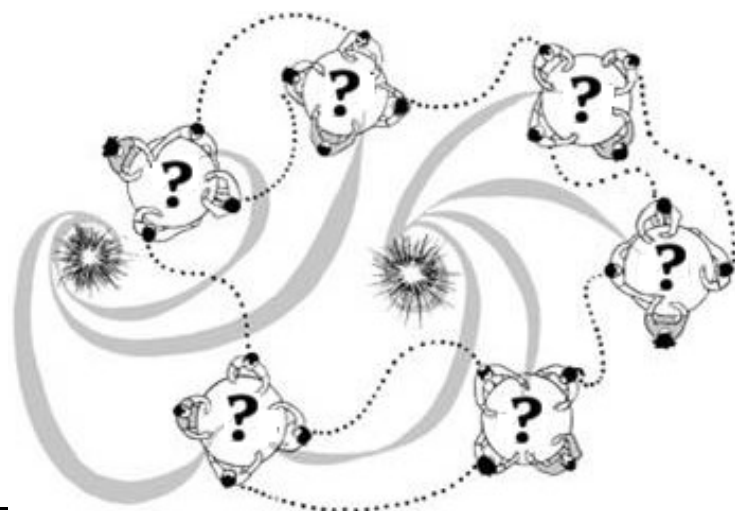


Method	How to run an Evaluation Café
Brief Description	The Evaluation Café is a method for group facilitation that allows stakeholders of a project or programme to evaluate its impact in an informal brief session.
Purpose	The purpose of the Evaluation Café is to build and document stakeholders' views on success and impacts after a planned activity. The aim of the workshop is to clarify future expectations of strategic planning in the light of past experiences.
Main Users	Main users are evaluators, project managers, development agencies, non-governmental organisations, consultants, service providers, government personnel.
Context	<p>Evaluation consists in judging the results of public actions in order to check their conformity with set objectives. Evaluation aims to improve management, in particular by taking into account the lessons of past public actions and to reinforce capacity to account for, and to ensure, better transparency.</p> <p>Evaluation Café is a fast result-driven qualitative survey, seen as a participative way of focus group interview. The group comprises individuals involved in a development policy or intervention. It is set up to get information concerning the people's opinions, behaviours, or to explain their expectations from the policy or intervention.</p> <p>The café group is useful in evaluations of projects or programmes, and particularly for field studies with beneficiaries and intermediary stakeholders. When a café group is organised after the implementation of a programme with a view to assess its impact, it helps understanding, analysing and identifying the reasons beneath the opinions expressed by the participants.</p> <p>The café group is a mean to collect information and points of view quickly. When it involves stakeholders with different points of views, it eases the expression and explanation of the discrepancies within those points of view, as well as enabling an in-depth study of the stakeholders' opinions.</p>
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to quickly produce high quality and up-to-date qualitative data. • Important tool for acquiring feedback regarding project impacts • Group interaction fosters the participants' explanation, specification and justification of their testimonies. • It enlarges the reference sample. • It is useful with groups of beneficiaries and especially for impact analysis • Most participants like working in small groups, brainstorming and sharing ideas. • Relaxed informal atmosphere encourages openness and credibility. • Promotes a flat hierarchy, as working together and all participants taking responsibility is encouraged. • Simple to utilize, as it builds on social competencies. • Allows for collective and organizational learning • Focus is on common ground rather than on differences. • It has limited implementation costs. • Venue can be a restaurant/café, an office or apartment building. • It is time-saving. • Suitable for many further purposes, can be adapted to a wide range of issues.



Limitations

- The evaluator has less control over a group than in an one-on-one interview.
- The data are tough to analyze, because they result as a reaction to the comments of other group members.
- The collected information is only qualitative.
- Public expression could be limited by political and social weights, or impaired by the participant's position within the group.
- The number of beneficiaries in the groups is not large enough to be a representative sample of the target group.
- The project has to be relevant to the beneficiaries; otherwise stakeholders are not motivated to appear and to contribute.
- Conflict may be noted and acknowledged, but it is not specifically addressed as a part of the workshop.
- Facilitators/ moderators need to be experienced.
- Groups can be tough to get together.
- Danger that the method is used as a one-off exercise since it is often difficult to institutionalize the practice.
- Oversimplification of objective.
- Time discipline can bother some participants.
- Time can be lost on issues irrelevant to the topic.

Principles

The method was adapted from the World Café Conversations. This is an intentional way to create a living network of conversation around questions that matter. A Café Conversation is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes.

The methodology is simple: The environment is set up like a café, with small separate tables, tablecloths covered by paper tablecloths, flowers, some colored pens and, if possible, candles, quiet music and refreshments. People sit four to a table and have a series of conversational rounds lasting from 20 to 30 minutes about one or more defined questions which are personally meaningful to them. At the end of each round, one person remains at each table as the host, while each of the other three travel to separate tables. Table hosts welcome newcomers to their tables and share the essence of that table's conversation so far. The newcomers relate any conversational threads which they are carrying -- and then the conversation continues, deepening as the round progresses. At the end of the second round, participants return to their original table -- or move on to other tables for one or more additional rounds -- depending on the design of the Café. In subsequent rounds they may explore a new question or go deeper into the original one. After three or more rounds, the whole group gathers to share and explore emerging themes, insights, and learnings, which are captured on flipcharts or other means for making the collective intelligence of the whole group visible to everyone so they can reflect on what is emerging in the room. At this point the Café may end or it may begin further rounds of conversational exploration and inquiry. The documentation of results is based on the participants own writings.

An Evaluation Café is most effective with between 15 and 50 participants. Thirty is an ideal number of people. If there are more than 50 participants it is usually necessary to employ microphones for the large group conversation, and this tends to inhibit the flow of the conversation. One to two hours are required for a worthwhile Evaluation Café. The only hard and fast rule is that the meeting is conducted in such a way that most of the time is spent in conversation. Presentations and feedback sessions have no place in Evaluation Cafés.

Café Questions

Questions are a central part of Café conversations. Form open questions according to the evaluation criteria:

Relevance - Example: To what extent are the objectives of the intervention consistent with beneficiaries' requirements and local needs?

Effectiveness- Example: To what extent have the objectives been achieved, or are expected to be achieved?

Impact- Example: What positive and negative long-term effects result from the interven-

tion, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended?

Efficiency - Example: Has the implementation form made it possible to obtain the maximum effects?

Sustainability - Example: To what extent has the aid contributed towards continued long-term benefits even after major development assistance has been completed?

Questions have to be open and relevant to the participants. Each table has one different question. Make sure to include sustainability and impact in any case, as these are the lead themes for the subsequent discussion.

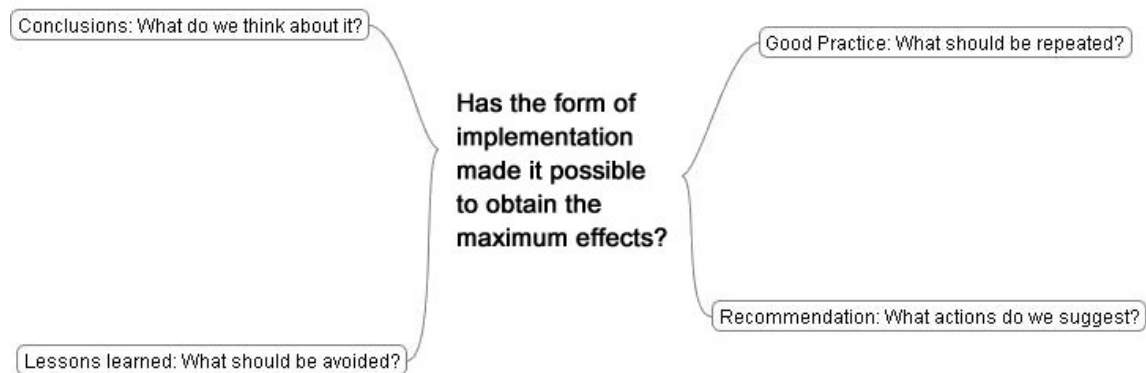
Alternative Questions

If you concentrate on just one evaluation criterion, e.g. impact, you can set a single Café Question and four sub-branches to lead the discussion:

- Good Practice: What should be repeated?
- Lessons learned: What should be avoided?
- Conclusions: What do we think about it?
- Recommendation: What actions do we suggest?

Participants draw their contribution around a Mind Map on the tablecloths. The facilitator should provide them with a template like this:

Mind Maps



Procedures Preparing for the Evaluation Café

1. Identify the major objective of the meeting.
2. Carefully develop four to five questions (see below).
3. Plan your session (see below).
4. Appoint a facilitator – someone who can encourage participation. Consider using co-facilitators.
5. Make personal contacts with potential participants. This is often done through a telephone call or personal visit. For those who agree to attend, send a personal letter that confirms their participation and communicates the relevant details of the event.
6. Make a reminder phone contact the day before the event.

Developing Questions

1. Develop four to five questions that can be answered in 20 minutes.
2. Always first ask yourself what problem or need will be addressed by the information gathered during the session.

Planning the Session

1. Scheduling - Plan meetings to be up to 1.5 hours long. Over lunch seems to be a very good time for participants to find time to attend.
 2. Setting and Refreshments - Hold sessions in a conference room, or other setting with adequate air flow and lighting. Configure chairs and small tables to enable all
-

members to see each other and talk over the table. Place two or more paper table cloths on all group tables (this also protects the table surface). Hand out different pens and markers. Bring an alarm clock (the one from the kitchen will do). Provide name tags for members, as well. Provide refreshments, especially box lunches if the session is held over lunch.

3. Café Rules - It's critical that all members participate as much as possible, yet the session move along while generating useful information. All statements given during the session must be kept confidential and sources are not revealed to outsiders.
4. Agenda - Consider the following agenda: welcome, introductions, review of agenda, review of goal of the meeting, review of Café rules, questions and answers, first 20 minutes session, second 20 minutes session, third 20 minute session, wrap up.
5. Membership - Evaluation Cafés are usually conducted with 10-20 members who have participated or hold some stake in the project, some or all of them should be beneficiaries/target group. Select members who are likely to be participative and reflective. Attempt to select members who don't know each other.
6. Plan to record the session with either as photo or video documentation. Don't count on your memory. If this isn't practical, involve a co-facilitator who is there to take notes. Save the original tablecloths and flipcharts.

Facilitating the Session

1. Major goal of facilitation is collecting useful information to meet goal of meeting.
2. Introduce yourself and the co-facilitator, if used.
3. Explain the means to record the session.
4. Carry out the agenda - (See "agenda" above).
5. Explain the Café process. Emphasize that groups change three times after 20 minutes sessions. Set the timer alarm to 20 minutes. Consider that after 20 minutes you might interrupt the groups in their most productive moment.
6. Carefully word each question before that question is addressed by the groups.
7. Introduce one or two key open-ended questions. For example, if the topic is evaluation, the question for the group might be: "What are the barriers to maximum impact of the project, and how do you overcome them?"
8. Ensure even participation. If one or two people are dominating the meeting, then call on others. If the domination persists, note it to the group and ask for ideas about how the participation can be increased.
9. Allow the group a few extra minutes for each member to carefully record their answers.
10. Then, put the tablecloths on the walls and facilitate discussion around the answers to each question, one at a time. Start with Sustainability, then look at Impact and if time allows discuss Effectiveness and Efficiency.
11. Closing the session - Tell members that they will receive a copy of the report generated from their answers, thank them for their attendance, and adjourn the meeting.

Immediately After Session

1. Collect the material produced on tablecloths, flipchart, cards etc. Verify if the photos and videos, if used, worked throughout the session.
 2. Make any notes on your written notes, e.g., to clarify any scratching, ensure posters are numbered, fill out any notes that don't make senses, etc.
 3. Write down any observations made during the session. For example, where did the session occur and when, what was the nature of participation in the group? Were there any surprises during the session? Did the material last?
-

Participation Rules

Agree with participants on how to have a great conversation. The participation rules might include:

- Relevance: say what you consider most important
- Open-mindedness: listen to and respect all points of view
- Acceptance: suspend judgment as best you can
- Respect: know that everybody knows something and no one knows everything
- Curiosity: seek to understand rather than persuade
- Discovery: question old assumptions, look for new insights
- Sincerity: speak for yourself about what has personal meaning
- Brevity: go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on
- Collectiveness: refer on ideas of others and build on them
- Visualization: Write/paint/draw everything on the tablecloths
- Informality: eat, drink, laugh, sing, but don't smoke in the room

References

The Evaluation Café shares certain features with The World Café, a conversational process developed by the global World Café community of practice. See <http://www.theworldcafe.com>

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Autor

Karsten Weitzenegger, AGE G Consultants eG, December 2009

Keywords

Evaluation, development cooperation, focus groups, workshop facilitation, large group facilitation, knowledge sharing, organisational learning, World Café

Article type

Method documentation

Article URL

<http://www.weitzenegger.de/cafe/index.htm>

Example: Evaluation of a social dialogue and worker's rights project in Argentina, 2008



The large table is split, groups have 3 members.



Groups rotate after 20 minutes.



Everybody can write at the same time.



Discussion is equal and informal.



This odd-shaped room fits well for the Café.



Now everybody is involved and can see results.