hart voor projecten

Working with scaling questions

"Who's in the room?"

At the start of meetings, we like to work with scaling questions. We also call the exercise 'Who's in the room?', because in a short time it gives you a picture of who you have in the group. It is an active exercise that gets the group moving straight away and that you can vary endlessly. The minimum you want to achieve in the introductions is that everyone says something about their motivation for taking part in the project. Scaling questions are a good way to combine the two.

PURPOSE	Letting participants get to know each other. Making visible which similarities and differences there are in the group, in all kinds of areas. Getting moving. Something happens straight away.
WHEN	Particularly for opening the session. You can also use scaling questions for the check-in of a project fresh-up or as an exercise in an evaluation.
WITH WHOM	Groups who do not know each other yet, and also groups who do.
WHAT YOU NEED	Enough space to move around. If there is no room in the meeting room, you could go into the corridor or outside.

HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

1. **Make room.** Ask all participants to stand up and to make as much room as possible to move around. Make sure there are no cups or other loose items on the floor.

2. **Think of your questions and follow-up questions.** Now you can ask different kinds of questions. Think for yourself about the questions you want to ask, and especially about the follow-up questions. Start with some simple questions to get to know each other; after that you can ask more exciting ones. Below are a few to get you started.

3. **Put the group on a line.** For example:

   Stand in alphabetical order of your first name. Point out where A is and where Z is. Once everyone is standing, go through all the names. You can also find out straight away who already knows whom.

   Stand in order of how long you have worked here. Point out where short is and where long is. Once everyone is standing, it is elegant to start with the people who have worked here the longest; after all, they deserve respect. You can of course also ask some questions about what you see. Perhaps there is a gap in the timeline and a lot of new people joined after a certain year.

4. **Form groups.** For example:

   Stand together with the people you work with, or the people who are in your team. This becomes a kind of organisational constellation. If there are many people in a group, you can also ask whether there are subgroups within this group. You can also have people explain to each other what the relationships between the different groups look like.

   More personal: stand together by eye colour, or form groups with people who play the same instrument or are involved with music in another way. You can also use the room as a map of the Netherlands (or the world): where were you born? A follow-up question could be: where did you study, or where do you live now?

5. **Ask scaling questions from 0 to 10.** For example:

How much experience do you have with ... (the topic of the meeting)? Stand on a scale from 0 to 10. It is your personal estimate.

How much are you looking forward to this meeting?

How much are you looking forward to this project? ...

PLEASE NOTE

This last question is of course an important one. You could also ask:

"How involved do you already feel in this project, or how important is this project to you?"

You can place the participants on a scale from 0 to 10, but you could also put the project manager in the middle and have the participants take up a position close to or far from the project manager.

6 **Ask follow-up questions and stay neutral.** With this question it is important to realise that people can have good reasons for not being very motivated or not yet very involved. So above all, invite people to be honest and to explain what makes them stand where they stand. It is therefore important that you remain neutral and do not pass judgement on this.

TIPS

A few 'pro tips' for working with scaling questions:

- When you point out the scale, you as the facilitator are facing the group. So a true professional points out the scale mirrored. Then it is the right way round for the participants.
- The follow-up question is at least as valuable. For example: what would it take to move up the scale?
- In some settings a physical scaling question is difficult or impractical. For example because space is limited, because you are working online or because the exercise does not seem appropriate. You can also do the scaling questions on a flip chart (or a digital whiteboard) by drawing the scales and preparing sticky notes with the participants' names. They can put these in the right place themselves. You can then discuss the scale afterwards in the same way as a physical line-up.

NOTES