

Pro Action Café

combining world café and open space

The Pro Action Café is a space for creative and action oriented conversation where participants are invited to bring their call - project - ideas - questions or whatever they feel called by and need help to manifest in the world.

The concept of Pro Action Café is a blend of “World Café” and “Open Space” technologies. It was first conceived by Rainer von Leoprechting and Ria Baeck in Brussels, Belgium.

What is Pro Action Café Good For?

As a conversational process, the Pro Action Café is a collective, innovative methodology for hosting conversations about calls, questions, and projects that matter to the people that attend. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between cafe tables, cross-pollinate ideas and offer each other new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, organization, or community.

As a process, the Pro Action Café can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people’s capacity for effective action in pursuit of good work. Pro Action Café can be used with a network of people and/or as a methodology for a specific, group, organization, or community to engage in creative and inspirational conversation leading to wiser and more collectively informed action.

General Flow of a Pro Action Café

A quick check in circle to connect to purpose of the session and with each other. If check-in has already taken place as part of a longer process go straight to building the agenda.

You need 2 1/2 to 3 hours for a good Pro Action Café. Invite participants to step forward with their call and in that way ask the community for the help you need to move your project into action. People with a call/project stand up, speak it and write it on the agenda that corresponds to a numbered cafe table.

Count the amount of participants, divide by four - this gives you the amount of

callers with projects/sessions that can be worked. (i.e. with 40 participants, you can have 10 callers maximum) The principle is first come, first served. If you have less callers, add chairs to cafe tables but no more than 5 at a table. During this process each contributing participant (those who do not step forward) get to support up to three different calls/projects.

When the agenda has been created, invite the callers to go to their numbered café tables. There will be three rounds of conversation in café style of 20-30 minutes - each guided by a few generic questions to help deepen and focus the conversations.

Round 1

What is the quest behind the call/question/project? - to deepen the purpose of the call

Round 2

What is missing? - when the quest has been deepened, explore what could make the project more complete and possible

Round 3

What am I learning about myself? What am I learning about my project? What next steps will I take? What help do I still need? - to help bring it all together for the caller and their project

Round 3 is in 2 steps:

1. First 20-25 minutes for the callers to reflect by themselves on the 4 questions above and harvest their key insights.
2. Round proceeds as the previous rounds – in conversation with participants. The new participants visit the table to listen to the harvest of the caller, their learning, their steps, help needed - and then offer any insight and any further support they can offer.

Between each round, create breaks for the participants to have a drink, relax together, and get ready to support another caller in their quest/project.

Last step is to meet in circle and invite the callers from each table to share answers to these two questions: 1. What am I grateful for? 2. What are my next steps?

If there is time, the whole group can shortly reflect on: What applications do we see for practicing Pro Action Café in our contexts?

End the Pro Action Café with a collective gesture to appreciate the work done and the gifts offered and received.

Materials and Set Up

- Ideally create a large circle in one part of the room and enough café tables with four chairs in another part. (If the size of the room does not allow this, then participants will move the tables and chairs themselves as soon as the agenda is created.)
- Dress the tables with flipchart paper, colored pens, and markers as basic café set up.
- Prepare the matrix for the agenda setting of the session with the right amount of sessions according to the number of participants divided by four.
- Have fun and do good work together.

<http://sites.google.com/a/pro-action.eu/pro-action-cafe/how-to-become-a-host/hosting-kit>