An Introduction to Systems Thinking and Wicked Problem Solving™

By Tom Wujec

How to Run DrawToast Workshops

DrawToast workshops are a great way to get groups to think freshly about mental models. In just 3 minutes, each person sketches a diagram of how to make toast. When comparing diagrams, people are shocked at how diverse the diagrams are, revealing a wide range of models of what's important in making toast. It's a great launch pad for drawing out what's really important to the group.

There are 8 Simple Steps to the DrawToast Exercise:

Step 1: Prepare

Get the ingredients: felt markers, thick paper stock, sticky notes or index cards, and masking tape. Stage your room with tables, chairs, and a clear wall where you can post your work. It's important to have enough room for all participants to see everyone's creations.

Step 2: Invite

In your invitation, set expectations that your meeting will focus on building a systems model of an important challenge - clarifying your vision, improving cash flow, figuring out the next bold challenge. Begin with a simple design exercise.

Step 3: Conduct

Run the meeting informally. Hand out markers and paper to everyone and ask people to draw a picture of how to make toast.

Give them 2-3 minutes.

You may want to play toast-making music...

Step 4: Reflect

Have each person hold up their drawing for all to see. (Let the laughter start) Have the group place their drawings on a large wall space and comment on the drawings; pointing out which are simple and complex, which have people and which don't.

Step 5: Video

Play the TED.com DrawToast video and let it explain the big ideas about systems thinking. After it plays, ask the group how many nodes they drew and what kind?

Step 6: Draw Your Challenge

Have people draw a picture how to improve what they are working on as a group. This can include almost anything, strategic or tactical. See 'Draw Questions' for inspiration. Make sure people draw individually and in silence.

Step 7: Share

Have people work at tables showing and explaining their diagrams. Compare and contrast the diagrams and see what is similar and different between them. What links and nodes are common?

Step 8: System

If you have the time, have the group develop a systems diagram of the challenges using sticky notes and drawn links. Building on the previous individual diagrams, have groups of 4-6 people create nodes and links to solve the challenges.

http://www.drawtoast.com/