

The Question Box

A discussion activity for team-building and other topics

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Aim

To raise issues, challenges, and opportunities for teams reflecting on their dynamics and needs.

Group Size

Each box serves a team of 3-6 participants. Multiple boxes for multiple teams could be used simultaneously.

Resources

Blank and pre-written cue cards (see Appendix 1)

One large cue card

A large box with a lid

Writing materials and craft or design supplies as appropriate

What To Do

1. In advance of the session

Ask everyone to come prepared with an answer (and an illustrative picture, video or audio clip) to the following questions:

What is your favourite team from a book, tv show or movie? What makes it so good?

Prepare the prewritten cue cards with the following questions - one item to a card. Feel free to adapt or add your own questions. (Sample cards are available in Appendix 1 of this document).

- What's the best team you have ever been a part of (in or outside of a work context)? What made it so good?
- What's the worst team you have ever been a part of (in or outside of a work context)? What did you do about it?
- When do you prefer working alone?
- When do you prefer working with other people?
- What do leaders need from team members?
- What do you need from a team leader?
- What do you need from a teammate?
- What strengths do you as an individual bring to our team?
- What makes us a team, as opposed to five individuals working alongside each other?
- Apart from our team, which is the best team in our organisation? What makes them so good?
- What can our team offer our organisation, and its partners?
- What challenges do we face in working as a team?
- Describe our team in three words. What word would you like to change?

- What external factors affect our teamwork?

On the large cue card, include the prompt:

- What do we need to change about our team? How are going to do it?

Put all of the cue cards into the box and close the lid.

2. Introduction and Icebreaker

“Today we are here to explore our team and the way we work together. We’ll think about ways we’ve worked in the past and present, how we might want to work in the future, and how we relate to other teams and stakeholders too.”

Give each participant a blank cue card and writing materials, and invite them to write one question which they have about teamworking on the card. This could be a general question, or one specific to the organisation or the team.

Take the cards and ask the participants to share the favourite team they have chosen in advance.

While the participants are discussing their favourite teams from fiction, put the cue cards which they have written into the box and close the lid.

3. The Question Box

Distribute the craft materials and give the team the box.

“You are going to open the box and explore what is inside. You’ll need to come up with some kind of response to what you find inside, and here are some craft and writing materials to help you do that - you can also record a video on your phone, or come up with another approach, as long as your response ends up as some kind of documentation of your discussion which we can keep for the record. Other than that, it is your choice how you respond to the contents of the box.”

Allow the team to open the box and give them a fixed time to explore and respond - 30 minutes is suggested.

If the facilitator is taking part in the discussion, join in but allow your colleagues to lead the response to the box’s questions collectively. If the facilitator does not need to take part, observe and document the discussion, paying attention not just to the content of the activity but how the team chooses to work together in addressing the challenge and responding to the contents of the box.

How the team conducts this activity will be as revealing of their attitudes to teamwork as what they say or write in response to its challenges.

Plenary

Invite the team to present, reflect on, and discuss the response they made to the Question Box.

Ask:

- How did the team address the challenge? What did this tell us about the team's ways of collaborating?
- Which questions were easy for the team? Which ones were harder?

Refocus the team on the large cue card's challenge:

- What do we need to change about our team? How are going to do it?

Invite final responses to this question and document them.

Congratulate the team and ask them if there are any questions they would add to the box for the next team who use it.

Appendix 1: Cue Cards

What's the best team you have ever been a part of (in or outside of a work context)? What made it so good?

What's the worst team you have ever been a part of (in or outside of a work context)? What did you do about it?

When do you prefer working alone?

When do you prefer working with other people?

What do leaders need from team members?

What do you need from a teammate?

What strengths do you as an individual bring to our team?

What makes us a team, as opposed to individuals working alongside each other?

Apart from our team, which is the best team in our organisation? What makes them so good?

What can our team offer our organisation, and its partners?

What challenges do we face in working as a team?

Describe our team in three words. What word would you like to change?

What external factors affect our teamwork?

What do we need to change about our team? How are
going to do it?