

Quick Tips for Team Leaders¹

Facilitation: Advanced Parking Lot & Tossed Salad²

Jeff Oltmann

QuickTip - Advanced Parking Lot

Many of us know how to use a parking lot during a meeting, but you can enhance the technique when the meeting participants are discussing what actions to take. When the group agrees to park an idea or option, do more than stick it in a general parking lot. Use a chart like the one below to decide on the spot the type of follow up that is most appropriate.

		Issues Under Discussion:	
Potential for Improvement	High	<u>Look for Opportunities to Use</u>	<u>Keep on the Radar</u>
	Low	<u>Consider Later</u>	<u>Do Not Consider</u>
		Easy	Difficult
		Implementation	

¹ This series of “Quick Tips” articles is by Jeff Oltmann, experienced program and technology executive and principal of Synergy Professional Services, LLC in Oregon, USA. The Quick Tips offer simple approaches and models for problem analysis, gathering ideas and input from team members, facilitation and taking action. The tips offered in this series were identified or developed over two decades of helping program, project and team leaders get things done in faster, more agile ways. Learn more about Jeff Oltmann in his author profile at the end of this article.

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QuickTip – Tossed Salad

Tossed Salad combines elements of brainstorming and small group work. It helps a large group draw out everyone’s best ideas, refine them, and select a few for further action.

When to Use

Use this technique when you want to make sure that the group considers ideas from all participants. It requires some supplies – small cards to write on and a container (the “salad bowl”) to collect them.

Procedure

1. Provide each person with a stack of blank cards, such as index cards.
2. Ask everyone to write down their best ideas, one per card, and place their cards into the “salad bowl.”
3. Mix up the cards in the bowl - “toss the salad.”
4. Pass the bowl and draw. Typically, each person draws as many cards as they put into the bowl.
5. Break into small groups. Give the groups time to discuss and evaluate the ideas on the cards that the group members drew.
6. Get back together as a large group. Have a representative from each small group verbally summarize their evaluation, then facilitate a large group discussion that further refines and selects the most promising ideas for further action.

Considerations

1. Consider limiting the number of cards that each person can put in the bowl so that they focus on writing down their best ideas.
 2. This is a good technique to use when some participants are more comfortable expressing their ideas in writing rather than speaking about them.
 3. It also can provide some degree of anonymity about the initial ideas.
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About the Author



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Jeff Oltmann is a seasoned leader with over 30 years of experience advising clients, managing successful technology programs, and developing new products. His specialties include strategy deployment, operational and project excellence, and project portfolio management. As principal consultant at Synergy Professional Services, Jeff advises leaders and teams in diverse sectors including healthcare, research, bioscience, and technology product development.

Jeff is the founder of the Portfolio and Project Leaders Forum. He is also on the graduate faculty of the Division of Management at Oregon Health and Science University and was previously on executive staff at IBM. He teaches portfolio, program, and project management and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP®).

Jeff welcomes your questions and ideas. You can contact him at jeff@spspro.com or read previous articles at www.spspro.com/article-library.

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