

Instructions for Post-It thinking diversity exercise

Here's a quick meeting warm-up technique to show the diversity of thinking in the room, and why everyone's contributions are important. It's a useful exercise before any meeting where a range of ideas is the goal — brainstorming, strategy, troubleshooting, what could we do, what went wrong, how we could improve, what opportunities we have.

PREP

- Have a group of 3-12 people. With larger groups, split them into smaller groups.
 - Give everyone a stack of Post-It notes and a pen. They will only need about 30 notes each.
 - Have a clear reachable space on the table, or a whiteboard.
-

EXPLAIN

- *This is a quick exercise, with no right or wrong answers.*
 - *I will say one word, and you will write down the first 10 words you think of when you think of that word.*
 - *Write one word per note.*
 - *Peel off each word as you write it, and collect them in a stack next to you.*
 - *Stop when you have 10 words. This will only take a minute or so.*
 - *Make sense? Everyone ready?*
-

ROUND 1 - broad, open word

WRITE

- *Remember, write down the first 10 words you think of. There are no right or wrong words.*
- *The word is "run". Go!*
- Everyone should begin writing. The facilitator can write too.
- It should take about a minute (about 6 seconds per word). Wait until everyone has finished.

GUESS

- *We now have ___ words (10 x # of people). We are now going to see how many of them are the same.*
- *First, everyone please write down three numbers. What's your guess for how many of the words...*
 - *... everyone had in common?*
 - *... everyone but one person had in common?*
 - *... only one person wrote?*

TALLY

- *Let's sort the notes and see.*
 - *The facilitator spreads out their stack of 10 words on the table or wall.*
- *Everyone place their words on the table or wall.*
- *If a word is exactly the same as a word on the table, put it on top, making a stack.*
- *If a word is different in any way, start a new stack.*
 - *for example, "sun" is not the same as "sunshine"*

NOTICE

- *How do the stacks compare with your guesses?*

- *Are there more in common, or more unique than you thought?*
- *“Run” is a very broad word, with lots of different meanings. Now we will do it one more time, but we will use a much narrower word.*

ROUND 2 - narrow, closed word

WRITE

- *Again, write the first 10 words that come to mind, one per note. There are no right or wrong words.*
- *The word is “_____” (use something specific to your team, company, or industry)*
- *Wait until everyone has finished writing.*

GUESS

- *Again, please write down three numbers. What’s your guess for how many of the words...*
 - *... everyone had in common?*
 - *... everyone but one person had in common?*
 - *... only one person wrote?*

TALLY

- *Either move the “run” notes to the side, or use a different part of the table or whiteboard.*
- *The facilitator spreads out their stack of 10 words, and everyone places their words either on top of exact matches, or in new stacks.*

NOTICE

- *How do the stacks compare with your guesses?*
- *Are there more in common, or more unique than you thought?*

DISCUSS

- *Overall, were there more or less common words than expected?*
- *Overall, were there more or less unique words than expected?*
- *Was there a difference between the broad or narrow word?*
- *Were there any words that everyone had in common?*
- *How many words were unique to one person?*
- *If there were more unique words than expected, what could that mean?*
 - ***No one else has all your ideas. Your input is unique and important.***
 - ***If you don’t say what you are thinking, our thinking as a group will be less rich and diverse.***

BONUS to show we’re even more diverse than we think

- *Pick one of the words that the most people had in common (the tallest stack of notes).*
- *Each write the first 10 words that come to mind for that word, one per note.*
- *Tally the results by making stacks again.*
- *Notice that even the word we had most in common is rooted in diverse thinking.*

**If everyone thought exactly
the same way you do,
then why would we need you?**

Picture Diversity 

exercise instructions by Scott Moehring, www.moehrbetter.com
inspired by The Mind Map Book by Tony Buzan