Which Large Group Intervention?

**FUTURE SEARCH**
2.5 day including 2 nights
40 - 80 participants
larger groups in multisearch conference

**SEARCH CONFERENCE**
2.5 day including 2 nights
32+ participants, keymembers
larger groups in multisearch conference

**REAL TIME STRATEGIC CHANGE**
1 - 3 days
40 - > 2000 participants
several meetings and activities

**PARTICIPATIVE DESIGN**
4-5 meetings of 1-2 days
>30 participants

**CONFERENCE MODEL©**
5 conferences of 2+ days
80+ participants (>80 in parallel conferences)

**REAL TIME WORK DESIGN**
several conferences of 1 day
50 - 2400 participants
design team and implementation team

**WORK OUT**
1 - 2 days
20 - 200 participants

**REAL TIME STRATEGIC CHANGE**
1 - 3 days
40 - > 2000 participants
a range of meetings and activities

**OPEN SPACE**
1 - 5 days
40 - 500 participants

**WORLD CAFE**
0.5 day, possible follow-up meetings
15 - >100
larger groups in parallel meetings

**SIMU-REAL**
1 day
50 - 100 participants

**Toolbox choosing a Large Group Intervention method**

- search for desired future, common ground in community/organization
- willingness to use a set format
- search for desired future, rationalising conflicts in strategic contexts
- accent on strategic change, flexible format in process and participation
- collective vision and strategy
- problem identification or process improvement
- generate new ideas, planning action on a theme
- work on current issues, test future designs, learn about work system
- work design
- existing team
- with whole system or combinations of teams
- whole-system participative work on current issues, questions or problems

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Future Search

Purposes and results
- Joint formulation of future vision and strategy
- Plan for implementation of an existing vision or strategy
- Fast action on complex issues that lack a coordination structure

When to use
- Problems that cross the borders of the organisation or community
- Developing coalition
- Shared vision is desired, action plan is a necessity
- High time pressure, urgent questions
- An important change is at hand (merger, change of power)

Group size
60 – 80 (>80 in serial conferences)

Participants
Cross-section of stakeholders

Length
16 hours over three days (sleep twice)

Preparation time
3 – 6 month, monitoring results of actions during the following 12 month

Elements
- Review the past from perspectives of self, organisation or community and society; identify the events, trends and developments shaping the future
- Map the present in all its complexity; identify the prouds and sorries resulting from relations with the institution(s) or issue(s) at hand
- Create ideal future scenarios of the most desirable attainable future, 5 – 20 years ahead
- Find common ground and develop a shared vision
- Develop action plans

Characteristics
- Preparation group of participants
- Set format
- Work with mixed table groups and with stakeholder groups

Conditions for success
- Get the “whole system” in the room, invite a significant cross-section of all parties with a stake in the outcome
- Explore “the whole elephant” before seeking to fix any part, get everybody talking about the same world; think globally, act locally
- Put common ground and future focus front and centre while treating problems and conflicts as information, not action items
- Encourage self-management and responsibility for action by participants before, during, and after the future search

Developers
Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff

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# Search Conference

**Purposes and results**
- To identify, plan and implement the most desired future of a system, organisation or community
- Searching for common ground in strategic planning

**When to use**
- Planning process prior to a complete redesign of the system, making it democratic and participative
- Creating new types of organizing, to handle certain urgent or neglected matters
- Rationalization of conflicts in a strategic context
- Anticipating possible developments with high impact
- Searching for a theme for a learning community or research team

**Group size**
20 – 60 (more in multisearch conference)

**Participants**
A microcosm of the whole system, no external experts

**Length**
2 days, including two nights

**Preparation time**
1 – 18 month

**Elements**
- Environmental scan, analyzing history, present and future
- Exploration of the systems history and current situation, determination of the most desirable system
- Integrating the system with the environment, identifying constraints and conflicts and finding ways to deal with them
- Developing implementation plans and agreeing on next steps

**Characteristics**
- Set format, no experts from outside the system
- Rationalization of conflicts
- Making a collective map of the system, environment and strategic choices
- Often followed by a Participative Design Workshop

**Conditions for success**
- No fixed solutions beforehand
- Participants have responsibility for coordination and results
- Leadership style of sponsor facilitates work of action groups

**Developers**
Fred Emery en Eric Trist

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Real Time Strategic Change</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purposes and results</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To create a preferred future with system-wide action planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involving an entire organisation in fast and far-reaching change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When to use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complex or unclear situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development and implementation change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A lot of people need new competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mergers and reorganisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduction of new technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group size</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 &gt; 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal and external stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0,5 day – 4 days each conference</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3 months per conference; lead time &gt; 2 months</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Design team events, including sponsors</td>
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<tr>
<td>• One or more large group conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-managed table groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Common database of strategic information available to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A change process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Format is custom-designed by a design team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Highly structured and organised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working in real time: simultaneous planning and implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Current reality is key driver, not what is supposed to happen</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Logistics-team (depending on group size)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Conditions for success</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Whole system in the room, at least once in the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preparation with a diverse design team</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Commitment leaders to contribution of employees and to distribution of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No hidden agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathie Dannemiller and Robert Jacobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**The Conference Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purposes and results</th>
<th>Redesign of an organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **When to use**      | • When system wide redesign is necessary  
                        • Innovative thinking is required  
                        • Urgent questions for redesign  
                        • Redesign also requires changes in culture |
| **Group size**       | < 100 (> 100 in parallel conferences) |
| **Participants**     | • About 1/3 of the members the organisation visits all conferences; as many employees as possible attend at least one conference  
                        • External stakeholder groups (customers, suppliers) |
| **Length**           | 5 conferences of 2-3 days, alternated by meetings in small groups |
| **Preparation time** | 1-3 month for each conference |
| **Elements**         | 5 conferences  
                        1. Visioning conference: future vision  
                        2. Customer conference: relation with customers/suppliers  
                        3. Technical conference: current working processes  
                        4. Design conference: new working processes  
                        5. Implementation conference: new way of working |
| **Characteristics**  | • Series of coherent conferences, small meetings in between  
                        • “Walk-throughs” involving larger organisation  
                        • Cross-functional and cross-hierarchic planning group  
                        • Data team, logistic team and communication team |
| **Conditions for success** | • Patience, planning and persistence  
                        • Intensive communication  
                        • Top shares part of the decision making with participants  
                        • Involving clients and suppliers in the process  
                        • No desire for instant solutions |
| **Developers**       | Dick and Emily Axelrod |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Purposes and results</strong></th>
<th>Redesign of organisation or processes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>When to use</strong></td>
<td>• Organisation wide redesign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Everyone needs to be involved</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Urgent questions for redesign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Redesign asks for change in culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group size</strong></td>
<td>&gt;30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>Employees, no external stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length</strong></td>
<td>4-5 conferences of 2 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation time</strong></td>
<td>Depending on number of participants and urgency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elements</strong></td>
<td>• Education-workshops with management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gathering and analyzing data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Redesign in (often parallel) workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>• Six design principles (critical conditions) used to redesign work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bottom-up process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Company-wide education is first step</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Each level designs, coordinates and controls its own work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Multiskilling is the norm, using the “skill-matrix”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conditions for success</strong></td>
<td>• Underlying structures need to change, to generate ownership from the majority of workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Management wants to share power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developers</strong></td>
<td>Fred and Merrilyn Emery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Purposes and results
Redesign of organisation or processes

### When to use
- Organisation wide redesign
- Everyone needs to be involved
- Urgent questions for redesign
- Redesign asks for change in culture

### Group size
50 - 2400

### Participants
Management and employees, external stakeholders

### Length
Several conferences of 1-2 days

### Preparation time
Depending on number of participants and urgency

### Elements
- Launch conference with the whole system
- Process conference
- Design conference
- Deep dives for training, compensations, roles and responsibilities
- Implementation conference with the whole system

### Characteristics
- Whole system present at launch and implementation
- Interim activities of a Research and Design team
- Implementation team
- Mini-conferences to manage process, design and “deep dives”

### Conditions for success
- Investment of a lot of time
- Top management shares decision making with participants
- Clients and suppliers are involved
- Task groups take care of specific tasks in the process

### Developers
Kathie Dannemiller and Paul Tolchinsky
## Open Space

| Purposes and results | The creation of self-managed meetings that generate high levels of ownership  
| | Exploration of plans and possibilities  
| | Initiation of new networks/taskforces/actiongroups around topics |
| When to use | Resolving complex or conflict-ridden issues in a short period of time  
| | When innovation and ownership are the desired outcomes  
| | Creating community spirit  
| | Exploring and planning new possibilities for action |
| Group size | 10 - > 1000 (limited only by the size of venue) |
| Participants | All stakeholders interested, whoever comes are the right people |
| Length | 1 – 3 days |
| Preparation time | As long as it takes to invite and get people into the venue (1 day - …. ) |
| Elements | Central theme is predefined  
| | Plenary session in a circle  
| | Facilitator lays out format and ground rules  
| | Generation of themes and making an agenda  
| | Working in self-organising small groups  
| | Marketplace to share results  
| | Plenary session for prioritizing issues and developing action plans |
| Characteristics | Minimal structure, simple rules, emerging contents  
| | Maximum self-organisation of participants  
| | Facilitator is as much as possible “invisible”  
| | Set of reports is ready for all participants at the end of the event |
| Conditions for success | Voluntary self-selection for participation  
| | People are able to self-organise; whatever happens is the only thing that could happen |
| | Keep it simple |
| Developer | Harrison Owen |

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# World Café

| Purposes and results | • Accessing collective intelligence, by creating a living network of conversation around questions that matter; sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action  
|                     | • Bringing forth the future, by discovering shared meaning |
| When to use         | • Exploring burning questions  
|                     | • Sharing knowledge to stimulate innovative thinking and create possibilities for action |
| Group size          | 12 - >1000 |
| Participants        | People with an interest in the questions that matter |
| Length              | 2 – 3 hours |
| Preparation time    | As long as it takes to invite people to participate |
| Elements            | • Café host explains purpose and logistics  
|                     | • Progressive rounds (usually three) of conversations of 15-30 minutes each moving between small tables, exploring questions that matter, connecting diverse perspectives  
|                     | • Collective visualisation of process and results, sharing in a whole group conversation |
| Characteristics     | • Café as a metaphor for an informal web of conversations, hosted by a facilitator  
|                     | • Listening together for patterns, insights and deeper questions, sharing collective discoveries  
|                     | • Many variations possible: poster cafés, passion cafés, combinations with interactive creative techniques  
|                     | • Simply to organise with high profits |
| Conditions for success | • Well-crafted questions  
|                      | • Hospitable space  
|                      | • Thoughtfulness, artistry and care in hosting  
|                      | • Listen to other perspectives, be prepared to be surprised  
|                      | • It is not about detailed action plans |
| Developers          | Juanita Brown and David Isaacs |

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# Simu-Real

**Purposes and results**
- Sensing and solving complex problems
- Redesigning and trying out of structures or processes

**When to use**
- Testing, analyzing or changing of existing models and structures
- Work out and testing of new processes or organisation structures
- Reflecting on and learning about an existing procedure
- Crossing boundaries of departments and teams, getting a shared image of the complexity of the system

**Group size**
Limited only by size of venue

**Participants**
A microcosm of the organisation, or all members if possible

**Length**
1 day

**Preparation time**
Depending on the topic and tasks

**Elements**
- Planning committee selects topic and decision process
- Room arrangement for simulation
- Action – stop – reflection and analyzing moments
- Determining in fish bowl style what needs to be changed

**Characteristics**
- Action-reflection format
- Room arrangement reflects organisation’s structure
- People act their organizational role
- Working together on real organisation tasks

**Conditions for success**
- Facilitator needs expertise in process consultation
- Decision process is agreed upon in advance and explained to participants

**Developer**
Donald Klein

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