

2

The Round Robin

In doing this project, you are going to learn a discussion method called *The Round Robin* to be used in problem solving. Another common term for this method is *circular discussion*, which is especially effective when you are dealing with subjects of controversy. It allows you to get many ideas expressed prior to the general discussion and the format is comfortable for those not accustomed to discussion participation.

This method provides good training in careful listening and speaking briefly in turn. For example; you have been designated as discussion leader during a PTA meeting. Your subcommittee has been allotted fifteen minutes to come up with recommended solutions to the problem of how to best distribute funds received from a special grant for community related educational programs. You must allow each individual of your 12 member group as many opportunities as possible to offer suggestions and opinions. The input by fellow members tends to stimulate more ideas among the others as the session moves quickly along.

Present the Problem

As the group leader take three minutes to present the problem for discussion. State it as a narrowly defined question that is worded briefly, clearly, and selectively. Make sure at the outset that each member of the group agrees on the meaning of the question. Define all terms within the question that might be misinterpreted or misunderstood. The reason for limiting the scope of consideration is so that during the discussion your members will be aware of exclusions to the central problem.

Ask For Ideas

Starting clockwise or counterclockwise, ask each club member to provide an answer to the problem under consideration. (Limit the participation depending on the size of the club, but use at least six to eight people.) The answers may be personal and do not have to be explained or defended. All critical judgment is ruled out. *The point here is to seek ideas, not critical analysis.* Encourage as many wild ideas as possible. You want quantity, not quality. This process is also commonly referred to as *brainstorming*. Keep a record on the flip chart of these ideas as they are given. On each go round, allow each person no longer than one minute to speak.

Explain to the members that they may not interrupt each other nor speak out of turn. The number of times you go around the circle will depend upon the group's belief that the subject has been adequately explored and the time limitation for the discussion.

Review and Screen The Ideas

Read back the basic ideas and review these as a group with each member applying his or her best judgment to the problem by either passing without comment or adding to what has been suggested. Ask the members for individual questions or comments and record general conclusions on the flip chart. Some standard general questions you might ask are:

- What is the nature of the problem?
- What are the facts of the situation?
- Who is involved, what is happening, and what are the obstacles?
- To whom does it apply?
- What are causes of the problem and conditions that brought it about?
- How can the situation be changed?

During this critical judgment stage, you must get the group members to

Objectives

- Establish the meaning of a question with a discussion group.
- Using a problem solving pattern, lead the participants in a brainstorming session.
- Screen the possible solutions and lead the group in deciding what action to take.

GROUP SIZE: Club members.

MATERIALS: Flip chart, grease pencil, pad and pencil.

TIME: 20-30 Minutes.

agree upon some standard so you can measure or evaluate the solution against that standard. The discussion will involve areas of values, objectives and personal philosophy. It is your responsibility to screen the answers and come up with one or two for final consideration.

Be aware that in approaching a problem, you and the other members have preconceptions on what you are willing to think about. Your attitudes are influenced by what you already know, how you feel, and how you act. As each of you confronts the problem, you are trying to solve it to your personal satisfaction.

Decide The Solution

Keep an eye on your time. This is the point during the discussion when you lead the group in deciding what action to take or in deciding the solution to the problem. Remember that no single person can provide all the answers. The decision that seems to offer the most advantages and the least disadvantages provides the basis for a final agreement.

Your Project Speech

Select a problem for discussion. Narrow its scope so that it is worded concisely. With the assistance of your club's Educational Vice President, choose six to eight volunteers to make up your discussion group or use all the club members for this exercise.

Provide clear instructions to your group members as to how you will be directing the discussion.

Use the round-robin problem solving method to arrive at a solution within 20-30 minutes.

Steps For The Round Robin

1. Prepare a clear, brief, single focused question.
2. Seat participants in a circle, if possible, or around a table.
3. Explain the process and decide on a time limit (usually one minute) for each contribution.
4. Be certain each member understands the question. (Explain, give example, ask if it is clear.)
5. Call on each participant in turn, clockwise or counterclockwise until each has had an opportunity to express ideas.
6. Each participant may do the following:
 - Respond within the time limit
 - a. Bring in new ideas or combine those given
 - Pass
 - Request that his or her minute be spent on more thinking time
7. There can be no interruptions or speaking out of turn.
8. The number of times around the circle will depend upon:
 - Group consensus that the subject has been adequately explored
 - Frequency of those who pass an opportunity to speak.
 - Time limitations for the discussion
9. As time permits, invite individual questions or comments after round robin is completed.
10. Careful recording of all comments will provide background for general conclusions and discussion leading to action.

