Modified Delphi Technique

The Delphi Technique was designed to gather input from participants without requiring them to work face-to-face. Often, the process is used to find consensus among experts who have differing views and perspectives. The Delphi Technique enables group problem-solving using an iterative process of problem definition and discussion, feedback, and revisions. The Modified Delphi Technique described here uses mail or email to gather information, provide feedback, and report conclusions.

Preliminary Work to Be Completed by the Planning Committee or Sponsor

The planning committee or sponsor must describe the problem to be addressed or the issue to be discussed, and choose a communications manager to send messages, collect responses, and provide summaries. The planning committee should write or review the first questionnaire to be sent to participants.

Round One – First Questionnaire:

In Round One, the questionnaire defines the problem or issue and asks each participant to list as many responses (ideas, solutions, approaches, etc.) as possible. If this is a mail survey, the response form simply lists the question and provides blank lines for responses. If using email, the message is designed to allow input after hitting the "reply" email option. An example question might be, "what actions could our committee take to improve retail sales in the downtown district? List as many as you can, using just a few words or a phrase." Or "what should be our theme for this year's festival? List as many ideas as you can, using just a few words or a phrase." Participants respond anonymously.

Round One – Compiling Responses:

The communications manager compiles all the responses and creates the second questionnaire, with space for participants to respond to each idea.

Round Two – Second Questionnaire:

The second questionnaire includes all the responses, and asks participants to evaluate each idea. Participants are asked to clarify or add to ideas, comment on the feasibility of ideas, brainstorm additional strategies to implement ideas, and suggest new ideas. Participants respond anonymously.

Round Two – Compiling Responses:

Again, the communications manager continues to develop the list of ideas, which now includes comments, additions, clarifications, and strategies. The communications manager develops the third questionnaire, with the additional information provided in Round Two.

Round Three – Third Questionnaire:

The communications manager repeats the process of compiling information, sharing it with participants, and collecting feedback. The third questionnaire may ask respondents to rank ideas in order of importance, in order of timeliness, or other criteria such as "my willingness to work on this project."

Round Three – Compiling Responses:

This is the final round of compiling responses, unless the planning committee decides that participants need additional rounds of input and feedback.

Resolution and Report

By this round, the feasible ideas have been identified, and set in priority order by participants. The communications manager responds to the group with the ideas or strategies, with details of implementation, arranged in priority order.

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION
College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences