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Description:

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a small-group problem solving strategy using a facilitator-posed question as the starting point of discussion. It is best used for clarification of a group's goals and actions. Processes include generation of ideas by each individual, round robin listing of those ideas, group discussion and prioritizing of ideas, voting, and tabulation of results.

Uses:

NGT is most effective with small groups whose purpose is to generate ideas, plan programs, and problem-solve. NGT takes advantage of "pooled judgments" (Dunham 1998) meaning that decisions can be made by a variety of people with varied talents and backgrounds. Other uses:

- Provides a balance of participation across the group members instead of domination by one or two members
- A greater number of ideas are produced in NGT than in traditional group processes
- Encourages participants to confront issues on a problem-solving basis rather than on a personal assault basis
- Leads to a greater sense of closure and accomplishment

Materials:

1. A meeting room large enough to accommodate groups of five to nine members at individual tables, situated far enough apart to minimize interference
2. A flip chart for each group, 3x5 index cards (5 cards per person), masking tape for posting charts developed by each group, writing supplies

Instructions:

1. Facilitator provides an opening statement to clarify the purpose of the meeting, the roles each individual will play, and how the group's output will be used
2. The facilitator presents a question or problem to the group on an index card and verbally reads the question or problem statement
3. The participants silently write down their ideas on the index card--no group interaction here. Allow 5-15 minutes for this activity.
4. In a clockwise fashion, the facilitator calls on each participant to present his or her idea. The facilitator records each response on a flip chart or board as it is read (no editing)
5. Members enter into an open discussion of the ideas, clarify unclear statements, combine similar ideas, and add or delete ideas. No resolution is made at this step. Allow 20-40 minutes.
6. Members now make a silent and independent preliminary vote on the priority of ideas. The facilitator asks the group to determine the number of ideas they want to prioritize (5-7 are best). Next, the leader distributes 5-7 index cards and asks the members to record each idea on a card and individually rank the ideas according to importance. Allow 10 minutes.

7. If time allows, another group discussion and silent vote can take place here to readdress certain items or ask for more clarification. Allow 20-40 minutes.
8. Final vote tabulation by the facilitator now takes place. Each member receives a copy of the final results.

Adjunct Strategies:

- Brainstorming
- Syntetics
- Delphi Technique

References:

Korhonen, L. (1998). Nominal Group Technique. In Michael W. Galbraith (Ed.), Adult Learning Methods (pp. 219-231). Malabar FL: Krieger Publishing Co.

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Debold, B. (1999). The Nominal Group Technique, found at:

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Dunham, R. (1998). Nominal Group Technique: A User's Guide, found at:

<http://instruction.bus.wisc.edu/obdemo/readings/ngt.html>