

Four-Box Synectics

Information Processing: Activating and Engaging

PROCESS

- On chart paper, draw a 2×2 box. Post.
- A recorder at each table draws a similar box to collect the group's thinking.
- Elicit recommendations for an object or a concept to place in each of the boxes. Suggest each time that the next recommendation be as different as possible from the previous recommendation (examples: lamppost, sailboat, hammer, daisy).
- Instruct table groups to brainstorm three or four responses for each box to the prompt you provide. (Example: Professional communities are like a lamppost because _____. Professional communities are like a sailboat because _____.)
- Give groups 2 minutes to select their best items and a spokesperson.
- Elicit responses from the groups using a full statement such as "A professional community is like a lamppost because _____."

cont.

ALTERNATIVES

- People synectics. Provide each table group with three to five postcards that have images of famous people on them. Ensure that the postcards represent diversity.
- Direct the groups to talk about what they know about each person on the cards.
- Have the groups select one card and complete the phrase: [Name the person] is like [the topic you are working on] because_____
- Complete the phrase: [Name the person] is not like [the topic you are working on] because_____.

TIPS

- Explain that *synectics* is derived from two Greek roots: *syn* (bringing together) and *ectics* (diverse elements). This activity draws from the metaphoric brain, which hold information holistically.
- There is a whole-model of teaching on synectics developed by the Cambridge Synectics Group.
- Select topics that relate to your work, the environment, or the group.