all this, will we reach our goal?