



Knowledge to lead

World Café

Step by Step

- Prepare some café-style tables, and put on them a paper tablecloth, markers and some refreshments.
- Create groups of four or five people and sit each of them around a table. It is very important to keep the number of participants small. The intimacy of the small group is crucial for the discussion. Each table should never have more than 6 people.
- In each group identify a person that will have the role of the host and will never leave the table.
- Set up progressive rounds of conversations, each of them must be around 20-30 minutes. The number of conversations depends of the total number of participants to the word café.
- Select questions or issues that are significant for the participants, and ask everyone to discuss them.
- Encourage everyone, host and other members, to write and draw on the tablecloth.
- After the round of conversation is completed (according to the time you fixed at the beginning), ask all the participants but the host, to leave the table and sit in another one.
- Ask the table host to welcome the new guests and to introduce to them the themes and ideas discussed in the previous round. The guests are then encouraged to link to the ideas proposed by the host and share the discussions that were made in their previous tables. Since people are moving around in different tables the ideas of all the different groups start to link and connect to each other.
- In the third round the participants can be invited to go back to their previous table or to go in a new one and keep exploring the topics proposed.
- After all the previewed rounds of conversation have been made, initiate a period of discussion with the whole group, sharing ideas and insights of all the groups. In this context patterns can be identifies, collective knowledge can grow and possibilities of action can emerge



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Facilitator's Role

- **Clarify the context.** World café should focus on an issue that is important for the organization and for the participants. Clarify before the session what are the expectations and the requirements toward this exercise. The choice of the issues to be discussed is a very important step of the process and it's worth to dedicate some time to it.
- **Create hospitable space.** Tables should be distributed in a large room, with space between them. Try to create a real café atmosphere.
- **Explore questions that matter.** The questions that are discussed should be compelling and energizing, so that they can generate meaningful dialogue. Carefully choose them.
- **Connect diverse perspectives.** All the people should be encouraged to talk and to share what have been discussed in the previous rounds in the various tables, so that all the discussion will be connected between them. Invite the host to summarize, at the beginning of every new session, all the themes and ideas that have been discussed in their table.
- **Listen together and notice patterns.** Everyone should be encouraged to have an open attitude and listen to what was discussed by the others. After the session, display the drawings on the wall of the room, in an exhibition style, so that everyone can notice similarities and differences.

Possible Variations

This methodology, as many other presented in the site, does not have to be followed in a strict way. It can be adapted according to the goals of its use and what kind of results are to be obtained from it.

- One possible variation of the method makes it suitable to be used in particular contexts such as a reform process or the evaluation of an action plan. In this case each table should be associated with a step of a process, for example. There should be as many table as the total number of steps in the process. Every participant is supposed to move to each one of the tables, so that he/she can give a personal insight related to everyone of the step. The final result would be a complete feedback and revisions of the process, with modifications and new insights.
- In some case it can also be useful to collect the results of the Knowledge Café on some premade template. Instead of leaving the table cloth and no instruction on how to collect the information a structured template could be distributed. This would have the advantage to lead the discussion on the issues that are particularly important for the stakeholder and also to create some results ready to use.



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