

Tool 19: Delphi

Aim of the tool

To explore and clarify issues, identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and try to reach a consensus among experts on the issue at stake.

When to use it?

In the early phases of an MSP to clarify specific issues, or in a later phase to make a well-considered decision based on detailed examinations of possible options.

What is the Delphi method?

The Delphi technique, mainly developed by Dalkey and Helmer (1963), is a method for achieving convergence of opinions from a panel of experts on a certain topic. The method is designed as a group communication process aiming at conducting detailed examinations and discussions of a specific issue as input for goal-setting, policy investigation, or predicting the occurrence of future events (C. Hsu et al (2007)). As such, the tool can be useful in the early stages of an MSP, or in the last stage, when a decision needs to be made.



From: www.fruitzicht.com/de-delphi-methode-en-uw-visie-op-de-toekomst/



Delphi method - Step by step

Step 1: Choose a facilitator: The first step is to choose your facilitator. You may wish to take on this role yourself, or find a 'neutral' person within the MSP. It is useful to have someone that is familiar with research and data collection.

Step 2: Identify Your Experts: The Delphi technique relies on a panel of experts that discuss the issue to be explored. Experts can be a group of stakeholders from the MSP who are experts on the issue.

Step 3: Define the Problem: What is the problem or issue you are seeking to understand? The experts need to be clear on what they are commenting on, so ensure you provide a clear and comprehensive definition of the problem.

Step 4: Expert round 1: Ask general questions to gain a broad understanding of the experts' views on future events. The questions may go out in the form of questionnaires or surveys.

Step 5: Delphi round 1: Collate and summarize the responses removing any irrelevant content and look for common viewpoints. From the relevant answers, make new questions to delve deeper into the topic and clarify specific issues. These questions may also go out in the form of questionnaires or surveys. Experts will elaborate on the questions and clarify where needed.

Step 6: Intermediate summary: Based on the first round, make an intermediate summary of the experts' first responses and elaboration on issues to be clarified.

Step 7: Delphi round 2: Re-examine, comment and complement the findings of the first round. Based on this process, think of the final set of questions. The final questionnaire focuses on supporting the decision-making. Refine the areas of agreement. What is it that experts have agreed on?

Step 8: Expert round 2: The expert panel will work on the final set questions.

Step 9: Act on Your Findings & Final Report: After this round of questions, your experts will have, we hope, reached a consensus. Analyze the findings and put in place a plan to deal with future risks and opportunities to your project.

If needed, you can set another round to reach a closer consensus.

This tool can be used in workshops but is often done by email iterations.

Learn more

C. Hsu, B. A. Sanford (2007). The Delphi Technique: Making sense of consensus. *Practical assessment, Research and Evaluation* Vol. 12 nr. 10.

Dalkey, Norman and Olaf Helmer (1963, April). An experimental application of the Delphi method to the user of experts. *Management science*, 9, 3, pp. 458-467.

(Based on: 'Delphi Technique, a step by step guide' from www.projectsmart.co.uk)