



Action Planning

Duration: 3-5 hours

Group size: small groups of any size

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to develop a self-managed implementation plan. Participants are ready to join with others who share a common interest and make a public commitment to work toward team goals. Self-formed action teams will own projects of their choosing, develop a robust plan of action, and report their commitments to the full group before closing the workshop.

Outputs

- Self-organized action teams
- A list of projects that have been owned
- Action plans with short- and long-range goals and timetables for each project
- Individual commitments
- Communication plan

Preparation

- Prominently display the final Common Future themes and Potential Projects flip chart sheets.
- Pre-arrange the facilities for flexibility in accommodating an unknown number of small groups of various sizes.

Materials:

- √ Personal Action Planning worksheets
- √ Action Plan worksheets
- √ Pens
- √ Flip charts
- √ Colored markers

Guidelines

This activity consists of two rounds of planning. Allow from 1½ to 2½ hours per round depending on the needs and desires of participants in general. Once decided, all small groups should adhere to the same schedule so the workshop can conclude with a final full group session.

Round 1

- Encourage participants to self-organize into action teams by joining with others who desire to work on similar projects. They should announce their intentions aloud so all who are interested can join in.
- Start by providing each participant with a Personal Action Planning worksheet. Encourage them to take 10 minutes to fill it out. These are personal commitments to action – to be shared only if people wish. They fill a larger purpose of giving participants a few minutes to begin to think of specific actions that need to take place in order to achieve the objectives of the project.
- Then the action teams talk over their common future. They determine what they want to work on and with whom. Decide on a specific project or projects.
- Use a flip chart and/or the Action Plan worksheets to sketch out a rough action plan for each project, including short- and long-range goals and an approximate timetable.
- At this point, action teams report their plans and needs for help to the full group.

Round 2

- Going into Round 2, offer an opportunity for the action teams to reorganize any way they wish in the event participants wish to switch to another team.
- Return to the Action Plan and bring it to a new level of maturity. Revise or finalize the short- and long-range goals and the timetable.
- Ask people to “put a stake in the ground” – to make a public commitment regarding whatever they want to work on.
- Formulate a communication plan that involves both the team and reporting to the full group.
- Reassemble the full group and report the outcomes of each action team.
- In conclusion, ask participants to speak out what they are feeling/sensing right now.
- Workshop Sponsor or Lead Facilitator closes the workshop.

Adapted from Weisbord, Marvin and Janoff, Sandra (2000). *Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities*, Second Edition. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

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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