

Points for Consideration

Nominal Group Technique

Overview:

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is used to gain a large number of ideas from a small group of people (five to ten per group) in a short amount of time. NGT encourages participation from all group members by allowing everyone to generate their own ideas, take turns sharing them, discussing them and then voting for the most important.

NGT is a useful tool: when consensus is desired or conflict may arise, to generate many creative ideas, or when there is a fear that not everyone in a group will be heard.

Perhaps the most important step in the NGT is the generation of the discussion question. The wording should prevent misunderstanding and be objective.

The Process:

Have discussion question printed on worksheet

- 1) Silent Generation of Ideas:
 - a) Keep the group quiet while they write their individual responses to and ideas about the discussion question.
 - b) Don't lead the group by answering questions
 - c) Respond to group questions in whatever way is most meaningful to them.

Need flip chart, tape, and markers

- 2) "Round Robin" RECORDING of Ideas:
 - a) The objective is to map the group's thinking.
 - b) Present only one idea per round – NO DISCUSSION, ELABORATION, OR JUSTIFICATION
 - c) Each participant decides whether their idea duplicates another
 - d) Record ideas, number them in sequence (avoid abbreviation/condensing of ideas)
 - e) Participants may pass their turn if they choose
 - f) Post filled sheets where everyone can see.

Note: May want to limit the time for sharing ideas to only five minutes, or tell people to present their top two or three items, or go around the table one more time...

- 3) Serial Discussion of the Listed Ideas:
 - a) Purpose is to clarify the ideas presented
 - b) No arguments, everyone will vote later
 - c) Maximum two minutes per item, OR enough time to allow for 15 minutes of voting
 - d) List is "Group Property" – anyone can clarify or comment on any item on the list

Each participant needs five 3" X 5" index cards

- 4) Voting
 - a) Encourage all participants to vote (even if they didn't share ideas)
 - b) Each person selects the five most important items and writes one in the center of each card
 - c) Write the sequence number in the upper left hand corner of the card
 - d) After five have been selected, announce that rank ordering will begin; Spread them out in front of you, and decide which is the MOST important, write "5" in the lower right corner of that card and underline it three times, and turn it over; Next, select the LEAST important item of the four remaining in front of you and write a "1" in the lower right corner of that card and underline it three times and then turn the card over; Then rate your next most important item as a "4", your next least important a "2" and finally a "3" on the remaining card.
 - e) MAKE SURE ALL RANKINGS ARE UNDERLINED!!!!!!
 - f) Collect all cards and shuffle
 - g) Have a tally sheet made; e.g. item #13 received a "3", etc.
 - h) The number of votes is a more important indicator of an item's relative priority, and not the total of the votes received: e.g. item #2 received 10 points (2 votes of 5 points each), but item #12 received 10 points (5 votes of 2 points each).

Advantages:

- 1) Generates a good number of ideas in a short period of time while giving every participant a voice.
- 2) Minimizes pressure, competition, and domination among participants.
- 3) Useful in obtaining input from a diverse group of participants.
- 4) Allows for prioritizing issues / ideas.

Disadvantages:

- 1) Requires good preparation and trained facilitator.
- 2) Minimizes discussion and some participants might feel it is rigid.
- 3) Not suitable for large groups.
- 4) Focused on answering only one "nominal" question.

References:

Evaluation Research Team. (2006). Gaining Consensus Among Stakeholders Through the Nominal Group Technique. Department of Health and Human Services. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Evaluation Briefs*, (7). Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/evaluation/pdf/brief7.pdf>

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