



UPDATE
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Serving individuals, communities, business, government, and organizations since 1992

Harvesting the Wisdom in the Room

Custom strategies and programs to support how we live, work and interact

Wisdom. Where does it come from? In simple terms, it comes from experience – how we process information, apply knowledge and reflect on learning.

Wisdom is banked in personal accounts based on how we interact, achieve or fail, and generally make our way through the day. We become experts on our own experiences which can both inform our own journey or be imparted to another.

The opportunity to “harvest the wisdom in the room” is an often overlooked human resource. When an organization taps into the wealth of knowledge held by its members, it has a competitive edge through the extraction of a broader understanding of issues and depth of problem-solving resources.

Key benefits include:

- ◆ Deepens insight into current perspectives.
- ◆ Builds stronger consensus for what people want.
- ◆ Inspires more ideas for how to achieve objectives.
- ◆ Enhances willingness and capacity to communicate.
- ◆ Increases personal investment and sense of belonging.

According to human resource expert Thomas Cunningham, by encouraging everyone’s mental orientation to shift from “leadership and staff” or “from teacher and students” to “fellow humans engaged in learning,” the pressure of needing to know everything there is to know is released and replaced with a curiosity about what each person present will bring to the discussion.

Lang & Associates has learned through years of providing training, mediating disputes, and facilitating large groups that harvesting wisdom does not come from simply asking, “What do you think?” One must ensure a conversation is based on neutral curiosity, encourages engagement, and values every experience and viewpoint.

The bounty from effectively harvesting “the wisdom in the room” makes the effort well-worth it.

Tips for Creating a Neutral Group Discussion Space

- **Invite willing participants:** Are they available to share and be open to other viewpoints?
- **Create discussion guidelines as a group:** What rules support sharing experiences and perspectives?
- **Develop a clear purpose:** Why are we having this conversation?
- **Consider designating a facilitator:** Do we need someone to keep us on track?
- **Note participant observations and thoughts:** What information, knowledge and wisdom was shared?
- **Explore next steps:** Are there any actions to take as a result of this discussion?
- **Welcome feedback:** What worked well and what might have been done differently?

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