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Facilitation - Open Ended Agenda

Premise

Lean Coffee and Open Space techniques are accepted techniques for creating an agenda based on the interests of people who attend.

But like all techniques there are times when it may not be appropriate. For example, let’s say a group of people are getting together to come up with a new product. Each person comes into the room with a different set of perspectives, and different understanding of different aspects of the product - sales view, marketing view, development view, support view, financial view etc. Many times these different viewpoints will be different perspectives on the same thing; other times the different viewpoints will represent constraints that need to be dealt with.

For these situations, a list of subjects might not be enough.

Context

A degree of psychological safety is required.

Technique

The simplest approach to generate a set of subjects to talk about, representing everyone’s viewpoint, is to start with brainstorming subjects individually, on stickies

Note: stickies that are not rectilinear eg hexagonal work well with this activity.

Then start placing stickies on a big table, proximity mapping items that are similar views of common subjects so that items do not cover each other up.

There will typically groupings that happen as a result of this process. The question then is “where do we want to start”. Use the groupings to investigate all the aspects around a grouping, marking off specific items as you go and have discussed to completion. You’ll find setting a time box will help progress the conversation.

At some point in the conversation you will find the subjects remaining have limited value, or diminished return in which case you should abandon this approach and perhaps, now there is a more concrete view remaining subjects, use more normal facilitation approaches after that.

Want to Know More?

- Open Space

Template, Consultant, FacilitationTechnique, Tools

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