

Hints for the Consensus Workshop “Naming” Step

From *Winning Through Participation*:

A rule of thumb in arriving at a consensus is that you never criticize or reject someone’s model or articulation of the consensus unless you present a better one. In other words, if someone says, “I think the stars are all about “the good life,” the leader should not accept responses such as, “No, they’re not,” or “I disagree.” Ask for alternative suggestions, rather than reactions, until the group begins to respond in an affirmative chorus: “That’s it!” It is helpful for the facilitators to mention at the beginning of the naming part that this is the process that will be used.

From *The Workshop Book*, Chap. 8 – One Concept from Many Ideas

This step is where you name the clusters of ideas. The essence of this step is a depth dialogue to discern the consensus of the group on the names of each cluster of data, and to develop ownership of the work. Your task as the facilitator is to *coach* the group in creating the titles. It is up to you to pull out the real insight that is held in all the ideas in the cluster. This is a quest for the pearls of wisdom.

1. Give a context for the naming process.

We are going to name these clusters we have created. The names we will give the clusters are not categories (like economic issues, or cultural challenges) but answers to the focus question that hold the insights hidden in all the ideas. If we turn the focus question into a statement, the cluster name completes the statement. (In our case, each cluster is a Vision Component or Element). The name will be three to five words that describe the concept behind all these ideas in the cluster. Each of our names will be descriptive component of what we want to see in the Center.

The context helps participants see the intention of the naming step and how to describe the final product.

2. Read all the cards aloud from the first cluster.

By reading the cards aloud, you are working on two perceptive modes – auditory and visual. You are also making sure that the group is dealing with all the ideas in the clusters – not just the ones they remember or the ones that catch their attention.

3. Note clues to the major idea

“What are all of these items (this strand) of data about?”

“What are the clues to the major idea in this cluster?”

“What do they all have in common?”

“What do all these cards describe?”

Have the group work with the clues to pull the insights together into a suggested name. You may go through a number of name suggestions before the right one clicks with the group. You are looking for verbal responses and nonverbal clues (several nods, for example) from the group that the name is the right one.

It's important to keep pushing the name till a common understanding is apparent. Make sure participants really struggle here. Don't let them off the hook when they come up with overly simple or pre-cooked titles. *You have to remind them that naming is about what people mean, not just what they say.*

The touchstone in the naming process is whether the name is an answer to the focus question.

You can test this by asking,

“Does the name answer the focus question?”

“Does it describe what we have been talking about?”

“Does it hold the group's insight?”

If the group answers in the affirmative, write the cluster name on a framed card and put it in the heading row at the top of the cluster.