



Workshop Opener

Duration: 30 minutes **Group size:** full group

Purpose

This activity helps break the ice, set expectations, answer general questions, and provide common objectives for the workshop.

Preparation

- Meet with the leadership team to review the activities of the day and ensure each person understands their role and responsibilities.
- Have the room completely set up before participants arrive so you are available to greet them.
- Have all the materials needed for day one prepared in advance.

Materials:

- ✓ Copies of workshop Roadmap
- ✓ One large ball of string for every 8 participants
- ✓ Paper and pen for every participant

Guidelines

Step 1 – Introductions, Hospitality, and Roadmap

- Welcome participants and express appreciation for their involvement.
- Introduce Workshop Sponsor, Lead Facilitator, and any other workshop leaders.
- Provide guidance regarding location of restrooms, frequency of breaks, and any other housekeeping matters.
- Review the workshop Roadmap to give a basic overview and understanding of the process, objectives, and anticipated outcomes.
- Allow a brief opportunity for general questions.
- Explain the principle of self-management and how it will be applied.
- Underscore the importance of participation in every session of the workshop.

Step 2 – Team building warm-up: Net Weaving

- This simple exercise takes approximately 15 minutes.
- The objective is to get everyone thinking about constructive group process and get them talking to one another.

- Participants should self-organize into small groups of 6-10 people and stand in a loose circle.
- One person holds onto the end of the string and throws the ball across the circle to another person. This is done until every participant has received and thrown the ball twice.
- Facilitator says: We are about to start a workshop with the hope we can work together to create new ideas for our shared future. How does the net you have helped to make create a metaphor for teamwork? How many anchor points are there? How many nodes are formed by the intersections of the string? What would happen if several people let go? Encourage each person to relate an observation about the string and constructive group process.

Step 3 – Futures thinking warm-up: Emerging Trends

- This exercise has everyone seated together and takes 15 minutes.
- The objective is to help participants appreciate external forces and emerging trends of change that could affect them and their future.
- Ask each person to jot down three things that were important 10 years ago that are obsolete today.
- Then ask each person to list three of the most important current trends that will shape our future over the next 20 years.
- Have everyone pass their paper to their right.
- On the paper you received, cross off 1 item on the list of past changes you consider least important.
- Then cross off 1 item on the list of current trends you consider least important and pass the paper to your right again.
- On the new paper, cross off 1 of the 2 remaining items of each list that you consider least important. Pass the list back to its author.
- Do you agree with the assessments of others?
- Have people call out the most important item remaining on their past change list and quickly write them on a flip chart.
- Have people call out the most important item remaining on their current trends list and quickly write them on a flip chart.
- What does this exercise tell us?
 - We all are aware of changes and can evaluate and compare them.
 - You may have revised your thinking after hearing input from others which demonstrates the value of flexibility and group communication.

Warm-up exercises adapted from Schultz, Wendy (1995). Futures Fluency: Explorations in Leadership, Vision, and Creativity. Doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Hawaii.

Tips for facilitating group activities

- Consider changing the usual meeting environment to stimulate creative thinking.
- Keep the end goal of decisive action in mind for the duration of the activity.
- Open with a brief overview of the activity so participants know what to expect.
- Be careful and consistent to maintain pre-set boundaries of time and task.

- Encourage small group self-management; suggest that each group select a recorder, a reporter, a time keeper, and a discussion leader.
- Work with the people, ideas, and motivations you have to find enough common ground to act rather than being bogged down or sidetracked with an attempt to resolve “deeper issues”.
- Seek global perspective on issues by allowing all opinions to be expressed, validating polarities, and by agreeing to disagree on issues that cannot be resolved quickly.
- Encourage people to stay engaged in spite of differences. Resist the urge to intervene unless you observe movement toward ‘fight or flight’. Allow the group to resolve its own differences or agree to set them aside.
- Provide plenty of easily available nutritious snacks and beverages
- Consider using a Church Futures consultant to add depth and breadth of experience.

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