Generating solutions using the Nominal Group Technique

**Purpose:** The Nominal Group Technique enables people to meet practical learning challenges in the workplace by identifying solutions and prioritising actions. It promotes the participation of all individuals in a group as part of the decision-making process.

**You will need:**

- A nominated Facilitator
- A group of participants – between 6 and 12
- A topic for discussion. (This could be a statement or a question)
- Time: Approximately 1:30 hour.

**Topic for Discussion**

*E.g. What actions should our team take to support our research engagement?*

**Session Plan**

1. **Group Formation (5 mins)**
   - Facilitator welcomes participants and explains the three phases of the nominal group technique: the silent phase, the group item generation phase and the discussion and clarification phase.
   - Ground rules are explained (think creatively, take turns, opportunity for all to speak, focus on solutions etc.)
   - Facilitator confirms the topic for discussion and clarifies anything if needed.

2. **Silent phase (5 mins)**
   - Facilitator asks participants to silently and independently write a list of potential ideas and suggest solutions to the topic.

3. **Item generation phase (15-20 mins)**
   - Facilitator asks each individual to read out their list, and writes ideas on a board or flipchart for everyone to see.
   - In the event that a suggestion is repeated, it only needs to be recorded once.

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*Remember: This is a focused phase to generate ideas. You will have the opportunity to explain your suggestions in the next phase.*

*Share! The silliest suggestion is the one you haven't made. Be creative and allow yourself to think broadly, every idea matters!*

*Facilitator: Group the similar or repeated suggestions to optimise the discussion and clarification phase!*

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4. **Discussion and clarification phase (25 mins)**

- Facilitator takes each idea in turn, discussing and clarifying it with the group.
- If additional items emerge at this stage, they can be added to the list.

5. **Voting phase (10-20 mins)**

- Facilitator asks participants to individually score each item in order to gain an understanding of the actions the group feel they can prioritise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Participant 1 score</th>
<th>Participant 2 score</th>
<th>Participant 3 score</th>
<th>Participant 4 score</th>
<th>Participant 5 score</th>
<th>Total group score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Item B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Score 2:** yes, definitely, can do it and want to do it.
**Score 1:** maybe, would like to and think we could.
**Score 0:** no, don’t want to and can’t do.

- Facilitator records the individual scores and then adds them to form a group score for each item. This shows the most popular and least favoured suggestions, as displayed in the example below.

6. **Final plenary phase (15-20 mins)**

- Discuss what the group would like to do next: this may include developing the top suggestions further, and excluding the least favoured ideas.
- Group agrees an action plan, identifies who will carry out the agreed actions, and selects a review date.
- Facilitator collates suggestions and scores action plan.
- Thank all participants and close.
- Facilitator circulates the outcomes to participants.

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*We encourage participants to update each other of progress either by email or at a subsequent Nominal Group Technique if one is agreed.*