Do's and Don'ts

Collaborative Sessions

contributed by Ruth Younie

Stakeholders are under constant pressure to make change happen in our ever-changing world. They have competing priorities, short timelines, and work to do. It's not surprising sessions often end with unhappy stakeholders and stressed business analysis professionals. This list of Do's and Don'ts is intended to help you work through the combat zone and get to a collaborative space.

Things to consider:

- ✓ Your stakeholders' reaction to the change
- ✓ Your stakeholders' knowledge about the topic and the change
- ✓ Your stakeholders' understanding of other stakeholders
- ✓ The bigger picture

Do's

- ✓ Choose a technique you are comfortable with
- ✓ Be adventurous – mash up techniques
- ✓ Be prepared with a Plan B, C, D
- ✓ Confirm your approach with the sponsor (including backup plans) before the session
- ✓ Practice the techniques you'll be using
- ✓ Practice a best-case and worst-case scenario
- ✓ Test the technology. Test it again. And again.
- ✓ Tell people what you intend to do
- ✓ Share responsibility for the session outcomes
- ✓ Establish common ground
- ✓ Expect different reactions from your audience
- ✓ Give everyone a chance to speak
- ✓ Acknowledge individual contributions
- ✓ Pay attention to the time – consider appointing a timekeeper
- ✓ Stop sidebar conversations and distractions – use a parking lot
- ✓ Redirect discussions to the session objectives
- ✓ Confirm session outcomes
- ✓ Agree on owners for action items
- ✓ Communicate next steps

Don'ts

- ✗ Use a specific technique just because "we've always done it that way"
- ✗ Record the session without asking first
- ✗ Try something you've never tried before without first practicing it
- ✗ Start late
- ✗ End late
- ✗ Expect everyone to be as excited as you
- ✗ Replace your stakeholder's words with your words
- ✗ Rush your stakeholders
- ✗ Let one person monopolize the discussion
- ✗ Allow sidebar conversations
- ✗ Blame the technology
- ✗ Apologize for everything
- ✗ Ignore rudeness