

The Storyboard Process

Purpose

The storyboard system is a visual process designed to bring out a group's best thinking and energy on a specific issue. It is carried out in an environment of fair play and equal participation. Thoughts and ideas are captured on cards and then moved around. This allows for ideas generated during a brainstorming session, for example, to be analyzed and an action plan developed. It can be used for planning an event, prioritizing projects, assigning tasks, organizing or otherwise capturing thoughts in a visual and flexible way.

History

Leonardo da Vinci was the first to use storyboarding and Walt Disney used it extensively. Author Mike Vance, formerly with Disney, shared the storyboarding process with Jerry McNellis of the McNellis Company who developed this system as a way to help people think more effectively.

How It Works

There is one card pinned to the top of the storyboard indicating the overall topic being discussed. Beneath that are 5x7 cards that represent a heading within the topic, called "headers." As participants discuss the topic, a designated printer captures the essence of each participant's thought into a phrase, prints it on a 3x5 card and hands it to a "pinner," who pins it to the storyboard beneath the appropriate header. These represent the thinking of the participants.

Tips for Printers

- Listen to participants' comments and ideas as they are presented.
- Capture the essence of what was said in one single, complete thought and write it on the 3x5 cards.
- Use paraphrasing and synthesizing skills.
- Use a verb as a first word on the cards.
- PRINT all information.
- Contribute your own ideas during the process.

Tips for Pinner

Take the 3x5 cards from the printer and pin them under the appropriate heading.

Pin the 3x5 card off center and down a little from the top of the card.

Avoid overlapping cards or leaving a gap between the cards, as the cards can later be connected by a piece of Scotch® tape running down the middle of the cards, the pins removed, and the cards folded accordion-style to save in a file for future use.

Stand to the side when waiting to pin so the participants can see the board.
Contribute your own ideas during the process.

Tips for Facilitators

- Stand when facilitating a storyboard session.
- Step back every few minutes to view the entire storyboard.
- Allow for creativity and innovation to happen.
- Draw out the participants through positive body language.
- Capture *all* ideas – even “goofy” ones can become workable.
- Remain neutral, keeping an open and balanced flow of ideas.
- Facilitate the process, not the content.
- Allow for spelling errors – keep others from getting hung up on them.
- Avoid judgmental language, either “good” or “bad” and discourage it in others.
- It’s okay if the process slows down. If it slows down too much, use proactive language, such as “Let’s try this approach,” or have them look at the topic from *another* person’s point of view to give new perspective.
- Always debrief the session.

Storyboards and their materials are available through the McNellis Compression Planning Institute. www.mcnellis.com Jerry McNellis, President: jerry@compressionplanning.com

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