



Alternatives Assessment

Duration: 60 minutes

Group size: small groups of 5-8 people

Purpose

This activity provides a logical structure for analyzing options. It is a catalyst for robust discussion of strategic alternatives. Use it to review and appraise the variety of design ideas you have generated. It will also help participants begin to visualize what the future design could look like.

Outputs

- A structured appraisal of design alternatives for objective comparison

Preparation

- Prepare flip charts with the Alternatives Assessment worksheet structure and print individual worksheets for participants to make their own notes.
- Provide a list of design ideas to be evaluated or assign specific design ideas to small groups.
- Prepare a large sheet of white table paper like the Comparison Matrix.

Materials:

- ✓ Alternative Assessment worksheets
- ✓ Flip charts
- ✓ Colored markers
- ✓ List of design ideas
- ✓ Large sheet of white table paper

Guidelines

- Select and assign a realistic number of design ideas to each small group to assess in 30 – 45 minutes.
- Ensure everyone is clear on what they are to appraise. Allow opportunity for questions and answers before starting.
- Use a separate Alternatives Assessment worksheet for each design item to be appraised.
- Discuss each evaluation criteria, making notes as you go. Try to put at least two things in each category.
- Photograph each flip chart sheet for future reference.

- Reassemble the full group and report the work of small groups.
- As each small group reports, fill in the Comparison Matrix to create a tool for objective comparison of the design ideas.
- Circle or draw a bold box around the design idea(s) that appear strongest for each evaluation criteria.
- Lead the full group in a discussion of the design alternatives and capture comments on a flip chart.

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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