5 Methods for Moving Fast

EVERYTHING IS A HYPOTHESIS

Groups can get stuck trying to get things just right, like agreeing on very specific goals and initiatives. While it's important to have an overall shared direction and agenda, it's not helpful to get stuck in analysis paralysis. We use terms like "hypotheses," "working goals," and "good enough" to remind groups that we only need enough clarity to keep moving forward effectively, and that we will refine our goals and our analysis over time.

PROTOTYPE IMMEDIATELY (ALMOST)

Groups can learn as much with their hands as with their minds, and prototyping ideas early and often is a powerful way to surface assumptions, ground our thinking, and focus everyone on the work rather than debates. While we always begin by sharing our current understanding of the challenges and opportunities before us and identifying what to prototype in the first place, we rarely leave a meeting (even a launch meeting) without having developed some prototype solutions or at least rough conceptual sketches of solutions.

QUESTIONS OVER ANSWERS

Developed by our friend Patricia DiVecchio, the *Asking the Next Right Question* technique keeps groups moving fast by focusing on finding the right questions before we struggle with finding answers. When a small team presents a possible solution to a large group, we ask the larger group to ask questions but the team is only allowed to capture the questions not answer them (clarifying questions excepted). Invariably, the team finds that 2-3 of the questions provide fresh insight that helps them refine their solution on their own, which builds ownership.

This technique avoids a host of problems with the conventional Q&A approach: (1) the desire of the team members to look smart and competent so they make up their responses on the spot, (2) the sense of having answered and resolved a question so the team doesn't consider it further, and (3) the larger group taking away "responsibility" from the team for answering the hard questions themselves rather than trying to please the others.

IF-HOW-IF

Sometimes, making a commitment to solving a complex problem is intimidating or threatening to members of a group. Often, however, what really scares people is the unknown (after all, most of us prefer the devil we know to the devil we don't). To overcome these fears of commitment, we invite groups into thought experiments in which we explore possible solutions without asking for any commitments at all. Rather than first dealing with the question of IF we should do something, we first thoroughly explore–through storyboarding, roadmaps, backcasting and other techniques–HOW we would do it. Often, by the time we've completed our thought experiment, everyone in the room is ready to move forward.

ITERATE...FAST

Two 15-minute rounds of presentations and feedback, facilitated tightly, will yield far better solutions than a single one-hour presentation and feedback round. Couple this with the *Asking the Next Right Question* process above for powerful results in the least amount of time.

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