

Nominal Group Technique

What is a Nominal Group Technique?

In 1968 this technique was developed as a 'participation technique for social planning' by Andre Delbecq and Andrew Van de Ven. It is now used for primary data collection, program planning, evaluation, and exploratory research.

NGT can be compared best to focus groups, the Delphi Method, and brainstorming. However, it is more structured because a five step process is followed resulting in a list of potential ideas and responses to the issues in question.

This method involves a facilitator and a small group of 9-12 individuals who work as a team to find the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a particular is-

sue. Unlike other methods where individuals can dominate the discussion or decisions, NGT encourages group involvement. After the question has been presented and clarified by the facilitator, individuals are given time to reflect on the question and write their ideas. When the individual presents their ideas, the facilitator's role is to make sure each idea is recorded as is. The process is unique because 'every individual's idea is given equal standing whether unique or not'. The final ideas are voted on and 'the final list of ideas becomes the focus of further research and discussion. These ideas can also be used to generate a work plan for a formal strategic planning process, a basis for a survey or interview, or the development of a scale.'

How is the Research Method Conducted?

1. The facilitator introduces the technique and presents the question(s) to the group.
2. Individuals are the asked to silently reflect on the question(s) and write their responses.
3. The facilitator asks for responses from each group member in a round robin fashion and records all answers in a form

that is visible to the entire group. This time is only for recording answers, not discussion.

4. Participants discuss the listed ideas for clarification of their meanings (not to change the idea or to add to them).

5. The participants select the top ideas through a voting process.

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Anonymous

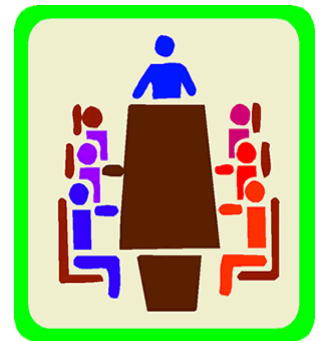
Individuals write their ideas on index cards and pass them forward, the facilitator then lists the ideas in front of the group.

Computer Conferencing

This can be done for the first steps. The question can be sent out via e-mail and ideas generated while the group is apart. This is ideal for alleviating unease that can accompany sitting around a table with a group and not talking.

When to Use It?

- When some group members are more vocal than others
- When some members think better when it is quiet
- When there is some concern about members not participating
- When some or all the group members are new to the team
- When the issues are controversial
- When the team is stuck in disagreement.



Useful for...

- Providing focused effort on topics of importance
- Identifying issues and opportunities
- Making collective decisions for use in parks and recreation planning and management
- Gaining insight into group issues and behaviors

'To identify trends and issues about leisure services, management and delivery systems.'

Effective tool for...

- Decision making
- Strategic planning
- Policy development
- Goal formulation
- Identifying strategic problems and developing appropriate and innovative programs to solve them
- Determining research items

Potential Uses in Recreation and Tourism

'NGT can be utilized by managers, staff, stakeholders, and outside resources to facilitate problem solving and identifying issues.'

This method is not used often enough in the industry. However it does provide an opportunity for tourism and recreation members to come together and 'generate ideas to help guide future management decisions and program development'.

An example of this is in the United States where a study was conducted based on the consensus that public land management agencies should involve their stakeholders in the planning and management of public natural areas. The NGT method was used in this study and it was found that the process allowed the stakeholders to have a direct voice in the planning process and alleviated frustration from both parties created by the previous lack

of participation. The study concluded by stating that the NGT is a good starting point for further research but more than that, it is also a good technique to use to compare results to other previously executed planning techniques or surveys.

Strengths



- Encourages equal participation and gives everyone a voice
- Encourages the integration of new members
- Generates higher quality ideas than brainstorming because of individual input
- Provides a more structured environment
- All ideas are visible to the group once presented
- Provides time to think about the question in silence before responding
- Group consensus is reached faster
- Gathers opinions of the group
- Generates and clarifies a large amount of ideas quickly
- Strong technique for preventing conformity to group pressure

- Forces everyone to have a voice
- Ideas are presented as is and can not be built upon (no creative thinking)
- Good ideas can be voted out because its potential can not be developed further
- Does not use the skills of those who are able to build on ideas
- Some individuals are not able to think well in silence
- Small groups limit participation and are pre-selected

Weaknesses



Example

A five-man shift quality group at a coal mine was trying to improve a slow transport system for moving coal from the face to the main belt. As two of the team were known to be particularly vocal, with another two being quiet but known thinkers, the foreman asked the site quality manager to facilitate a session that would help to identify a way to improve the system, but which would allow all shift members to contribute equally.

The quality manager started by meeting with the group to gain a common understanding of what they were trying to achieve. They agreed on a problem statement of, 'How can we find a simple way of having a low-vibration face transport system?' He then gave them seven cards each and asked them to put their seven best thoughts towards a solution, one on each card, and bring them to the next meeting.

At the following meeting, the quality manager had written the problem statement from the previous meeting on a blackboard. He started the session by checking that everyone agreed with the problem statement and had completed the seven cards. He then described the technique that they were going to use and answered a couple of questions. The group then agreed to go with the final vote that they made. He collected the cards, shuffled them, then read them out one at a time, checking that everyone understood what the statement on each card meant. Where necessary, he helped with rewording and wrote it on a flipchart, putting a capital letter against each one.

They then voted on the best ideas. No-one ever said whose ideas were used, but no-one minded either, as the whole team got the credit (Quality Tools, 2007).

A Guide to Research Tools

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The NGT method 'allows individuals, whose experience, expertise, or perceptions directly related to the problem at hand, to come together and have their feelings heard in a non-judgmental environment.'

Delbecq, A.L Van de Ven, A.H. & Gustafson, 1975



Resources

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