

Visualizing Challenges

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Why is it helpful to visualize your challenges?

Sometimes it's hard to describe a complex challenge in words, but, as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. Visuals can be a departure point for conversation around the challenges your organization is facing.

Activity Objective

See your organization's challenges in a new way using visual images.

Participants

Can be done with any size group. A facilitator is recommended to lead the exercise and keep time.

Duration

Approximately 20 minutes.

Materials

You can use an existing deck of images, like the Visual Explorer Playing Cards, or create your own set by printing out photographic images that are complex and expressive (for example, from the Commons on Flickr).

Activity

Step 1: The facilitator lays out the images on a table (there should be approximately 2.5 times as many cards as participants).

Step 2: Each participant chooses two cards: one that captures something important about a major persistent challenge the organization is facing, and a second one that captures what the organization would be like after the challenge was successfully addressed.

Step 3: Once each participant has selected two cards, participants meet up in small groups of three.

Step 4: One participant shares with their cards within their trio, and answers aloud the question: "What challenge did you have in mind when selecting your cards?" The participant then invites the other members of their group to answer the question: "What do you see in my cards?"

Step 5: Each person in the trio repeats Step 4.

Step 6: Still in trios, review all three "before" cards together and all three "after" cards together.

Step 7: After the trios finish, the facilitator invites the whole group to place their "before" cards together on one table and their "after" cards together on another table.

Step 8: As a whole group, the facilitator invites the participants to reflect on what pops out at them when looking at all the "before" cards together and all the "after" cards together.

Reflection

What similarities and differences did you find among the "before" and "after" cards?

What did the others in your small groups see in your cards that differed from your interpretation?

How did the images help you think differently about your challenges?

Sharing

In the comments section of the online activity post, we encourage you to share something that you learned or something that surprised you.