

Tool 59: Closing circle

Aim of the tool

This tool helps to wrap up a meeting in a positive way, enhancing participants' commitment to the MSP.

When to use it?

The commitment stage.

What is a Closing circle?

It is as important to carefully plan the closing of a meeting – a workshop, a conference, or whatever kind of gathering – as it is to plan the opening of the working agenda and move forward. And as everything else in a process, every closing should be fit for particular context.

Among the many *purposes* that a closing segment may serve, we can consider the following: Feedback

Instead of a dry evaluation exercise, end the meeting by allowing all participants to briefly share their thoughts or feelings. Arrange a circle of chairs without tables to prepare for a “closing circle”.

Think carefully about what you invite people to share, or which question you ask them to address. For example, you can ask them to share, in one sentence, how they feel right now, when the meeting is being closed, or what the participants will take home from the meeting. Or, if time is short, ask the participants to share in one or two words only. You can also ask the participants to share what surprised them about the meeting, or which expectations were not only met but exceeded. Or you ask them for one highlight, in one word, that they will remember for a long time.

Inviting and sharing feedback like this is more memorable than a summary from the facilitator or chairperson. It helps to foster group bonding and create ownership of what has taken place and the results from the meeting.

A small object can also be used as a “talking stick” to pass around the circle from speaker to speaker. It is nice to use something that feels good to the touch, and is light and small enough to hand around easily, for example an orange, or a piece of wood.

The circle can be concluded with everybody speaking, or you can allow participants to pass the talking stick on to the next person without speaking if they prefer.

You can also put a small table, or a piece of cloth on the floor in the middle of the circle, and place the talking stick object there. In that case, those who want to share something will get up, pick up the object, sit back down or remain standing, share their thoughts and put the object back down, for the next person to come into the middle.

Evaluation

It is important to obtain feedback in a more formal and comprehensive manner, through evaluation of meeting contents, formats, organisational and logistical matters, presentations and materials, and find out if and how expectations of participants were met. More details can be found in Tool 60: Evaluation.

Next steps

Participants should be able to leave the meeting knowing what to expect next. Will there be a meeting report? When? In which form? Will there be a draft to comment on? Will presentations given at the meeting be made available to everyone? When and where will there be another meeting? If that is not known yet, when will it be known? And how will be it communicated afterwards?

Thank you

Don't forget to thank everyone who has contributed to making the meeting happen, and making it a success. Consider carefully who should give the Thank You's at the end: organizers, conveners, facilitators? There might be issues of status and tradition to be considered.

Sometimes, we can ask people to step forward, or stand up, when being thanked, so they receive applause. If you ask them to remain standing, and include in the Thank You's each and every one, including participants, then you end up with a room full of people standing and applauding each other. It is a fun way of celebrating a gathering.

Source

This tool description was provided by Minu Hemmati.