

Change Cafés 2010

A series of engaging evening conversations about community transformation

Goals

- Help election candidates & community better understand own priorities.
- Create shared vision for kind of community we want to become, steps needed to get there.
- Move from traditional combative debates generating heat to open, participatory ones seeding hope
- Engage people in local politics, in this election, feeling their participation makes a difference.

Format

5:00 Reception (food provided)

6:00 Welcome and Opening

6:30 World Café via Remember the Future Game

6:30 Round 1

6:45 Round 2

7:00 Round 3

7:15 Break

7:30 Prioritize via Prune the Product Tree Game

8:00 Wrap-up

What Is World Café?

Innovative yet simple methodology for hosting conversations about questions that matter.

Conversations link & build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, discover new insights into questions/issues most important.

As process, World Café can evoke & make visible collective intelligence of citizens, increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of common aims.

Remember The Future

“What should our service provide or accomplish?” Ah, yes, the seemingly open-ended question that many times isn’t that open-ended at all. Most of the time, what your service should offer is some reasonable extrapolation of what similar services have provided or accomplished in the past.

Your cell phone should have better signal strength, longer battery life, and be lighter. So should your laptop. Your car should be safer, faster, more stylish, and get better gas mileage. A government service is expected to do more with less.

The result is that the question is often trivially answered: Your service should be better. Which makes you wonder: **Are you asking the right question?**

How The Game Is Played

People sit in groups of 3-4 per table.

Ask them to imagine it's 4 years in future & we've now established the vibrant community we've all hoped for.

Now, ask them to go even further – an extra month. Ask citizens to write down, in as much detail as possible, exactly what community looks like and steps taken to get there.

Why Game Works

Game based on numerous studies in cognitive psychology that examined how we think about future.

When we ask the question “What should our service do?” there is no frame of reference for comparison.

When we ask question “What will our service have done?” we generate more fanciful, richly detailed, sensible, and longer descriptions, because it is easier to understand and describe a future event when using the past tense and looking back from a yet further future, even though neither future has occurred.

Why Game Works

Approach has other important benefits. By thinking of a future event as one that has already occurred, one can imagine at least one sequence of events that could happen to generate the event.

If you are asked “What should our service do?” you are left wondering about not only what the service will do, but how it could possibly do it.

If instead you are asked: “What will our service have done?” you not only generate a more concrete idea of what the service did, you can begin to answer the question “How did the service do it?”

Thinking of future service as already successful enables us to make more effective decisions by reducing the total set of possible outcomes that must be considered before a suitable plan is selected.

Prune The Product Tree

Each group given drawing of very large tree on a wall. Thick limbs represent major areas of importance within community.

Groups take features of future city generated from Remember the Future game (or entirely new ones) & place as leaves around tree, defining next phase of its growth.

Features prioritized by proximity to trunk of tree. Visually, can see where tree grows, becomes stronger.

What's The Result?

Meeting host team together with ChangeCamp team process qualitative and quantitative results.

Report published online, available to all.

Results fed into community portal to feed connections, discussion, action.

Project Scope

- Series of events: 1 city-wide, 1 ward, 1 online
- Host organizing team required per event
 - Event promotion, planning, hosting, processing
- Event design, facilitation, analysis support provided
- Events held mid-Sept to mid-Oct.