Post It!

Description

Post It! is a simple technique for uncovering topics and issues that a group wants to discuss. It is a simpler version of Affinity Grouping, described later in this book. Post It! can be used at various event levels for:

- All the attendees at an event.
- Breakout groups discussing a specialty set of topics.
- A single conference session.

If you're a conference presenter with an audience of less than 50 people, you can use Post It! to rapidly discover audience interests and help decide what those present would like to hear about.

Alternatively, Post It! provides an effective and efficient way for a group to learn and reflect on its members' interests. If you need to process in more detail the topics uncovered, consider using the Affinity Grouping technique.

When?

Run Post It! at the opening of an event, breakout group, or a single session.

Resources

It is surely no surprise that you'll need one or more sticky notes (e.g., Post-it® brand) for each participant. If you're using Post It! for a presenter tool at a single session, supply a single 2″ × 3″ note to each

attendee. For a group display of topics, supply one to four 6″ × 8″ (preferred size) notes, or 3″ × 5″ notes if posting space is limited.

Have sufficient pens available.

Finally, you'll need clear, accessible wall or noticeboard space for posting. Walls should be smooth and clean, as sticky notes don't adhere well to rough or dirty surfaces. Test any wall you're planning to use beforehand as some surfaces will not hold sticky notes reliably, in which case you'll need to tape up some large sheets of paper to hold the notes. If you're using Post It! as a presenter tool, the posting area should be close to where you are standing in the room so you can easily refer to it.

How?

How a presenter can use Post It! to shape the content of a session

Before the session begins, give each participant a single sticky note and a pen. Ask the audience to write down the one topic they would like explored or question they would like answered during the session. Give everyone a couple of minutes to write their response and collect the notes as they are completed. As you collect the notes, browse their contents and mentally categorize them into broad themes. For example, some attendees ask specific questions, some may want an overview of your topic, and some may want you to cover one particular aspect. Once all the notes have been collected, briefly read each note out loud and add it to a cluster of similar notes on the wall next to you. You may find a note that is unique and needs to be placed by itself.

Once all the notes have been stuck on the wall, it should be clear to both you and your audience what the group is interested in. Don't feel obliged to cover everything mentioned. Instead, use the notes to make a plan of how you will spend your time with the group. Describe your plan briefly, and apologize for topics that you're not able to cover in the time available. Even if you don't cover everything requested, your audience will have the information to understand why you made the choices you did. If you're going to be available after the session is over, you can invite attendees to meet with you to talk more.

As you continue with your audience-customized session, you can refer to the note clusters to confirm that you're covering your plan.

Using Post It! to make public the interests and questions of a group

Before the session begins, decide on the number of sticky notes to give participants. This is determined by the size of the group and the time available for any resulting sessions. See Table 35.1 for recommended number of notes by group size.

TABLE 35.1 • *Suggested number of notes provided to each person for group Post It! exercise*

SIZE OF GROUP	SUGGESTED NUMBER OF NOTES FOR EACH PARTICIPANT
20–30	2–4
30–50	2–3
50–100	1–2
100+	1

Hand out the sticky notes and a pen to attendees. Ask them to write down one or more topics they would like explored or questions they would like answered during the session, one per note. Tell them they do not need to use all their notes. Indicate the wall area where notes can be posted, and ask them, once they have finished, to post their notes on the wall. Give participants a few minutes to write their responses. As the notes are posted it is natural for people to hang around the wall and read what others have written. Let them do this, but ask people to allow late posters to get to the wall.

Once all the notes have been posted, provide some time for everyone to take in the topics and questions. This group sharing can then be used as a starting point for Open Space, fishbowls, Plus/Delta, and so on.

Excerpted by permission from "The Power of Participation: Creating Conferences That Deliver Learning, Connection, Engagement, and Action" by Adrian Segar

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