

Pro-action cafe

This tool was first created by Ria Baeck and Rainer Von Leoprechting in Brussels, Belgium. It has since been developed by the Global Art of Hosting Community.

You can read more about it, [here](#).



Why?

Help individuals with answer specific questions with input from all.



How many people?

2 – 10+ people



How long?

2 to 3 hours

Introduction

This process is very similar to a World Cafe, yet individuals are given the chance to ask their own questions to the group, rather than questions being chosen by the host. At the start of the meeting, participants with specific questions (around how to make something better, or how to begin it) come forward and then claim a table each. We call these people ‘callers’.

The questions asked in each round do not change. The changing rounds allow all other participants to spend a set amount of time at each table.

Using this method you can achieve complete ‘cross-pollination’ and a mixing of ideas and dialogue. It encourages absolutely all participants to mix, and allows new conversations to begin with different people during each round. The conversations around tables are small, so everyone gets a chance to contribute.

- There are 4 - 5 people per table.
- There’s no set plan for where people move, they can go where they choose.

If you had 15 participants, labelled 'Person A' to 'Person O', the diagram below shows just how they might move between tables, spreading ideas and building new conversations throughout the meeting.

	Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4	Table 5
Round 1 What is the quest behind the project? (20 minutes)	A B C	D E F	G H I	J K L	M N O
Round 2 What is missing? (20 minutes)	F H O	A G N	B D M	C E I	K L J
Break: What help is still needed?					
Round 2 What is missing? (20 minutes)	E L M	I J O	A K N	B F G	C D H

Ahead of the meeting, you need to:

- To create a welcoming space**
 There's power in creating a space that feels safe and inviting. When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking. Both your invitation and the layout of your room should encourage people to feel comfortable.
- Decide how you'll end each round**
 How will you signal to participants that it's time to move to another table?. Will you shout a buzzword? Ring a bell? Play music?
- Be aware of Health and Safety**
 With so many people moving around, it's important to give participants enough space to move safely around the room.
- Decide how you'll collect information at each table**
 You can either use flipchart paper and pens to allow people to feedback in a 'free flow', or you can use the more structured practice of Designing for Wiser Action.

Designing for Wiser Action:

The Designing for Wiser Action table can be used within a Pro-Action Cafe.

Participants are asked to fill out each box within the table in order to think a project through fully.

Although the table may seem simple, breaking down thinking in this way allows for clear goals and next steps to be seen. You may wish to draw this table out on flip chart paper to allow plenty of room.

During the meeting

Step 1

Count the amount of participants you have in the meeting and divide by four - this gives you the amount of callers you can have in your meeting (i.e. with 40 participants, you can have 10 callers maximum).

Step 3

Ask callers to step forward if they need help. It's first come, first serve. Those people should settle at one table each and stay there throughout.

Step 3

Let people know what sound they will hear which will signal a new round.

Step 4

Begin! Time your rounds carefully in order to give equal weight to each round.

There are three rounds (and a useful break)

1. Participants to help the caller answer the question - What is the quest behind the project?

2. Participants to help the caller answer the question - What is missing?

Break: Caller is asked to reflect alone: **What help do I still need?**

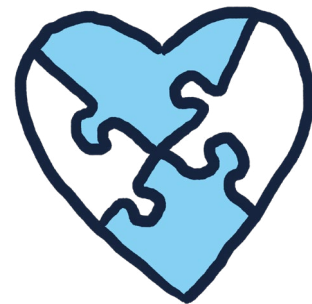
3. Participants hear callers feedback and continue to input.

Finally: You can end the meeting by forming a circle and asking callers to feedback on what help they've received, what they've been inspired by and what's made a difference.

Reminder

Make the cafe work for you

You can bend the rules around timings and the number of participants. If you have fewer people involved, perhaps only put three chairs around each table. Not enough time? Take only 10 minutes per round.



The history of these tools

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York MCN
15 Priory Street
York, YO1 6ET

yorkmcn.org/yorkculturalvalues

