



Collaborative tools, services and training

Meet smarter, not harder!

The world we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far creates problems we cannot solve at the same level of thinking at which we created them.

– Albert Einstein

What you can do, or dream you can do, begin it; boldness has genius, power and magic in it.

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

training events coming up

Brisbane

Group Facilitation Methods

9–10 February 2010
Contact: Elaine Richmond
emr@inet.net.au

Strategic Thinking & Planning

20–21 April 2010
Contact: David Jago
david@smartmeetings.com.au

Understanding & Leading Change

15–16 June 2010
Contact: Elaine Richmond
emr@inet.net.au

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Fresh outcomes demand fresh approaches

If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got! That's why really new outcomes need new thinking. In turn, this thinking is based on expanded information and awareness.

Getting the data you need

One way to think of a workshop or conversation is as a form of information processing. In this context, you have to start with the end in mind. That is: the outcome you are aiming for. Therefore – **what information, processed in what way will deliver that outcome?**

Let's take these in reverse order. You've already defined your **outcome**: this is the Practical Result. What new information do you need as a starting point towards the list, decision, plan, agreement or what ever.

The **processing** is indicated by the Rational Aim. What will you do to enable the *comprehensive coverage of...* or the *objective analysis of...* to come about?

So, **how do you get the information you need?** The 'brainstorm' question is not necessarily the same as the Focus Question. The latter is different in that it can function across several linked sessions. For example: future vision, current reality, strategic directions, actions.

Therefore, what 'question', asked in what way, will elicit that information? Here are some things to consider:

- **Garbage in, garbage out.** An oldie but a goodie. No amount of high falutin' processing is going to fix up crap data.
- **You get the data you ask for.** This means asking precise questions. You can think of it as word-smithing in reverse. Consider these two questions: "...factors involved in XYZ" and "...forces driving XYZ" What different responses will they elicit from the group?
- You'll need a **backup**. Sometimes, even with good preparation, you won't ask quite the right question. What's your Plan B, C...?
- As ever, **open ended** questions are the go. This means what... or how... or why... It means avoiding questions that can be answered with yes or no.
- **One question at a time** please. Double barrelled questions are just plain confusing and only generate poor quality information.
- It's **not always a question**. In some cultures, questions are not appropriate. It's a matter of subtle additions and responses to the conversation that guide it in the required direction.

So, what's your experience of crafting precise questions to get the information required to expand a group's thinking? Please, go online and post a comment.

Go well!

David

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