

Tired of the same old strategic planning meeting?
Try a World Caf_ format
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Annual strategic planning meetings can become a bit tired using the same, traditional planning format. To introduce innovative thinking around group discovery and processing, try a World Caf_ format.

How the World Caf_ Works

World Caf_ is based on a simple but powerful concept that creating the right conversation is the key to confronting challenges and discovering solutions and opportunities. Through a series of exercises focusing on powerful questions and group collaboration, participants explore future scenarios for their profession or industry as well as possible positioning of the association to deal with these scenarios. The process is highly interactive and creative resulting in an energized and enthused participant base. Furthermore, the process lays the foundation for ongoing dialogue based on continuing refinement and enrichment of key issues and observations discovered in the process.

A trained facilitator is a requirement if you want to get the most out of the meeting. He/she will be responsible for:

- Clarifying the purpose and intent of the meeting and ensuring that the meeting stays on track.
- Creating a hospitable space where everyone feels welcome and "safe" to bring up different points of view and experiences.
- Providing powerful questions that encourage deep thinking and group collaboration.
- Moving from table to table helping participants to be creative and encouraging their participation.
- Helping to connect diverse perspectives.
- Sharing insights and discoveries with the entire room.
- Summarizing the results of the meeting in a written report.

In keeping with the World Caf_ model, the room should be set with round tables of 5-6 people at each table. Tables should have red checkered table clothes with several flip chart sheets and water-based markers on each table. The session icebreaker will involve each table creating a collage of their vision for the future of the organization. Each table will share their vision with the larger group and completed collages will be placed on the walls around the room.

Identical sets of discussion questions are at each table. Each table will have a Caf_ Host responsible for stimulating discussion and encouraging participation around the discussion questions.

Why the World Caf_ Works

- It's flexible—small intimate breakouts or whole room conversations.
- It's non- threatening.
- Inclusive rather than exclusive.
- Encourages collaborative conversation.
- Induces action and brainstorming.
- Clarifies options and alternatives.
- Assesses Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) in a thorough and engaging way.
- Creates a hospitable and creative space.
- Connects diverse perspective.

My experience using the World Caf_ model has been phenomenal. It opens up the discussion in a fun and effective way. For more information, email Dan: dan@leadershipoutfitters.com For more information about the World Caf_, visit the World Caf_ Website at <http://www.theworldcafe.com>