

Anecdote Circles – Facilitator’s Guide

Order of proceedings

- Welcome
- Project purpose
- About recording
- About confidentiality
- “We will focus on your experiences, examples and illustrations of actual events.”
—don’t mention ‘stories’
- Provide a relevant example anecdote
- Alert everyone to anecdote circle guidelines
- “I’m turning on the recorder.”
- First questions

Increasing anecdote richness

- **Ditting:**
“that’s a great anecdote!
Has anyone else had something like that happen?”
- **Alternative Histories:**
ask for a turning point and retell as if the alternative came to past.
- **Timelines:**
draw a line on a whiteboard and ask people to recall key events.

Facilitator Tips

- Relax – tension from the facilitator can be detrimental to the session
- Be interested
- Throw questions into the middle of the group
- Relish silence—let it hang
- Avoid asking too many questions and risk turning it into an interview
- Listen for cues to other important anecdotes
- Judiciously drill for detail
- Listen for high-level stories and invite more detail
- Listen carefully to separate opinions from anecdotes – ask for examples to support opinions

Dealing with Problems

- When someone is dominating, give them a job to do—such as observation
- If the group can’t think of any more anecdotes:
 - Draw a timeline
 - Brainstorm the key players
 - Ask more questions
- Someone is telling well rehearsed stories. Ask others for their version of events.

Participant Guidelines

- Focus on providing first or second-hand examples
- Allow your colleagues to complete their anecdote—no interruptions
- Avoid disagreement with another’s anecdote, instead tell your own version