THE CAROUSEL DESIGN

I. Goals/Outcome

1. To gather information from a number of people in an efficient and interesting manner
2. To fully involve all participants in creating a database about key questions
3. To manage the information efficiently and identify areas of priority

II. Background/Context

This design is an adaptation of a classic design and has several names: The Gallery Walk, The Walkabout, and The Carousel. All the names indicate movement, which is one of the key elements of this design. During a change process, leaders need to find ways to engage stakeholders and receive information and feedback from them. Because colleges and universities rarely have enough time for discussion and dialogue, different ways to solicit information are needed.

This design is one of the most interesting data-gathering designs we know. It is highly interactive and participative and, most importantly, very time efficient. This design can be used in a variety of ways to gather information about: 1) organizational climate, 2) stakeholder concerns, 3) a Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (S.W.O.T.'s) analysis, or 4) to get advice about organizational problems.

This design has an adaptation where you disseminate rather than gather information.

III. Logistics

Materials: Flipcharts, easels, magic markers for all participants, tape, timer, bell, or chimes
Space needs: Large, comfortable room where participants can move around easily
Time frame: 1 to 1.1/4 hours
Number of participants: 10 to 40
III. Implementation

We will use 20 participants and four questions as a model for this design.

The leader will have to do some upfront homework with this design and be very clear about the purposes of the meeting. If you want to do a S.W.O.T’s analysis about the institution or particular division, you would utilize four classic questions:

What are the strengths of our institution? (What do we do well?)
What are areas of weaknesses for our institution? (What do we need to improve?)
What are some opportunities we should be taking advantage of? (What excites you?)
What are some threats to this institution? (What makes you nervous?)

If you were to use this design to seek advice and information that would help the institution, you might ask the following questions:

What are the three greatest sources of tension within the college or university?
What is some advice you can give senior management that would improve institutional morale?
How can we further improve campus life for our undergraduates?
How can we further improve communication throughout the campus? Please be specific.

Helpful Hint

The ideal number of questions for this design is four. You can use up to six questions for larger groups, but this is the upper limit.

Once you have determined your focus questions, you should create four separate stations throughout the room with an easel and flipchart paper. Each station should have a focus question at the top of the flipchart.

The facilitator should have the group of 20 break into four groups of five participants. Do this by counting off one to four. This will give you randomly selected groups.

Make sure that each participant has a magic marker and have them stand in front of their assigned easel with the question written on the flipchart.

(When the group counts off, and you are number 3, you go to station #3.)

The facilitator should let participants know that their goal is to read the focus question at the top of the flipchart, and individually record their responses to the question. This is not about group agreement. We want individual responses. (This is why everyone has a magic marker.) If participants agree with other person’s ideas, they can indicate their agreement by checking off the idea. Each group is given 5 or 6 minutes to read the focus question and individually record responses.
An example:

#2 How can we further improve communication throughout the campus?

- The president’s office should produce daily e-mails about campus events ✓
- Re-institute the campus newsletter
- Have face-to-face meetings with each division ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Use the campus Web page to keep people informed ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Have the president visit our staff meetings ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
- Hold the convocation twice a year

At the end of 5 or 6 minutes, the facilitator should indicate by ringing a bell or chime that each small group of five should move clockwise to the next station.

Each group then reviews the input from the previous group, individually checks off the ideas with which they agree, and adds their own ideas to the list.

This process continues until all four groups have answered each question individually by rotating to all stations.

Once all questions have been answered, have each group return to the question where they first started. There will be a lot of new information added at this question/station. Give them several minutes to read the new information and indicate agreement by checking off the answers to the focus question.

The last step in this design is to have each original group report on the top four or five answers for their focus question. These will be easily recognized by their check marks. Keep this mini-presentation to about two minutes. The goal is to indicate the most important ideas and gain closure with this culminating activity.

Helpful Hint

You do not have each group go back and review all the answers to the focus questions, or do an entire second round. The activity will lose energy and you will have information overload.
### Schedule

1. Facilitator welcomes participants, shares purposes, and directions for the activity  
   10 minutes
2. Facilitator utilizes a counting off method to create randomly mixed groups  
   5 minutes
3. The four groups answer the focus questions and rotate to all stations  
   20-25 minutes
4. Groups return to their original question and read the information and 
   check off ideas they agree upon  
   10 minutes
5. Small groups select the top four or five ideas/answers for their focus 
   Question and prepare a brief presentation  
   5 minutes
6. Each small group makes a short presentation about their top four or five answers  
   10 minutes
7. Facilitator thanks participants and explains how the information will be utilized  
   2-3 minutes

Total time: approximately 1-1/4 hours