

Participatory Intelligence: An “In Process” Survey

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Not everyone is ready to engage with others in participatory planning. Not all situations are right for participatory planning. I believe it is better to NOT do participatory planning if leadership is not ready to use the outcomes generated by a participatory process

One of my worst experiences as a facilitator was facilitating a three-day team planning session for a secret test site. The runways were being paved and the site had to close down. It was a 24/7 operation and some of the leadership team had never met each other. The site director decided he would bring his leadership team together for the three-days and asked me to facilitate.

We worked hard for those three-days. The participants identified six improvement areas they wanted to work on as cross-functional teams.

At the end of the three-days, as we were getting ready to move to next steps, the site director said “we don’t have any budget for the teams to take time to work together.” Even though our quality assurance director assured him that budget was available, he insisted that only he and his assistant director would be able to do the work. The whole group was furious that they had gone through a senseless activity. It was worse than if we had never done participatory planning.

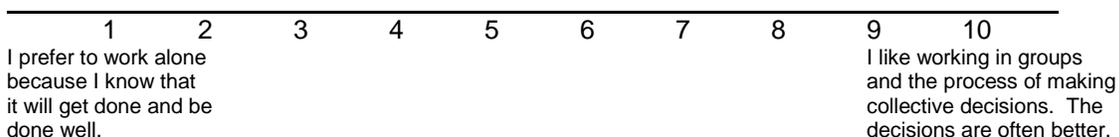
I’m certain that you too can think of times and situations when you have been asked to participate in a planning or decision making activity only to find that nothing you or your group said had any or little influence on what happened. Isn’t that just one of the most frustrating experiences we can have? The feelings we have when this happens range from anger to inadequacy to being used as well as having a sense that your and others time was wasted.

Based on my experience of working with many different types and levels of clients, I decided to create a *Participatory Intelligence* survey to help leaders see if they really were truly interested in my participatory planning process. This survey is just a small work in progress and by no means is it scientifically reliable or valid. It is just *Jane tested*, based on my own experience with what I have heard clients say and express and experience. It is meant to prompt reflection and perhaps a bit of searching for those considering a participatory planning process.

So, go ahead and check out the survey, rate your own *Participatory Intelligence*. Are you really ready to engage others in planning for the creation of your joint future? (A real test is to have one of your staff or colleagues complete this for you.)

Please **circle the number** that best describes where you fit on the scale. There are no “right” answers and different circumstances warrant different approaches to involving others in planning.

1.



2.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Normally I don't involve others in questions that need answering. I think the problem through and find the answer myself.				I tend to ask a few people for input.			I think best in groups and like to get everyone involved who has input to the question or is affected by it's answer.		

3.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
My mind works well when I can lay everything out in a straight forward sequence.							I find that my mind really gets working when I hear the ideas of others - random associations often lead me to great results.		

4.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I get uncomfortable when there is tension in meetings. I don't conflict and I don't like confronting or disagreeing with others.							Differences of opinion help us make better like decisions. I like the interaction.		

5.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
People should know what is needed - why take time to review the obvious facts.							Data review provides a common frame of reference to help us make better decisions.		

6.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I hate meetings. It's like designing a camel with a committee.							I like meetings. I enjoy the interactions and creativity that occur.		

7.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Most decisions made in meetings end up being compromises rather than the best solution/answer.							The best decisions are made in meetings because everyone had a say and will carry out the decisions.		

8.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I really like to have the right answer.							I really like to have an answer that people will agree to and act on.		

9.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I go nuts when we don't think situations through carefully. Why move ahead if we don't have it all together.								I'm comfortable with some ambiguity and working through issues that come up as we go along.	

10.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
When I move forward, everything is in place, the plan is perfect or close to it.								I believe that if you start with a few actions that can get the ball rolling, a lot of other things fall in place.	

Take a moment to review your answers. Average the numbers you circled. Circle the number here that reflects your average.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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If you have a low average (1 - 4), you may find using participatory methods uncomfortable. If you score in the middle (5 - 7), you probably find ways to include others in your problem solving and planning. You may ask for input or share your ideas before reaching conclusions. If you score high (8 to 10), you are probably already using participatory planning in your leadership role and feel comfortable with it.

Wherever you score on the scale, you can learn how to engage others in effective participatory planning. The Institute of Cultural Affairs, Technology of Participation methods provide a structured process to do so. Anyone can learn the methods and not only improve how effective they are when engaging others in planning and decision making, but even grow to like the experience.

You may want to read an article on the *Importance of Implementation* which looks at some other aspects of the role of participation in effective planning and decision making. You can find it in the Center for Strategic Facilitation website Resources tab – strategicfacilitation.com.

You may also want to consider taking one of the courses that we offer to build your and your team's capacity to work together productively. See our schedule for course information.

I'd also value hearing your comments about the survey and suggestions for improving it. Let me know what you think of the survey!

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