

Working with Groups:

Data Dump

Need to quickly find out what a group knows about a particular topic? Data dump functions as a quick survey that, with continued effort, can help identify fact from opinion on a particular subject.

1. Identify the main categories of information the group wants to know. For example, if the subject was the impact of a large employer moving into the community, initial categories or questions might include the following:
 - economic benefits,
 - community costs,
 - job quantity and quality, or
 - housing and household needs.
2. Write the name of each category at the top of a blank sheet of flip chart paper. Hang the labeled sheets side by side on a wall with the group facing them. If the topic or the group is large, enlist some people to help record.
3. Ask the group to brainstorm about each category. Encourage people to reduce their comments to key words and phrases. Add extra sheets of paper as needed.
4. When the group has completed a data dump on each category, go back through the lists and circle any words or phrases that people want clarified. When all words or phrases are identified, go through them individually and ask for further explanation.
5. Now is the time to identify any further information the group needs: categories with little or no information shared, items that were doubted

or hotly debated, and categories that were missing that the group now wants to investigate. Develop a new list for these topics.

6. Decide as a group on how to get the information that is still needed.

Variation: F & O

Post the blank category sheets around the room and have individuals write down on the paper what they know about each topic. When the group is finished, review the lists for words or phrases that need more explanation and have participants clarify.

Once this has been completed, ask participants to take five to 10 minutes and mark on the paper if their statements are fact {F} or opinion (O).

Fact: The person can produce objective data to prove an assertion (price lists, item counts, technical specifications).

Opinion: No objective data can be shared within a reasonable cost and time frame to support the assertion.

As a facilitator you need to encourage the group not to jump to conclusions and favor fact over opinion. Simply ask participants to label them so people know which is which. Share with the group that not all important information is objective and not all facts are valuable. An informed opinion is valuable.

References: University of Minnesota *Facilitation Resources* (2001). Making group decisions. In partnership with Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. (5) 23.

Kearny, L. (1995). *The facilitator's toolkit: Tools and techniques for generating ideas and making decisions in groups*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press.

Source: *Working with Groups: Generating Ideas, Making Decisions, and Enhancing Communication*, by Phyllis I. Schoenholz and Cheryl A. Burkhart-Kriesel, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, EC478, 2008, The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture. Adapted with permission.