

Meeting Conversations That Accelerate
Decisions and Action

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DESIGNED DIALOGUE

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GoWall's Designed Dialogue™
Template 1: Brainstorming
Template 2: Training
Template 3: Planning Sessions

USING DESIGNED DIALOGUE METHODOLOGY

Create focused conversations that engage participants, deliver actionable outcomes, and shorten meeting times.

People complain about meetings taking too much time, while delivering sub-par results. In fact, the opposite is true. Meetings don't waste time, people do. Companies spend billions in labor costs each year for time spent in meetings. We all know that meetings are the lifeblood of companies – you have to meet to compete. But how many hours have we collectively wasted in meandering meetings with lackluster participation?

Running and facilitating successful and productive meetings (large and small) has been the focus of my life's work. I know how difficult it is, particularly if you aren't a professional meeting facilitator. I understand the pain for meeting hosts (and their participants) when things go off track. That's why we have developed tools to make it easier for you, and more engaging for your participants. These tools work whether your participants are in the same room or across the globe, whether it's a brainstorming session or a training event, a breakout session or a town hall meeting.

Meetings are all about conversations. Good conversations with the right outcomes need to be structured and designed. That's why I've created something called Designed Dialogue™. It enhances your ability to drive the right conversation and achieve your objectives. You determine how to move the conversation forward and invite true, directed collaboration. By designing the dialogue for your meeting, you will see instant results and increased engagement.

On the subsequent pages, you'll find templates for various meeting types. These tools articulate the conversations and provide questions that will help you get the results you need, while keeping your participants engaged and contributing.

Whether you use GoWall for your meetings yet or not, we hope the following templates will help you get the most out of every meeting conversation.



Bill Kern
CEO of GoWall

DESIGNED DIALOGUE FOR BRAINSTORMING

The Situation

You have a large team coming together for a brainstorm. They are a cross functional group, at many different levels in the organization. Many haven't worked together before. You need to generate ideas and actions. Some of the team are less inclined to share their thoughts. Look to equalize all the participants in the meeting, creating a transparent, safe place to express individual thoughts and invite feedback from others.

Objective

To generate new ways to improve customer satisfaction (improve service delivery, enhance the customer experience, or whatever brainstorming topic you choose).

Participant Experience

To be as creative and engaged as possible, while making sure that the ideas generated are realistic and can be implemented.

Top Tips

In brainstorming sessions, people tend to defer to the most important person in the room, agreeing that their ideas are the most valid. It is important as the meeting owner to encourage participation from everyone. Make everyone feel equal. Make participants leave their job titles at the door.

You know that the participants are hungry to be heard, but you fear that the meeting could spiral into endless discussions that would not necessarily lead to the results that you are trying to achieve. Stay alert and keep to your agenda. Be clear on the duration and objectives of each section of your agenda.

Design the Dialogue

Start

Brainstorming can either be structured and somewhat bounded, or it can be without any structure or boundaries. We at GoWall, believe that you get better results by structuring your brainstorming. Everyone should be exploring at the same time from the same vantage point.

Drive the Conversation with Facts

This part of the conversation allows participants to think about the facts that they need to identify new ways of improving the topic of the brainstorm. Because they come from different functions in the organization, their starting point and need for additional information will be different. Gathering those ideas helps build the plan for discussion. For example, they might want to know how customer satisfaction is measured, if the numbers are the same across the product lines or different, how the functions compare to each other, how has the trend been over the last 5 years.

Obstacles

This conversation looks at obstacles to improve the the topic at hand. For example, you might ask participants to identify the biggest obstacles to achieving customer satisfaction. Do they have suggestions for how to make improvements? If so, are there barriers to implementing them? It could be processes that prevent them from executing properly, roles, or the organizational structure.

Opportunities

This part of the conversation is focussed on gathering suggestions from the participants to improve the the topic at hand. You might want to ask questions like: what are the best ways to improve customer satisfaction? What is one thing we can do now to improve customer satisfaction? Could we set different expectations with our customers?

Making it happen

You will want to clearly articulate the next steps. Show how their brainstormed ideas will be evaluated, and how a plan of action will be developed. For example, you might ask: Who would like to work on the next phase of evaluating and prioritizing the ideas? Do they see one idea that could quickly be implemented and make a big impact?

Closing

Commit to sending out meeting notes as soon as possible (same day is preferable). Ask for feedback on the meeting and go over next steps. Remember to acknowledge everyone for their participation and contributions.

DESIGNED DIALOGUE FOR TRAINING

The Situation

You need to test a training offering that you have developed to train the organization on a new process. You have one hour to do this with 10 people.

Objective

Get as much feedback as possible on the slides, the flow, the exercises, and the relevance of the material.

Participant Experience

You want the participants to provide valuable feedback, feel engaged and encouraged by what you are trying to teach them.

Top Tips

- You always want to develop your training material. Use the feedback provided to evaluate what needs improvement.
- Hearing from diverse groups of people will increase the quality of your training offering.
- Always plan to speak for less time than you anticipate, so you can leave room in your program for stories, conversations and unexpected questions.
- Meet your participants before the meeting, especially if you haven't met them before. That way, you'll be presenting to familiar faces.
- Make sure that you've created and timed all your material in advance.
- Consider how your room is set up: Theater style? Classroom style? Boardroom style? The room set-up can make all the difference in terms of how your participants interact.
- Use questions regularly to keep people focused and to check their understanding.

Design the Dialogue

Start

Arrive early so you can welcome everyone individually. When you are introducing yourself and the subject, get excited about it! Try to ignite something in the participants to keep them interested and engaged throughout the session.

Focus the Conversation with Facts

The types of questions you will ask them here will be fact-based. For example: Is this topic relevant for the target audience? Are the checklists correct? Is the flow of the process understandable? Are the examples relevant? Are the exercises reinforcing the learning?

Obstacles

The types of questions you ask here are their perceived obstacles to the success of the program. For example: How are they reacting to the training? What part isn't clear or doesn't resonate? What's too long or too short? What example is unnecessary? What would prevent people from finishing this training?

Opportunities

The types of questions you ask are intended to build on your training. For example, you will ask questions like: What other material should be covered? Is there a way to make the training even better? How do we build it for easy updates? Is there anything else that should be leveraged?

Making it happen

Focus on how to improve your training based on the feedback as quickly as possible. For example: What feedback and suggested improvements can be made to steps in the process? Is there agreement to the changes suggested? Which group should be trained first? Is there a commitment to team training?

Closing

This can often be the most important, because participants will often remember what you said last. Make sure you thank them for their valuable feedback, and tell them about the next steps.

DESIGNED DIALOGUE FOR PLANNING SESSIONS

The Situation

You had a brainstorming session with cross-functional teams from across the company to investigate opportunities for improving customer satisfaction (or any topic of your choice). During that meeting, dozens of ideas were generated. You now want to evaluate the ideas, prioritize them and develop a plan.

You are overwhelmed by the interest that everyone expressed to continue with the process. You want to be as inclusive as possible, yet you want to end up with a very concrete plan that will have an immediate impact. You were trying to reduce the team to 10 people but 40 out of the 50 have indicated they wanted to continue working on the project.

Objective

Deliver a plan to implement the top 3, most beneficial ideas as rapidly as possible.

Participant Experience

A sense of satisfaction that they have engaged with each other and have identified key solutions to support the business.

Top Tips

- Aim to be disciplined and organized.
- Don't let new people join this effort. They will slow the team down.
- Try to identify the priorities before the meeting, as well as the process by which decisions will be made. There are many ways to prioritize ideas, value-to-effort ratio tends to work well.

Design the Dialogue

Start

Go over the ideas that were generated in the previous meeting and remind people of what you are trying to do. It's a good idea to organize the ideas into themes. Review the obstacles and opportunities that were identified in the previous meeting to make sure everyone's on the same page. Explain the prioritization process and approach to the plan.

Drive the Conversation with Facts

For each of the ideas generated, ask participants to evaluate the expected level of effort vs. impact. The result of this effort will be a priority list. Then identify actions that need to be taken to implement these prioritized ideas.

Obstacles

This part of the meeting addresses risks to implementing the plan. For example you might look at the biggest challenges, associated costs, number of people who need to be involved, and organizational risks to speedy implementation.

Opportunities

To develop the plan for implementing the top ideas, break the group into smaller groups to focus on specific priorities. Each group should use the previously generated notes about obstacles and opportunities in order to come up with a sound plan for their idea.

Making it happen

Clearly articulate the next steps and how the plans will be managed, evaluated and reported to management. You might consider who else should be aware of this effort and how to best communicate it to the broader organization. Enroll people who will take a leadership role and are committed to the success of the project.

Closing

Ask for feedback on the meeting, go over next steps and commit to sending the meeting notes to everyone within a reasonable timeframe. Assign leadership roles for the plans and set goals and actions. Thank everyone for their participation, contributions and feedback.

MORE BEST PRACTICES...USING GoWall

Make breakout sessions more effective

Facilitators commonly divide larger groups into breakout sessions so that smaller, more manageable teams of 5-10 attendees can address specific challenges and make recommendations. Leaders from each breakout group then present their conclusions to the larger group for comment and revision. We've turned this paradigm on its head with this Best Practice:

- Before forming breakout groups, survey the larger group first on each challenge using GoWall's notes-based technology to tap the collective intelligence.
- Then breakout into groups. Smaller groups can reference the notes collected so that they have the benefit of all points of view first before they begin problem solving.
- The results of the breakout sessions will be much more on point and focused by having the benefit of diverse thinking and perspectives. Smaller groups start with a rich pool of intelligence vs working in isolation and starting from scratch.

Jumpstart Flagging Projects

The national account manager of a Fortune 100 used GoWall to structure a series of 90-minute innovation forums with an elite group of globally distributed technical executives. The group met every six weeks over a six-month period. Here's how the meetings worked:

Presentation: The account manager presented a problem or goal for technical consideration.

Brainstorm: Executives used GoWall to capture their feedback in response to the articulated challenges.

Focused Discussion: The account manager reviewed the feedback in real time and prioritized the topics for discussion in the meeting time remaining. This minimized off-topic conversations.

Real Time Feedback: The account manager was able to easily gather extensive feedback in a very brief period. He was also able to distribute meeting notes immediately using GoWall's one-click export-to-Excel feature. As a result, he improved customer satisfaction and increased revenue from his account.

Measure Team Morale and Get Complete Honesty With GoWall

We all agree that team morale is critical to project success and employee retention. But when was the last time you measured your team's morale? GoWall makes it easy.

Give everyone a voice using GoWall's Anonymous feature. It's ideal when you need to ask your group awkward or contentious questions and want candid answers. You might not know who provided the answer but you can be sure it's honest.

Get More From Your Agile Retrospectives

GoWall provides a simple structure for collecting team input and accelerating process improvements. For example: what worked well, what didn't work well, what actions can be taken to improve processes going forward. GoWall creates an environment of transparency and trust so the team can feel free to add comments and thoughts. With GoWall, it's easy to have ongoing agile retrospectives, one of the most important ways to foster continuous improvement.

ABOUT GoWall

GoWall is an exciting new meeting optimization tool that helps you design and lead focused meeting conversations for accelerating decisions and actions. The intuitive notes-based interface gets everyone participating immediately, helps generate ideas faster, and promotes much higher quality outcomes. GoWall also includes a feature that lets you seamlessly capture and export meeting notes at the touch of a button. No more collating hand-written post-its or flip charts! And GoWall can be used for either remote or in-person meetings – or a combination of both. To learn more about how GoWall can transform your meetings into focused, actionable conversations, please contact visit us at: www.gowall.com

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