

## Innovation “Hot Topic” Discussion Circles: Moderator Guidelines

A discussion circle is an opportunity for participants to get together in an informal setting for 45 minutes to examine a very specific innovation management topic through group discussion. There is no formal agenda, as the participants and moderator will determine the discussion on the spot.

Each discussion circle will have a label indicating the topic and 10 chairs. Delegates will be required to choose a circle on the spot. No pre-signup or reservation is possible (other than for the moderator, of course). If you are very keen on a particular topic, get there early.

The session lasts for 90 minutes. The same topics are discussed twice (2 x 45 mins) and delegates should not attend the same topic twice. No visual aids are used in this session.

### Golden rules for the moderator

- Your circle must run to time. Two minutes late is NOT to time.
- This is a group discussion; it is not a platform for your ideas or a presentation.
- Prepare in advance: What are the key issues in this topic? What questions and approaches will engage the delegates best?
- Break the ice quickly...45 minutes is not long. Figure out in advance how you will do this.
- Close each session with a summary, conclusion or "nugget" for the participants to take away.

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### A suggested format for moderators

This is indicative - please use your imagination; you are welcome to do whatever you want to make the table a success for the participants.

1. Introduce Topic (5 minutes to break the ice and get the ball rolling)
  - a. Tell participants who you are and what your job is as a moderator
  - b. Tour the circle asking for names, organisations and what precise sub-questions people want the discussion to cover
  - c. Summarise the sub-questions listed and give a short preamble to the topic, which leads to a popular question

*Tip: you are welcome to use a gimmick, trick or indeed any way you know how to get people engaged. Be sensitive to the fact that people will be from different cultures.*

2. Discussion (35 minutes to stimulate discussion)
  - a. Start with a popular sub-question and engage views
  - b. Look for conflicting views, challenge views, keep the ball rolling between the participants

*Tip: inevitably some personalities and cultures will dominate the discussion. Strike a balance between one-person domination (no monologues or speeches) and simply touring the circle.*

3. Conclude the discussion (5 minutes to round-off, swap contacts and finish on time)
  - a. Summarise the key points of agreement and disagreement
  - b. State how discussion might continue into the break or beyond into particular sessions
  - c. Close on time with a clear message for delegates to take away.