**Guide to facilitation: top tips and examples of activities**

If you want the people you involve to participate fully in your focus group, meetings, or other activities, you need to keep them engaged! Get as creative and interactive as you can when gathering insights. Use activities to stimulate discussion as much as you can.

These techniques will help keep everyone engaged but also help explore ideas in different ways. Here are a few options to get you started.

**Discussion techniques**

**Words and quotes**

Words and quotes can provide focus for discussion. Print out (or put on slides) words or quotes relevant to your consultation that you want people to respond to or discuss. They can do this individually by writing on post- it notes, in small groups or as part of the wider group.

**Case studies**

Case studies (real or made up) can be useful to increase people’s understanding of a topic or get them to reflect on different scenarios. Present your case studies with some questions to help guide discussion.

**Pictures**

Pictures can be a useful tool to help illustrate or explain ideas. You can gather immediate reactions from people, asking how they make them feel or what they think of when they look at them. They can also be used as ‘words and quotes’ to prompt discussions.

**Examples or prototypes**

When talking to people about the development and design of a document such as a patient information leaflet, it is useful to bring examples for them to discuss. It can be helpful to take different designs and ask what the patients like or don’t like about each.

**Activities**

**Voting**

Collect a range of ideas in small groups or a whole group. Write the list on a piece of flip chart paper giving everyone a chance to contribute. Then give everyone the same number of stickers or tokens (usually 1-3). They can use these to vote for which ideas matter most to them/which they consider most important. This can be useful to collaboratively prioritise ideas.

**Ranking**

This is where people can rank all options. You may want to propose around 4 ideas and put these on flip chart paper. Provide people with post-it notes labelled 1-4 and ask them to rank the ideas (1 being most important, 4 being least important).

For example, if you want to know what is important to people in an early diagnosis test you could ask them to rank qualities from most important to least important: low cost, accuracy, fast results, non-invasive.

**World Café**

This is a flexible and interactive workshop activity to allow you to gather insights on several topics or questions within the overarching theme. In small to moderate groups this technique enables everyone to respond to each topic and build on each other’s ideas. For larger groups, you can ask people to go to the tables with topics/questions they are most interested in.

This is the basic process for using the world café activity:

1. Everyone needs to be split into smaller groups.
2. Each table will need a facilitator.
3. Each facilitator will have a piece of flip chart paper, a marker and a topic/question.
4. The facilitator will introduce the topic/question.
5. People respond to and discuss the topic/question on their current table while the facilitator takes notes.
6. After a certain amount of time the facilitator will move tables (you won’t need as much time in the final rotations).
7. The facilitator will introduce the new topic/question and summarise what was discussed on the previous table.
8. People on the next table will continue to build on the comments and ideas that were provided by the patients on the previous table.
9. When all rotations are complete have each facilitator provide a summary of the discussions related to each of their topics/questions for the whole group.