

World Cafe Interview Exercise - step by step setup & instructions

The World Cafe is a group discussion/meeting methodology that we adopted for an interview exercise (<http://www.theworldcafe.com/>). We use it to assess communication skills and group/team interactions, which can be hard to assess through application materials and one-on-one interviews. In the end most people do fine, but once in a while we feel we really pick up on red flags that we might otherwise not have found out about! We also surveyed applicants last year who overall had a very positive response to it and thought it broke the day up, was creative, and made the day more relaxed/engaging.

Materials: 1 table with chairs for each group of 3-4 applicants plus a chair for the group facilitator/observer. Brown package wrapping paper (available in dollar stores in rolls) to cover the tables (exam table paper works in a pinch too!), markers/crayons (pile for each table), whiteboard or flip chart.

- 1) Cover tables with the paper so whole surface can be written on and put a pile of colored pens/markers/crayons on the table.
- 2) Seat applicants in groups with 1 faculty facilitator/observer at each table.
- 3) Applicants get 15-20 minutes for each question. We do two questions (see below) and then ask the groups to select a scribe and a reporter for each exercise. We mix them up for each question (have a few applicants switch tables) to keep group dynamics fresh.
- 4) We pose the question (orally and written on the flip chart or whiteboard) and then applicants get to work. The facilitators help move things along but are also there to observe (and fill out an eval afterward).
- 5) When it is time to “report out” each table’s reporter is “interviewed” by the person leading the World Cafe. We make it fun and frame it as a radio or television interview (complete with a random tubular object doubling as a microphone).

Table Host/Facilitator instructions:

When you participate in the World Cafe, you are more of a facilitator and should not be a recorder/presenter, nor the primary person providing ideas. Your role is to gently encourage people at your table to brainstorm ideas which they should organize and write down as they emerge. If the group is completely lost or missing a huge area to consider, you can ask questions to lead them in an appropriate direction, but we want the candidates to come up with ideas and work with each other. You should, however, definitely participate and not simply sit at the table and observe.

General concepts we’re looking for (other than their interactions):

- 1) Multi-systems approach -- Who (which experts or types of people)? Resources? Treatment? Research? Prevention?
- 2) Patient education and outreach concepts -- Content and wording (appropriate level)? Common concerns/questions? Appropriate use of social media?

Sample questions:

- 1) A new virus has broken out in _____. Little is known about the virus. The mortality rate is close to 40% and higher in children and the elderly. Your group is tasked by the CDC to put together the initial response team being sent to the area. Outline your group's main functions and approach.

OR

There has been the first confirmed local mosquito transmission of Zika virus in the Washington, DC area. You are part of the CDC team planning the initial Emergency Response to this new outbreak....

- 2) It is 9 months later and now a vaccine for the virus has been developed and released. Design a patient information website for the vaccine. Then write a tweet (140 characters) advertising the vaccine/website. Who will RT4U?

Just for reference, an example CDC Response plan (specifics on the Emergency Response Team in Appendix B): <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/pdfs/zika-draft-interim-conus-plan.pdf>