Perspectives Wheel

Purpose

* To open up and widen a team’s perspective, capturing more nuance than one or two extremely different perspectives
* To examine an issue from as many vantage points as possible

Facilitation Instructions

* Before the session, create the wheel and set it in the middle of a table.
  + To create the wheel, write the title or a symbol of the problem in the center, then draw lines across the wheel (as if cutting a pie) with each team member identified on a slice of the pie
  + Then, write up cards with the names or titles of eight or more key stakeholders for the problem being explored. Some may be internal (the dean of the Libraries, the President or Provost, hourly workers, supervisors) others will be external (students, faculty, accreditation bodies).
    - These can be identified in advance of the session and provided or brainstormed collectively as a group.
  + Place the cards around the wheel (see image, below)
  + Create a flip chart or large sticky note for each key stakeholder.
* When the wheel is turned, each person’s name should stop in line with one of the key stakeholders. That team member should take on the perspective of the stakeholder and add to the collective understanding.
  + For example, when your name lands on the ‘Libraries Dean’ card, you complete the sentence “From my perspective as the Dean, the critical elements within this situation are…”. You may write the elements on the associated flip chart or have someone else take notes for you
  + You may wish to color-code or annotate comments depending on their nature (are they concerning strengths/opportunities? Threats or critical concerns?)
* If an individual does not understand this stakeholder’s perspective, ask one or more these questions to prompt their thinking:
  + *Time:* What time frame am I operating within? When did I begin to look at the problem? When will it, effectively, be a nonissue for me?
  + *Expectation:* What do I expect will happen, if all continues as expected? What do I hope (or demand) should happen? Who expects me to deal with this? What do they want me to do?
  + *Examination:* How closely am I willing to examine the problem? How far away do I see it? What else is aggregated with this problem as I see it?
  + *Understanding:* what do I see about the problem which no one else sees? What understanding of the problem occupies my vision? What data is my understanding of the problem based on?
* Complete the activity when you have full descriptions of each perspective. You may add additional stakeholder perspectives through this activity – or realize you need to capture multiple perspectives within a stakeholder group (for example, three distinct “student” perspectives, each requiring it’s own flip chart page).

Time/Commitment Needed

* Primary Activity

Reference

Senge, P. M. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. Currency, Doubleday. 273.

Additional Information

* You are using this activity to build your team’s collective understanding and to practice taking on different roles and points of view that inform the situation. This exercise should supplement, rather than replace the step of speaking directly to stakeholders or incorporating other assessment methods. Ideally, this activity would be used among stakeholders to facilitate information sharing and understand the different perspectives and pressures within the group.
* If the wheel seems unwieldy, a similar effect can be achieved by handing cards from one person to the next, or shuffling and dealing cards after each turn.

