

Challenge Clinics!

Problem: You have a team who is looking to have stronger rapport, but they're having a hard time building it -- either because they hardly overlap in their work, or they are on totally different time zones and offices, or maybe they just kinda don't "get each other". Or your team meeting has incredibly low energy, with little or unbalanced participation. Maybe you've tried retreats, team building activities, weekly update meetings, and other traditional interventions – but none have quite worked.

Solution: Challenge Clinics work wonders for both high-performing and struggling teams. Challenge Clinics are a type of meeting structure that, after just two or three sessions, every team we've ever introduced them to have ended up loving, depending on, and finding they build camaraderie while simultaneously improving the quality of their work and projects. On the next page we walk you through the step-by-step process.

Important: Make sure you let the team know in advance you want to try something called a Challenge Clinic, and that they only have to try them for 2 sessions. If they feel helpful, you can build them into a cadence (some teams do them every 2 weeks, some monthly, some quarterly). If they don't help the team, no problem, you can drop them (this lets them know it's an experiment they will have input about). Book an hour for the first one. By the third Clinic, some teams get really fast and can shrink them down to 30 minutes, but most love giving them a full hour to really dig deep into a project or challenge.

First: If the group is new to this format – Make an extra 10 min to share with them this overview:
Why a Challenge Clinic?

- Every Challenge Clinic includes one Focus Person that brings a project or challenge they're facing, and could use new ideas or feedback about. The Challenge Clinic is a structure for how to provide ideas and feedback to them.
- Challenge Clinics strengthen teams because they make time to really learn and discuss what others are working on, in an energizing way.
- They leverage "outsider" ideas: Those not deeply involved in the project can offer new insights and help find blind spots, those well-involved will offer insider knowledge 😊

Bonus: Most people love attending Challenge Clinics even when they're not the Focus Person because the ideas and feedback shared often are helpful for their own projects and work. Most teams that start monthly or quarterly Challenge Clinics have some of the highest attendance at them of any meeting (even when they're optional).

Steps	Materials Needed
<p>Step One: Focus Person Brief</p> <p>2.5 min: The Focus Person shares 3 of any of the following to give context (they won't have time to share all of these, so they can pick which apply to them):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project/ Issue: What is the project or issue you're working on? ● Goals: What are 2-3 success metrics for it? ● Possible options: What have you already tried or are considered trying? ● Root cause: If you're stuck, where are you stuck? Why do you think you're stuck? ● Who is impacted (positively or negatively) by this? <p>Have them end their brief with a clear "ask", such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "I'd like ideas for how to achieve X, Y, Z goals without creating customer backlash" ● "I'd like feedback for how to improve my current proposal by 20% (nothing drastic, but small tweaks to make it even better)" 	<p>Pen and blank paper for everyone</p> <p>Timer or timer app</p> <p>Optional: Write ground rules on the board or have them projected – such as "Timer is king! If the timer cuts you off, make note of what you didn't finish saying and follow up with the person after the Clinic"</p>
<p>Step 2: "Press Conference"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1 min quiet brainstorm: Give everyone time to write down 1-3 questions they might ask the Focus Person to further understand the issue. They should be <i>open</i> questions that help understand what kind of advice and ideas are most helpful to the Focus Person. See the last page for ideas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why a quiet brainstorm first? This kick-starts "curiosity" for the audience's brains, which helps with the next step ☺ ● 15 min Question Roundrobin: Go in clockwise order and give everyone the chance to ask just one question, or "pass" if their question was asked already. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Step 2 helps to ensure the audience has the info they need to give input. ● Important: User a timer to give every question 3 minutes total (including answers from the Focus Person). Use a timer with a nice chime sound when time is up, so it's the timer "cutting off" the person who goes over on time. ● If you have more than six people in audience, ask for 6 volunteers for questions, most people are ok not asking questions if you let them know you want to ensure there's time for the idea/feedback step. 	<p>Tip: It's important that Step 2 feel like a press conference, in that there's very short answers from the Focus Person, this is not a time for debate or discussion ☺ the timer will help with this.</p>
<p>Step 3: Input!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3 min Quiet brainstorm: Give everyone a fresh piece of paper, have them write their name on it. This is where they can write down their input (ideas, feedback, advice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage innovative thinking, not just practical boring thinking -- Silly ideas and input helps keep brains positive and often pushes past obvious ideas. ● 15 min: Roundrobin: Go around the room and have everyone share 1 or 2 thoughts /ideas/feedback they have. They only have 2 min each, tell them "We can't all share everything we wrote in the roundrobin – we'd be here forever – but we can share 	<p>Tip: Have the Focus Person take notes of their own as people share their ideas/ input.</p>

what we think might be helpful for the *full* group to hear. Anything else is written down and will be turned into the Focus Person – so no ideas are lost”

- o **When folks are sharing their ideas and thoughts, the Focus Person just says “thank you!” -- no response or debate is needed from the Focus Person.** For example, if in the roundrobin one audience member says “I think this might exclude our Europe team because it’s in the evening when they’re sleeping”, then the Focus Person can just say “Cool, thanks Dan, good point”. They don’t have to explain or be defensive, just appreciate the contribution and let the next person share.

Optional Step 4: Open Floor

10 min: If time allows, the Focus Person can ask specific questions from the audience on what they want to hear more about. For example, they can say “Ok, I’d love to use the Open Floor time to hear more thoughts on Dan’s idea that we could launch this in a different season”. Anyone can talk, it’s the chance for a free-form discussion.

To Close the Clinic:

Have the audience turn in their paper so the Focus Person has everyone’s input, even the stuff that there wasn’t time to share aloud. They can follow up with people if they have questions about what people wrote (after the Clinic).

Have the Focus Person say thank you, genuinely, for offering so many angles, view points, and ideas. They do not have to incorporate them all (they can’t!). **Agreement with all viewpoints is not the goal**, the goal is diversity of thought, as this increases innovation and improves project outcomes for all 😊

Tip: Let folks know at the end the date for the next Challenge Clinic. Clarify how people can contact you if they want to request to be the next Focus Person at the next Clinic.

Ideas for Questions to Ask During “Press Conference”

1. Narrowing it Down

- A. Which part in particular are you most hungry for feedback on?
- B. Are you looking for big-sky ideas, or just ‘make it 10% better’ ideas? What kinds of ideas are you *not* looking for?
- C. What made you consider ____ versus ____?
- D. Which part of this is flexible vs not flexible?

2. Past

- A. What was tried in the past for this, how did that go?
- B. What barriers came up last time?
- C. What part of this idea or project has been loved, controversial and disliked by folks?
- D. Who was affected by this in the past?

3. Present

- A. How complete is the project currently? Is it 30%, 50%, 70% done?
- B. Who else is working on this kind of thing or related components?
- C. How would you rate the project now? What do you think is keeping it from a better rating?

4. Future

- A. How do you see this connecting with long-term/ yearly priorities?
- B. If this goes well, who all should feel the benefit?
- C. What’s the deadline, and what’s the next milestone you’d like to see?
- D. What could go wrong with this? What obstacles or pitfalls are you watching out for?