

QUESTION GENERATION WORKSHOP

<https://beradicalgroup.com>

be radical.

be radical.

We recommend allotting about 90 minutes for the workshop and running it with Zoom breakouts and Google docs.

Step 0 (pre-workshop):

Identify a Question Theme or Focus

Before convening your group, identify a theme or focus that will help participants understand the scope of the workshop and focus their creative inquiry on an area relevant to current/future concerns and objectives. We've found it useful to frame the theme as a problem statement. E.g., "Our leaders are struggling to engage and motivate teams in a digital work environment."

Step 1:

Generate Questions

Split your group into subgroups of 4-6, small enough so that everyone will be able to easily contribute and be heard. Ask each subgroup to designate a notetaker who will record all questions in a shared/collaborative document. If there's a particularly dominant voice in a subgroup, consider volunteering that individual as the notetaker to keep them busy listening rather than doing all the talking. ;)

Send to breakouts and give the groups 12-15 minutes to generate questions related to the theme. They are simply to generate and record at this point. No discussion, no debate, no attempts to answer these compelling questions as they arise. Don't be afraid to allot a generous block of time here: The richest questions are often asked after all of the obvious, expected questions have already been voiced.

be radical.

Step 2:

Refine Questions

Allow nearly as much time for this step as the previous one (12-15 minutes) for the subgroups to revisit and refine questions to make them more interesting, more focused, deeper, or richer. Consider opening any closed questions (yes/no) and vice versa. Begin to notice which questions feel most compelling or most important.

This is where the genius of collaboration emerges. We often find that our own questions are improved by a colleague's tweak or slight reframe and that we might be able to similarly enrich questions that didn't originally occur to us.

Step 3:

Prioritize Questions

Give the subgroups 10 minutes to review their refined questions and identify their favorites. Ask each subgroup to select 2 or 3 top questions and to choose a spokesperson who will share with the larger group in the next round.

We like to prioritize the questions that we feel most excited to discuss or debate at this point. One facilitator we know instructs participants to choose a most compelling question ("Which are you most eager to explore?"), a most urgent question ("Which feels most important to explore immediately?"), and a most surprising question ("Which would have been least likely to cross your mind before today?").

be radical.

Step 4:

Share Questions

In the large group setting, it's finally time to share our richest questions (those that Warren Berger describes as beautiful—non-obvious, ambitious but actionable, perspective shifting, etc.). Allow each subgroup spokesperson a few moments to share aloud and to answer any requests from the larger group for clarification. Note reactions and any patterns that start to emerge among the collection of prioritized questions.

Step 5:

Explore Questions

Be sure to keep the full lists of compiled questions for later review, but close the workshop with a discussion of next steps around the shared questions. Note the patterns/themes that have emerged among favorites, and allow the group to comment on those questions that feel most compelling, rich, or essential. Which questions will we begin to explore? How might we start to address and answer these questions? Who will own experiments to facilitate learning?

A successful workshop should generate a shortlist of rich, actionable questions that your group feels excited to explore, a longer list questions that may be less immediately useful but might still help leadership better understand the organization's known unknowns vs. unknown unknowns, and a collective taste for the role that questioning can play in building a practice of more creative innovation.