

Team Decision Making

The Tool	Nominal Group Technique (NGT)
What is it?	The Nominal Group Technique is a structured process that generates multiple contributions from all participants on a particular problem or issue. It prevents one or two people dominating the discussion while ensuring quieter group members participate. It results in a set of prioritised solutions or recommendations. However, as the name suggests, it's only "nominally" as participants do not interact as they would in other group processes group and rankings are achieved on an individual basis.
When to Use it	A team might want to use the nominal group technique (NGT) to: Generate many ideas Prioritise issues or ideas. Ensure everyone is heard Build consensus When there is controversy or conflict
What you need	Flip Chart Paper/Cards and pens for Participants

How to work with this

1. State an open-ended question (eg "What are some ways we could improve the information flow between shifts?").
2. Have each person spend several minutes in silence individually brainstorming all the possible ideas and jot these ideas down on cards
3. Ask each person to read, and elaborate on, *one* of his or her responses. Record these on a flipchart.
4. Continue gathering responses in round robin fashion asking each person for their second response and then their third response etc (one response per person each time) until all answers have been noted on flipcharts posted around the room.
 - No criticism is allowed, but clarification of responses is encouraged.
 - Encourage "hitchhiking," i.e., expanding upon another's statement. Ideas do not have to be from the participant's written list.
 - Participant may pass a turn and then add an idea at a subsequent turn.
5. Facilitate a Group discussion: After all ideas are recorded, the person who suggested the idea is given the opportunity to explain it further.
 - Restrict discussion to clarify meaning; the value or merit of ideas is not discussed
 - Duplicates may be combined.
 - Wording may be changed if the originator agrees.
 - Ideas are deleted only by unanimous agreement.
6. The nominal group technique often concludes with a prioritization process by assigning each of the final responses a letter or number.
7. Have each person evaluate the ideas individually and (anonymously) rank them according to their relative importance. (eg either 1st, 2nd, 3rd or best idea gets 5 points next best 4points, etc).

Team Tactics Tools & Techniques to Improve Performance

8. Collect the rankings from all participants and tabulate. Prepare a report illustrating the final ranking of ideas. For example:

Response	Participant 1 Ranked...	Participant 2 Ranked...	Participant 3 Ranked... of importance
A	1 st	2 nd	2 nd	5 = ranked 1 st
B	3 rd	1 st	3 rd	7 = ranked 3 rd
C	2 nd	3 rd	1 st	6 = ranked 2 nd
D	4 th	4 th	4 th	12 = ranked 4 th

Advantages and Disadvantages

The advantages of the NGT are that voting is anonymous and there is equal participation while distractions inherent in other group methods are minimized.

The disadvantages are that opinions may not converge in the voting process and the cross-fertilization, of ideas may be constrained.