



## **Weeting as a breakout session**

*Why, when & how | Martine de Vaan*

Do you have a meeting with a larger group of people? Use Weeting as a breakout session to keep everyone active and engaged. Make groups of 2-3 people. Have these couples or small groups discuss a specific topic during a walk. Participants return after a walk outside with harvest, but also with more energy and involvement. If the environment allows it you can have small groups of maximum of 4-5 people - but this is only possible in quiet locations with wide paths or streets without cars or cyclists, such as an estate or campus.

### **Possibilities to apply a Weeting breakout session**

This method is suitable for generating ideas, looking back, looking ahead, evaluating, developing a vision or strategy, applying theory to practice, or discussing the practical application of new policy. It is also suitable for more personal exchanges or for dividing topics to be discussed among subgroups.

It can be applied in:

- Workshops
- (Corporate) away day
- Away session
- Training
- Lecture
- Management meeting
- Strategy session
- Breakout session in a trade fair, congress or conference

### **Why choose this method**

- Brings energy and depth in sessions with large groups
- Everyone is involved / contributes
- More interaction between participants
- More fun

### **Do's**

- Announce in time (shoes, jacket)
- Consider all participants (health / fitness)
- Be clear about the intention, question or assignment
- Organize the logistics tightly, it is NOT a break.
- Provide a suitable route from the location

### **Don't**

- Combine a weeting with a (lunch) break.
- Surprise the participants with the working method (high heels / no jacket)
- Send participants outside when it's raining (provide an alternative working method)

### **Length of the route and duration**

How fast people walk depends on the environment and the condition of the participants.

Indicative times are:

- 15 minutes: 0.8 km
- 20 minutes: 1.1 km
- 30 minutes: 1.8 km
- 40 minutes: 2.2 km
- 45 minutes: 2.8 km
- 60 minutes: 3.8 km

This includes 5 minutes of leeway on departure but excludes introduction and plenary feedback. Add this time to the planning of the weeting. In an urban environment with traffic lights and / or a high office building with slow elevators the route must be shortened or more time should be allowed.

### **Additional tips for the process supervisor**

- Explain the intention, a slide or whiteboard with the times can be useful
- If the participants are going to walk without a process supervisor: show the route with distance and time, and name some orientation points (a bridge, church or square)
- Conclude with the question / assignment, and ask if it is clear. Optionally, ask the participants to write down their first thoughts. This ensures focus and guarantees that the question is clear when the participants start walking (see also extra options)
- Use a weeting route or hand out printed route maps

### **Route maps too much hassle for yourself or for the participants?**

Three different solutions:

- Lead the way yourself
- Give an indication (for example "you can walk to the church and back. That makes a total of 1.1 km long and at a normal walking pace you will certainly be back within 20 minutes.")
- Have participants use a timer (which is on every smartphone). For a session of 20 minutes set the timer to 10 minutes. When it goes off: turn around.

### **Practicalities and materials**

- Introduction slides with route, distance, times and the question / assignment
- Flip-over, flap or whiteboard for collecting participants' ideas
- Preferable firm writing cards with the size of a smartphone. Make yourself: 6 cards from 120 gram A4 paper: cut in half and then in 3s. For a group of 20, 4 A4 is enough.
- For harvesting afterwards you can use postits. When returning from the walk, ask the participants to write down the most important things for about 5 minutes on post-its, and let them take turns to put up their post-its with a short explanation.
- Have pens ready for those without pens

### **Introduction of the weeting on the day itself**

Explain the intention:

- We split into groups of two or three to discuss a topic
- We start and end in this room
- The route is (for example) 1.8 km, it is 13:06 now on my phone, at 13:45 everyone should be back.
- When you return, write down the most important ideas and stick them on ... (point out where). From xx to yy we discuss and assess the harvest. The results will be included in the report that you will receive afterwards.
- Explain that people can take notes or record something along the way if they think it is beneficial

### Extra options

- To encourage input from each individual, you can ask the participants to write down their first thoughts before leaving, and to take the card with them during the weeting, and encourage all participants to check with their subgroup whether all ideas are exchanged ("is there anything else you wrote on the card?") This way you prevent the more modest participants to keep their ideas to themselves
- For more interaction during the weeting, insert 1 or 2 plenary waypoints. Here you can 1) already briefly exchange 2) ask an additional question
- Motivate the groups to come up with good ideas: for example: the three best ideas will be implemented.

### Extra tips for crowd management

- Make use of mirroring behavior (people tend to do what they see other people do) and set a good example: write a card, put on a coat, possibly lead the way with a group
- While walking: in case of a larger group, provide a "broom wagon".
- When you return, make sure that everyone immediately goes to the room (prevent phone-calls etc.). "We finish together, then you can go to the toilet / make a phone call / (at a conference) hang your coat in the wardrobe". Alternative option is to wrap up in front of the building, before going back inside.
- Make sure you have wiggle room in terms of time, and plan what you might want to sacrifice (for example scrap a plenary intermediate stop, keeping the feedback shortcut on the route).

### Example program

This is what a breakout session of one hour could look like, including plenary feedback.

Start after lunch

Weeting from 13.00-14.00

Group of 20 participants, make groups of 2-3 people

Route length for 40 minutes, about 2.2 km

13.00 kick-off by workshop leader

13.05 start weeting in 2-3 pairs

13.25 plenary exchange on the way (with all 20), workshop leader asks extra question

13.30 weeting continues in 2-3 pairs

13.45 return and gather in the hall

participants write harvest on postits and paste this on flipchart

13.50 exchange and draw conclusions, summary by workshop leader / manager

14.00 closing

GOOD LUCK!

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