Lucid Facilitator's Guide

GATHERING PRODUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Gather productive feedback and build alignment on a new proposal or plan using this simple meeting structure. After the presentation, you'll lead the discussion using three feedback questions asked in a specific order.

This process begins with individual reflection before sharing responses, beginning with feedback about what people like before going on to concerns. Then, the meeting closes with a final question to ensure clarity.

Best For

Introducing new proposals or plans that may be contentious

Groups seeking a way to get more considered and balanced feedback

Gathering feedback from those who don't otherwise speak up

Contents

INTRODUCTION

You can lead a simple process to gather feedback on a proposal, idea, or decision using the **“Three Reaction Questions” technique**. It begins with individual reflection on 3 questions before sharing responses to those questions, one at a time, beginning with a question about what people like before going on to concerns.

This process enables you to gather productive feedback without ending up in an awkward, possibly contentious back-and-forth. It also **builds better alignment on the proposal** across the group since all get to see that their feedback is being treated respectfully...and all get to hear the feedback of others too.

Specifically, it **helps you avoid several challenges to a balanced discussion** when a proposal is presented. Those challenges include:

- Hearing first from those who “think on their feet” and react right away.
- Hearing first (or only) about the various concerns and not about what people like about the proposal.
- Hearing only from a few individuals who seem to dominate the discussion.

By reflecting on their reactions before speaking, participants can consider the range of their thoughts. Participants then hear more balanced feedback as they all listen to each other’s likes, as well as questions and concerns.

Once all the reactions have been shared, ask the group, “What are we learning about this proposal/decision?” This last question is intended to help everyone integrate all that s/he heard and arrive at overall conclusions.

Depending on your situation, you can explain any subsequent steps to work with the feedback and modify the proposal. You could also clarify how you wanted to work with the group on the decision, possibly moving to the decision now or later.

THE AGENDA

MEETING TITLE
Proposal Review and Feedback

MEETING GOAL
Review the proposal and collect feedback for the final version.

1. **Introduction**
2. **Presentation**
3. **Silent Reflection**
4. **Feedback**
   - What do you like about the proposal?
   - Where do you need more information?
   - Where do you have concerns?
5. **Closing and Next Steps**

   Closing question:

   What are we learning about this proposal?

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

Before the meeting

Prepare the proposal for review. You will be collecting feedback during the meeting; make sure you have an idea of how you will use this feedback to adjust the proposal and/or inform the final decision.

Decide if you want to share the proposal in advance.
Depending on the situation, you can share the proposal in advance... or not. If its a sensitive subject where you to present the proposal and gather feedback in a group, then I don't recommend sharing it in advance. For example: a proposed reorganization. When you share the proposal before the meeting, people will arrive at their own conclusions without hearing from others. Some people might begin to "lobby" for a particular view.

On the other hand, providing the proposal beforehand can shorten the meeting. Also, if the proposal includes complex (and less controversial) information, sharing it before the meeting will give people time to understand and consider. However, you still run the risk that some people will reach their own decision before the meeting.

Be sure to schedule your meeting and send invitations **at least 2 days in advance**, and turn reminders on.

HOW LONG WILL THIS TAKE?

Tips for adjusting the meeting duration for your group

During this meeting, participants will need to reflect on the review questions and give their comments. To figure out how long you should reserve for this meeting:

First consider the time for any presentation on your proposal or decision. This should be no more than 10 minutes.

Then plan the time for the feedback. If you have a smaller group of 7 or less (virtual or face-face), allow 5-6 minutes to gather replies from all to each question, or a total of 20 minutes including any time for the initial reflection. Your meeting will last for 35 minutes including all steps.

If you have a larger group meeting face-face, then allow time for small group sharing before reports back to the whole group.

Allow an additional 5 minutes for participants to turn to another person around the table and share their thoughts. When you are ready to hear the feedback, you ask each pair to summarize their replies to question 1, and then go around again for the remaining two questions. This means that the time for feedback should take about 1-2 minutes per pair of participants for each of the 3 questions. This means you will likely need 40 minutes for the whole session (or 45 minutes if you wish to be "safe.") *(See Option 2 under Step 4 below.)*

Most groups finish gathering feedback in

35-45 minutes

During the meeting

1 Introduction

Introduce the proposal or plan for consideration by the group. Refer to any pre-reading.

Explain that you will ask them to consider a set of questions after you outline your proposal.

As relevant, **explain how you intend to work with the feedback to arrive at a final decision**. For example, you might explain how the feedback will be worked into the plan, and what the process will be for making the final decision.

After this check-in, **click "Next >"** to move to the next item.

2 Presentation

Present the proposal or plan for review. Try to keep your presentation short—no more than 10 minutes is best.

Avoid opening up discussion during or immediately after your presentation, although you can address any questions of clarification. If the group seems on the verge of giving feedback or opening up a discussion, ask them to wait for now so that you can get all the feedback out first.

When you're ready, **click "Next >"** to start reflecting and gathering feedback.

3 Reflection

Give everyone a minute or two to reflect on the presentation and their own thoughts on the three questions.

Tip:
Don't make a big deal of this reflection – just do it.

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continued

The online meeting includes a timer automatically set for 2 minutes for this. You may need less time; feel free to adjust this for your group.

If some start to talk, ask them to hold their comments so all have a chance to organize their thoughts.

Ask people to reflect on their reactions to what was presented and then do the same yourself.

If you are meeting on-line, you'll see these questions in the agenda.

1) What do you like about the proposal?

2) Where do you need further information?

3) Where do you have concerns?

When you're ready to start hearing feedback, **click "Next"** to move to the next agenda item.

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Feedback: Hearing replies to questions

At this point you have two choices.

Option 1: For online meetings and/or small groups

Ask for responses from each person, one question at a time beginning with the first question. Make sure you **get all replies to the first question before proceeding to the second**.

The online agenda is set up to walk the group through each question, one at a time. After you have all the replies to question 1, **click "Next"** to move on to question 2 and then 3.

As you listen to replies, **check for duplicate replies**. If someone has the same comment as one already shared, just affirm that the feedback has been heard and don't waste the group's time listening to a repeated point.

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As the replies come in, **record/summarize the feedback to each question in the online notes**, or on a whiteboard if meeting face-to-face. Taking notes that everyone can see helps the group focus its attention and helps each individual see that their feedback has been heard.

Just listen and record for now, and avoid answering questions. Once you begin to reply, it becomes a back and forth and you lose the ability for everyone to hear all the feedback.

Option 2:
For groups of 8 or more in a face-face meeting

In larger groups, it is good to begin this step by asking everyone to first share their replies with one other person around the table, before you begin to gather their replies to the three questions.

Again, make sure to write all replies where the whole group can see them.

After writing down all feedback to the three questions, **click "Next >"** to move to the final item.

What's the difference between a "need for information" and a "concern"?

Often one person's concern is another's need for information. The difference is unimportant to the feedback. Even though the difference doesn't matter for the meeting result, always ask both questions. This helps people think about the proposal from several angles and leads to better feedback overall.

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Closing discussion and next steps

Once all the reactions have been shared, ask the group,

What are we learning about this proposal?

This last question is intended to help everyone integrate all that they heard and identify some overall conclusions.

Usually 3-5 replies to this question are enough. You are hoping to hear some comments that integrate all the feedback so far as opposed to beginning some search for an alternative or complete redesign.

Finally, **explain what you will do with the feedback received**.

Depending on the feedback received and your situation, you may choose to do one of the following:

- Modify the original proposal and come back to this group for a decision.
- Ask for the group's decision (consensus or consent) now.
- Or, affirm who the person responsible for the final decision is and how s/he will take the feedback and makes the final decision.

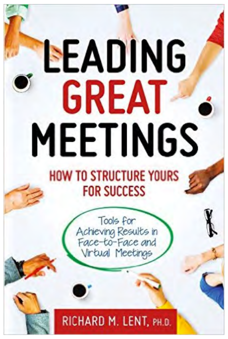
Be explicit in your description of next steps so your group understands how their input will be used and a decision made.

Then, thank your group and **click "End Meeting"**.
You're done!

After the meeting

Send out the follow-up email, which makes sure everyone gets a full report in their email, even if they couldn't attend the meeting.

RESOURCES FOR ACHIEVING MEETING MASTERY



The Book

This template is based upon the tools I call
Three Reaction Questions and **1-2-All**.
These are two of the 32 tools described in:
Leading Great Meetings: How to Structure Yours for Success

Other related tools include:

- Visible Note Taking,
- 5Cs of decision making (consensus, consent, compromise, counting votes and consulting to the leader),
- Consensus Guidelines, and
- PALPaR (Present, Ask, Listen, Pause and Reply)

On the Web

Meeting for Results Resources and Blog
http://www.meetingforresults.com/resources/

On the Lucid Meetings Blog

Getting Work Done in Meetings: Structures for Success
http://blog.lucidmeetings.com/blog/getting-work-done-in-meetings-structures-for-success

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This template was designed by Richard Lent, Ph.D.

Dr. Richard Lent has spent the last 25 years identifying structures for more effective meetings and coaching leaders in their use. He facilitates meetings around the world in business, non-profit organizations and communities. Some of the organizations with which he has worked include the World Food Programme, USAID, UNICEF, Logitech, the WK Kellogg Foundation, Johnson & Johnson, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. He has also worked with dozens of local civic, religious and nonprofit groups.

Rick delivers workshops and presentations on a structural approach to better meetings. In 2015, he published his second book, **Leading Great Meetings: How to Structure Yours for Success**. He wrote this book to help leaders to use the structure of their meetings much more effectively. It provides 12 choices and 32 tools to plan and conduct a wide range of meetings from team meetings to board meetings.

Rick received his Ph.D. from Syracuse University in Instructional Design, Development and Evaluation and continued his studies in organizational learning and development. He shares his perspective on meetings on his blog at www.meetingforresults.com.