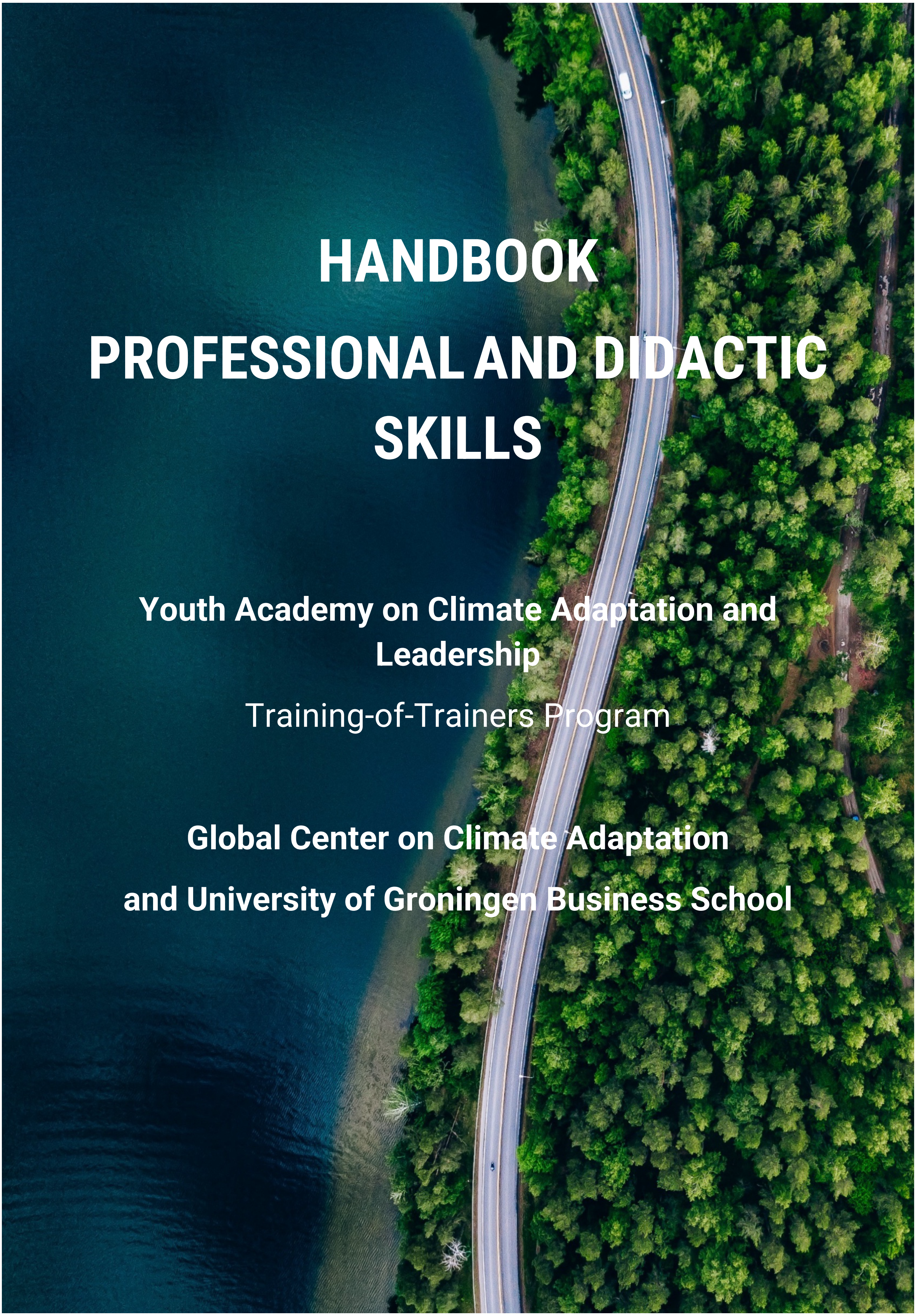


HANDBOOK

PROFESSIONAL AND DIDACTIC SKILLS

Youth Academy on Climate Adaptation and Leadership

Training-of-Trainers Program

Global Center on Climate Adaptation

and University of Groningen Business School

GLOBAL
CENTER ON
ADAPTATION

AUTHORS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was developed for

Global Center on Adaptation

GLOBAL
CENTER ON
ADAPTATION

ABOUT THE GLOBAL CENTER ON ADAPTATION

The Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) is an international organization, hosted by the Netherlands, which works as a solutions broker to accelerate action and support for adaptation solutions from the international to the local, in partnership with the public and private sector, to ensure we learn from each other and work together for a climate resilient future.

This report was developed by

University of Groningen Business School

university of
groningen

faculty of economics
and business

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL

The University of Groningen Business School (UGBS) is part of the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Groningen. It provides degree and nondegree executive programs to business professionals to accelerate their learning and effectiveness. Working together with partners from both the public and private sector, it aims to enhance the exchange of knowledge and foster capability development to contribute to the major societal transitions.

Foreword

This Handbook contains articles to support professional skills for participants of the Youth Academy on Climate Adaptation and Leadership – a training-of-trainer's model developed by the Global Center on Adaptation in partnership with the University of Nairobi and the University of Groningen. The University of Groningen Business School in the Netherlands is one of the program's partners and has compiled this Handbook. This Handbook is the revised edition of the Handbooks, Part One and Part Two, which were released in 2024.

The content of this Handbook focuses on the competences and skills of young leaders in inspiring and supporting people in climate adaptation and in building sustainable living conditions. This requires knowledge of personal leadership and entrepreneurial skills, knowledge of behavioral change, (intercultural) communication, and didactic skills as a trainer.

Most of the articles discussed in this Handbook are initially developed for (international) academic students at the University of Groningen and Dutch profit and non-profit organizations and **compiled by the Professional Skills Team of the Faculty of Economics and Business**. Others are specifically written for participants in this Youth Leadership & Education Program.

We wish everyone who uses this handbook much enjoyment in implementing programs and hope the material will contribute to the goal of climate adaptation!

Representatives of the University of Groningen and by building upon the efforts of the Professional Skills Team of FEB

Note:

In this Handbook, we use the terms participant, client, conversation partner, pupil, student, etc. when referring to the person participating in a training program. We use the terms trainer, teacher, consultant, coach, etc. to refer to the professional who delivers a program.

This Handbook is provided for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors/organization accept no responsibility for errors, omissions, or consequences arising from the use of this information.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Adapting to climate change requires behavioral change

We can support people in creating sustainable living conditions and achieving their goals by inspiring them and helping them adapt their behavior to climate change. Focusing on behavioral change is key to effectively adapting to climate change and building a sustainable future.

Why is paying attention to behavioral change important?

Here are some key reasons:

- **Effective implementation**: Adapting to climate change requires changes in daily habits, such as saving water, using less energy, and adopting sustainable farming practices. Without these changes, even the best plans won't work well.
- **Community engagement**: When people change their behavior, it can inspire others to do the same. This collective effort is essential for building strong communities that can handle climate impacts.
- **Long-term sustainability**: Lasting change needs a shift in mindset and habits. Sustainable behaviors ensure that adaptation efforts continue over time.
- **Resource management:** Using resources efficiently, like reducing waste, banning plastic bags (as in Kenya) and using renewable energy, helps manage resources better and ensures they are available for the future.
- **Policy support:** When people understand the importance of their actions, they are more likely to support climate policies. This helps governments implement effective strategies.
- **Innovation and adaptation:** Behavioral change can lead to new solutions for climate challenges, driving innovation and better practices.

Why is changing behavior so difficult?

Understanding the challenges can help us find better ways to support and encourage positive behavior changes. Changing behavior is hard for several reasons:

- **Habits:** People get used to doing things a certain way. These habits become automatic, making it tough to change.
- **Comfort zone:** Change can be uncomfortable. People like to stay in their comfort zone, where they feel safe and secure.

- **Fear of failure:** People worry that they might fail if they try something new. This fear can stop them from making changes.
- **Lack of motivation:** Without a strong reason or motivation, it's hard to stick to new behaviors.
- **Resistance to change:** People often resist change because it requires effort and can be stressful.
- **Social pressure:** Friends, family, the surrounding area and social influences can influence behavior. If they don't support the change, it can be harder to make it happen.

What are the reasons why people change their behavior?

People change their behavior for various reasons. Understanding these reasons can help us support and encourage positive changes. Here are some key points:

- **Negative consequences**: When the negative effects of current actions become too great, people are motivated to change. For example, experiencing extreme weather events such as floods or heatwaves can prompt people to adopt more sustainable practices.
- **New awareness**: Realizing that change is possible can inspire people to take action. Learning about renewable energy options or seeing successful community recycling programs can create this awareness.
- **Visible benefits**: When the benefits of new behaviors are clear and visible, people are more likely to adopt them. For instance, seeing the cost savings from using energy-efficient appliances can motivate someone to make the switch.
- **Influence of others**: Hearing from someone who has successfully changed, especially someone trusted and respected, can be very motivating. For example, if a community leader adopts sustainable farming practices, others may follow this example.
- **Life changes**: Major life events, like moving to a new house or starting a new job, can prompt people to change their behavior. These moments can create opportunities for adopting environmentally friendly habits, such as setting up a home garden or using public transportation.

Commitment to change in a formula

The willingness to change (W) depends on several factors, summarized by the formula:

$$W = (D + V + S) - C$$

- **Dissatisfaction (D)**: Feeling unhappy with the current situation creates the need for change. For example, being dissatisfied with high energy bills can motivate someone to seek energy-saving solutions.

- **Vision (V)**: Having a clear vision of how things could be better provides direction and motivation. Imagining a cleaner, greener future can inspire people to take action.
- **Steps (S)**: Knowing the first practical steps to take helps people start the process of change. Providing information on how to reduce waste or conserve water can guide people in the right direction.
- **Cost (C)**: The psychological and economic costs of change must be manageable. If the costs are too high, people might be discouraged from changing. Offering incentives or subsidies for eco-friendly products can help reduce these costs.

How to inspire and succeed in changing people's behavior?

- **Understand the reason**: Knowing why someone wants to change can help you better support them. For example, if someone wants to reduce their carbon footprint, you can provide tips on how to do so.
- **Set clear goals**: Clear and achievable goals keep people motivated and focused. For instance, setting a goal to reduce household waste by 50% in six months can provide a clear target.
- **Provide support**: Offer encouragement and support throughout the process. Positive feedback and being there to listen can make a big difference. Joining community groups or online forums can provide additional support.
- **Be patient**: Changing behavior takes time. Be patient and understand that there might be setbacks along the way. Encourage people to keep going and not give up.
- **Celebrate successes**: Celebrate small victories to keep motivation high and show that progress is being made. For example, celebrating milestones like reducing energy consumption or planting a certain number of trees can boost morale.

How to ensure that behavior change sticks?

In your role as a leader and trainer, you need a range of skills to inspire and encourage people in communities and organizations to change their behavior and ensure that this behavioral change is lasting, to create sustainable living conditions. This handbook focuses on several essential skills.

As a **traine**r you play a key role by translating knowledge into practice, creating space for reflection, and using experiential learning. Through repetition, feedback, and making progress visible, new behaviors become embedded.

As a **leader** you strengthen this process by acting as a role model, mobilizing peers, and shaping social norms. Young people especially learn from one another; when climate-adaptive behavior becomes part of group identity and everyday routines, it is more likely to last.

2. Entrepreneurial skills

Entrepreneurial skills are the abilities and knowledge that help people reach their goals by starting and running their own organisation. These skills help people turn ideas into reality and create new opportunities. Entrepreneurial skills enable people to navigate the challenges and opportunities and are valuable for anyone who wants to thrive in a dynamic environment.

Below is a list of essential entrepreneurial skills.

- **Vision and passion**: Having a clear vision and being passionate. Staying committed to long-term goals and driven to achieve them.
- **Strategic thinking**: Setting clear long-term goals and objectives, creating sustainable plans. Developing and executing strategies. Anticipating and responding to trends.
- **Problem-solving**: Identifying and analyzing problems. Developing and implementing effective solutions. Adapting to changing circumstances.
- **Creativity and innovation**: Ability to generate new ideas and solutions. Thinking outside the box. Developing unique products or services. Finding practical ways to adapt to changing conditions.
- **Leadership and management**: Inspiring and motivating a team to take action. Managing relationships and building networks. Delegating tasks and responsibilities. Managing resources and ensuring projects are completed on time and within budget.
- **Emotional intelligence:** Recognizing, understanding, managing, and influencing one's own emotions and the emotions of others.
- **Resilience and adaptability**: Bouncing back from setbacks and failures. Adapting to new challenges and opportunities. Maintaining a positive attitude and perseverance.
- **Communication skills:** Articulating ideas clearly and persuasively. Listening actively and empathetically. Building strong relationships with stakeholders. Effectively spreading awareness and educating people.
- **Networking**: Connecting with people and building and maintaining professional relationships. Leveraging connections for opportunities, support and community building. Collaborating with others to achieve goals.
- **Client focus**: Understanding client needs and preferences. Providing excellent client service. Building long-term client relationships.
- **Risk management**: Assessing and mitigating potential risks. Making informed decisions under uncertainty. Balancing risk and reward.
- **Financial literacy**: Understanding financial statements and metrics. Managing budgets and cash flow. Making strategic financial decisions.

- **Technical skills**: Utilizing technology to enhance operations. Staying updated with trends and advancements. Implementing digital tools and platforms.
- **Sales and marketing**: Promoting products or services effectively. Understanding market dynamics and client behavior. Developing and executing marketing campaigns.
- **Negotiation skills**: Reaching mutually beneficial agreements. Handling conflicts and disputes. Building win-win relationships.

In your role as a leader and trainer, you need entrepreneurial skills to raise awareness about the need for climate adaptation and facilitate people to change their behavior to respond to climate change and create a sustainable future. This handbook focuses on several essential entrepreneurial skills.

PERSONAL LEADERSHIP

3. Reflecting: what, so what, now what

Reflecting helps you to become more self-aware and to understand the impact of your actions on others. The model What – So what – Now what, is a tool for reflecting on experiences and learning from them. There are three stages. The stages are interconnected, with each one building upon the insights gained from the previous stage.

1. **"What?" establishes the foundation by focusing on objective description.** It prompts the individual to gather the facts and details of the experience without immediate interpretation or judgment.

   Your action in this stage: Describe the experience or event: What happened? Who was involved? What was the context?

2. **"So What?" transitions from observation to analysis and sense-making.** It encourages the individual to make sense of the "What?" by exploring their emotional responses, connecting the experience to prior knowledge, identifying patterns, and uncovering potential implications. This stage helps individuals move beyond merely recounting events to understanding their significance.

   Your action in this stage: Reflect on the experience: What did you learn/find challenging? How have your feelings, assumptions, beliefs have influenced your behavior? What surprised you? What were the consequences of your actions?

3. **"Now What?" transitions from reflection into action.** Drawing upon the insights from the "What?" and "So What?" stages, this stage focuses on developing concrete steps for improvement, future application of learning, and personal or professional growth. It transforms reflection from a passive process of thinking to an active process of planning and doing.

   Your action in this stage: Consider the implications of what you've learned: How will this experience change your future behavior? What will you do next time? What skills do you need to develop?

The connection between these stages is crucial as it allows for a deeper level of understanding and more effective action. By regularly reflecting on our experiences, we can identify areas for improvement and make more informed decisions in the future.

Sources:

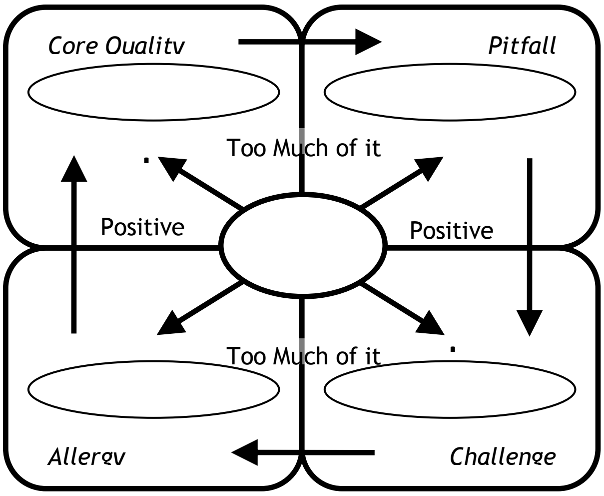
Borton, T. (1970). Reach touch and teach: student concerns and process education.

Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D., & Jasper, M. (2001). Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professions: A user's guide. https://www.simplypsychology.org/what-so-what-now-what.html

4. Understanding your core qualities

If you understand your own qualities, weaknesses, allergies, and challenges better, you can build better relationships. Dutch business manager Daniël Ofman introduced the concept of core qualities and core quadrants (1992). This is a model for describing a person's essential characteristics and for a better understanding of the process of your interaction with others (the interpersonal process between people). Watch this video to understand in less than 15 minutes what core qualities are or read the following text.

A core quadrant revolves around the four sides of one quality: The core quality itself, the pitfall of that core quality (too much of something beautiful), the challenge of the core quality (the positive opposite of the pitfall), and the allergy (too much of the challenge) that comes with that core quality.



Core quality
According to Ofman, everybody naturally has several core qualities or typical characteristics that color everything you do and see. Unlike skills that are acquired, core qualities are innate and form the core of a person. A person's core quality is special, and if you were to take that away, you would not recognize that person anymore. A core quality is always potentially present. You cannot 'switch' it off. If we deal with our core quality more clearly and consciously, we can let it shine through in our work and life.

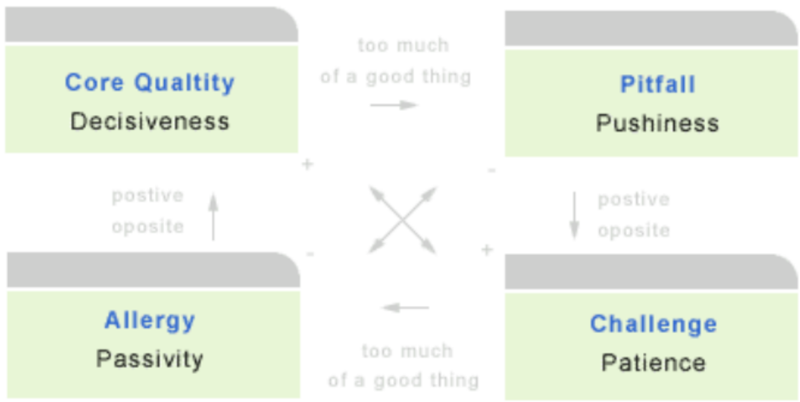
Pitfall
According to Ofman, with the core quality comes the pitfall. Which is too much of something beautiful. Core quality and pitfalls are inextricably intertwined. For instance, a person who is very good at analyzing may lean towards indecisiveness.

Challenge
You also have a challenge. If for example your core quality is 'determination', your pitfall may be 'pushiness' (too much determination). With pushiness comes your challenge, the opposite

of pushiness. Maybe ‘patience’? If you are patiently determined, or determined patience, you are very effective. Often, we see our challenge in other people.

Allergy
Your allergy is a ‘too much’ of somebody’s challenge. For example, too much of ‘patience’ becomes ‘passiveness’. If we experience this in another person, we can literally feel an ‘allergy’ for that behavior. Tao’s statement is relevant: ‘You learn the most from your enemies’.

Example of a Core Quadrant



When two similar people (e.g. two decisive individuals) meet, they often will respect each other because they value similar Core Qualities. Sometimes, however, they will reinforce each other’s Pitfalls with unpleasant consequences (nagging, exaggerating, etc.). When two opposites meet, often this results in contempt, because they are confronted with their Allergy in the other person. This confrontation makes individuals vulnerable and steers their behavior towards their own Pitfall (excessive application of their own Core Quality).

Awareness of your Pitfalls can help you address them constructively. As explained above, when you are confronted in another person with too much of your own Challenge (what you miss in yourself), this triggers your Allergy. This is the reason why you have a hard time getting along with this person. However, you can learn most from such people (because they have what you miss in yourself). Interestingly enough, your Allergy is often someone else’s Pitfall, and your Challenge is someone else’s Core Quality.

When you encounter someone, whose behavior triggers an Allergy in you (despising that quality), please think of this behavior not as their Core Quality, but as their Pitfall (they have too much of it to be good). This can help the other person find the Core Quality behind that Pitfall. And this provides a perfect basis for cooperation, as it aligns with your Core Quality.

Double quadrant

When one person's allergy is triggered by another's pitfall, a connection is created between their core quadrants. This connection becomes visible in what Ofman calls a double quadrant. For example, someone who is very flexible and thus has this trait as a core quality may be allergic to someone else's rigidity. While the person who shows rigidity as a pitfall, perhaps due to stress or allergy to an excess of flexibility in that other person, holds on too tightly to his quality 'orderliness'. By allowing more flexibility in oneself, this person will be able to avoid rigidity. What you admire in the other person is what you have to strengthen in yourself.

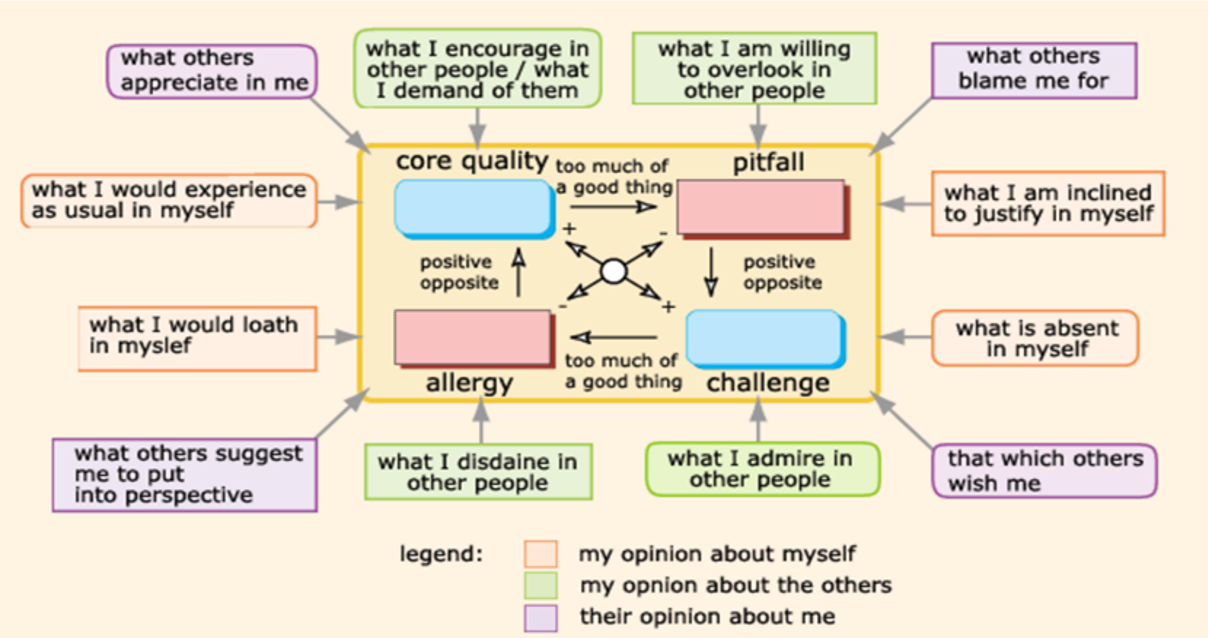
Example of a Double Quadrant:

	Core quality person A: *Decisiveness*	Pitfall person A: *Pushiness*
Core quality person B: *Modest*	Allergy person A: = Pitfall person B: *Passivity*	Challenge person A: *Patience*
Allergy person B: *Pushiness*	Challenge person B: *Initiative*	

Creating and using core quadrants
Want to create your own personal core quadrant? Then try it in the following way: answer the questions in the chart below. Write down everything that comes to mind, without thinking for long. Then turn the words you write down into a number of core quadrants that suit you.

Regularly reflecting on your feelings, behaviors and interactions with others, ensures that you become increasingly aware of your personal qualities and distortions when stressed or annoyed, and possibilities to get out of them. Translate your insights into daily practice and incorporate them into your personal core quadrant overview.

Core quadrants can help you take responsibility for your own life, your part in interactions with others and to enter into meaningful relationships. Understanding your own allergy, how it is triggered by the pitfall of another person and the core quadrants of both of you, can help you avoid and manage conflicts at work too. In this way it makes you a better leader.



More Examples of Core Quadrants

Core Quality	Pitfall	Challenge	Allergy
Decisiveness	Nagging	Patient	Passive
Flexibility	Inconstant	Organized	Rigid
Clearly	Remote	Empathetic	Slimy
Helpful	Meddlesome	Let loose	Careless
Modest	Passive	Initiative	Obtrusive
Courage	Reckless	Thoughtful	Doubtful
Empathetic	Sentimental	Observing	Remote
Reflective	Aloofness	Empathy	Sentimental
Profiling	Arrogant	Modest	Invisible

Source: *Ofman, D. (2004). Core Qualities, a gateway to human resources.*

5. Emotional intelligence

Traditionally, qualities were predicted and measured by IQ, professional qualities, strategic insight and result orientation. These aspects are obviously still vital for successful leadership. But to have impact, an additional dimension is required: EQ, emotional intelligence.

No doubt you have known for a long time: success does not depend solely on hard numbers and results. Being motivating and effective by creating impact is also essential.

Link between Intellectual Intelligence and Emotional Intelligence

There is no connection between IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and EQ (Emotional Quotient). They are controlled by two completely different parts of the brain. Individuals can have such high IQs, but if they lack the 'wiring' for self-observation and self-reflection or barely have an antenna to pick up signals from team members and colleagues, then sustainable success will not happen. The 'inventor' of EQ, Daniel Goleman (D. Goleman. *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. 1995), has shown in his studies that people who understand body language and emotions of themselves and others are more successful.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize your own and others' emotions, understand them, give them meaning, and adjust your behavior accordingly if required. Leaders with high EQ know what they are feeling, know what those emotions mean, and what the effect is on others. Empathy, understanding while 'standing in the other person's shoes', is seen by many as being the leadership skill number 1 in the 21st century. Not only is empathy hard to outsource and automate, but it also makes the world a better place.

How to develop your EQ

Imagine if all managers possess a high EQ and act as real leaders. They would then better understand their own emotions as well as those of their team members and colleagues and thus make better decisions with more support. They would communicate effectively, forge strong partnerships, and resolve conflicts constructively. They would be open to change and see mistakes and feedback primarily as opportunities to learn.

If you want to make the journey toward greater EQ, you must be willing to examine your own emotions, thoughts, and beliefs, identify your strengths and areas for development, and be fully aware of your impact on others. This process of personal development requires, among other things, openness to feedback, a willingness to change, a willingness to get out of your comfort zone, and a desire to learn from both successes and failures.

Overall, there are 4 steps:

1. Develop self-knowledge, self-awareness

Get self-insight on questions such as:

- Why do I do what I do and what are my underlying values, assumptions, and beliefs?
- What emotions am I experiencing, what do they mean, and where do they come from?

2. Self-management: getting started with the results of step 1

- Self-reflection: reflect on what you discovered in step 1, set goals, and make a plan.
- Concrete action: get out of your comfort zone by starting to practice with new behavior and by trial and error, get better and better.

3. Environmental awareness: you turn on your empathy radar, so to speak.

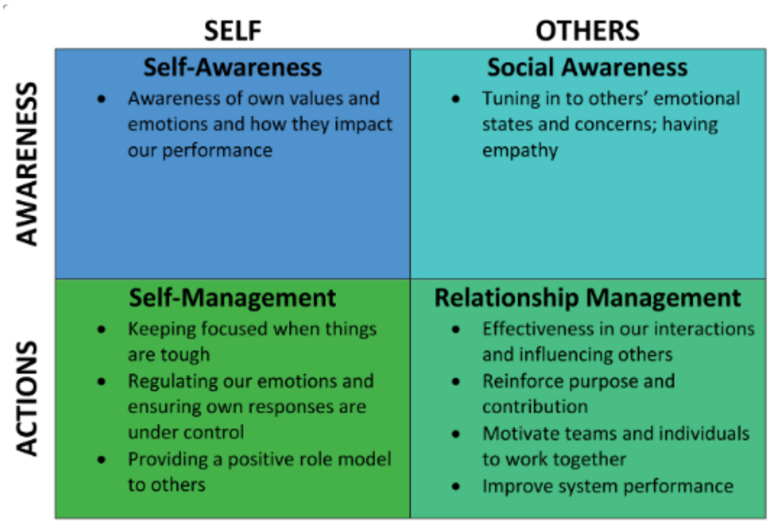
When you are (more) aware of others' emotions and perspectives, you can build better collaborative relationships and become a better team player.

- Put empathy into practice so that you better understand why people who are different from you handle things differently from you.
- Ask open questions to really understand the other person and start a conversation, rather than (too) quickly giving your opinion.

4. Consciously build your relationships: nurture positive connections, communicate with empathy and resolve conflicts constructively.

These skills are crucial to function well in the workplace.

- Tell others why you appreciate them or admire them in some way.
- Explain your decisions, ask for feedback and be willing to listen to others when they explain why they want to make their decisions differently. Stand up for your own interests with equal respect and consideration for the interests of others.



Source: *Goleman, EI Framework.*

When to start?

People are often only prepared to start changing when there is a crisis and they recognize that continuing in the 'old' way is no longer possible. It's more helpful to show personal leadership and start early. According to Stephen Covey (Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* 1989), personal leadership is consciously choosing to be proactive in your life and build sustainable relationships. You must do it yourself, but you don't have to do it alone: read books, take learning courses, coaching programs, and practice in your daily life. Practice, ask for feedback, reflect, set out new experiments, and practice again.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

6. Communication: verbal, non-verbal, vocal

Communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and feelings between individuals. It can be categorized into three main types: verbal, non-verbal, and vocal communication. Each type plays a crucial role in how we convey and interpret messages.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication involves the use of words to convey a message. This can be done through speaking or writing. It is the most direct form of communication and includes conversations, speeches, presentations, emails, and written documents. Effective verbal communication requires clarity, coherence, and the ability to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly. It is essential for building relationships, sharing information, and expressing emotions.

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication refers to the transmission of messages without the use of words. It includes body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, and even the physical distance between individuals. Non-verbal cues can reinforce or contradict what is being said verbally. For example, a smile can indicate friendliness, while crossed arms might suggest defensiveness. Understanding non-verbal communication is important for interpreting the true meaning behind someone's words and for conveying sincerity and empathy.

Vocal Communication

Vocal communication, also known as paralinguistics, involves the use of voice to convey meaning. This includes tone, pitch, volume, and speech rate. The way something is said can significantly impact the message's interpretation. For instance, a calm and steady tone can convey confidence, while a high-pitched and fast-paced speech might indicate excitement or anxiety. Vocal communication adds an extra layer of meaning to verbal communication and helps to express emotions and attitudes.

By understanding and effectively utilizing verbal, non-verbal, and vocal communication, we can enhance our ability to connect with others, convey our messages accurately, and build stronger relationships. Each type of communication complements the others, creating a comprehensive and nuanced way of interacting with the world around us.

7. Communication wall

In 1993, Derveaux and Sadeleer introduced the concept of the "Communication Wall" to describe the barriers that can arise in communication processes. This model highlights the various stages where misunderstandings can occur, emphasizing that effective communication requires careful attention at each step.

The Communication Wall is built upon the following stages:

1. **Intended Message vs. Said Message**: The first barrier occurs when the message the sender intended is not accurately conveyed in the words they use. This can be due to unclear language, assumptions, or a lack of clarity.
2. **Said Message vs. Heard Message**: Even if the sender's message is clear, the listener may not hear it correctly. This can be influenced by external noise, distractions, or the listener's preconceived notions.
3. **Heard Message vs. Understood Message**: Once the message is heard, the listener must interpret it correctly. Misunderstandings can arise from differences in language, cultural backgrounds, or personal experiences.
4. **Understood Message vs. Agreed Message**: Even if the message is understood, the listener may disagree with it. This stage involves the listener's values, beliefs, and attitudes, which can influence their acceptance of the message.
5. **Agreed Message vs. Action Taken**: Even if the listener agrees with the message, they may still not take the intended action. This can be due to a lack of motivation, resources, or other external factors.

For example:

1. Intended is not said. The trainer says: ‘I'm hungry for coffee!’ Multiple answers are possible. For example, ‘Yes let's pause!’, ‘Me too!’ or ‘Shall I get you coffee?’. The sender was not clear in his intention. The effect is that the other person then just has to guess what you mean and, of course, is often wrong. This is an explanation of proposition

2. Said is not heard. Suppose you are clear in your intention, but you still don't get your coffee. The other person has not heard you. This can happen because of internal and external noise.

3. Heard is not understood. Suppose the other person does hear you (‘Will you get me coffee?’). Again, things can go wrong because the other person does not yet understand exactly what you want (how many kinds of coffee are there?).

4. Understood is not accepted. Suppose the other person does understand you, because you want a cappuccino without sugar, for example. That doesn't mean the other person will agree. Ask the other person what could go wrong here (no desire, time, or some other reason). Still, you don't have coffee...

5. Accepted is not done. The other person may say, ‘I'll get you a cappuccino. ’ Fine, you think then. And after an hour, still no coffee! What could have gone wrong now? (rush job in between, forgot, got a message that someone at home has fallen ill, etc.).

Between Intended (1) and Done (5), there are lots of opportunities for miscommunication. Derveaux and Sadeleer's model emphasizes that communication is not just about transmitting information but ensuring that the message is accurately received, understood, and acted upon. By being aware of these potential barriers, individuals and organizations can work towards more effective communication.

8. Levels of communication

Context

When we observe a simple conversation between two people, e.g. a trainer or consultant and a client, before long we can see whether the conversation ‘runs smoothly' or not. If a conversation goes well, you will see that people listen to each other, understand each other, speak in turns, carry on where one left off, and/or become enthusiastic. If, on the other hand, a conversation does not run smoothly, you will see that people increasingly begin to speak louder, become more irritated and start to speak with more emphasis, that misunderstandings crop up, that the participants feel misunderstood, that the conversation remains superficial or, worse, that the conversation results in a conflict.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the role of the trainer/consultant demands special requirements beyond mere expertise. This is not just about the substance of the problem or project they are working on. It is also about the structure of the process and the procedural aspect of the working relationship being clear so that the client knows what they can expect from the trainer/consultant and vice versa. In addition, it is important to be attentive to the mutual relationship and feelings that come into play.

To a trainer/consultant, feelings are important sources of a client's real problems and of the possibilities for entering into a good relationship. By paying attention to these issues, potential resistance can be discussed and addressed.

The four levels of communication

1. **Content:** *What* do we talk about? The subject of the conversation/training, the rational or explicit part of the discussion, is about what is known as the technical or substantive topic. It is important that you discuss the same topic and share a common goal.
2. **Procedure**: *How* do we talk about the content? The structure of the conversation, the agenda, the approach, and the division of time.
3. **Interaction**: How do we *interact* with each other? Often, interaction is determined by unwritten rules about what we consider appropriate in a given context. The tone of the communication is largely determined by this level.
4. **Feeling**: Which *feelings* play a part in the communication that we have? Often, feelings and motives are invisible. But they certainly influence the communication! It may concern your own feelings or the feelings of your clients. Somebody who is not happy at all with the training they have to conduct, because they are feeling insecure, may behave distracted, not engaged, and non-cooperative.

In many conversations, people confuse *content and relation*. People may argue about content without being aware of, or even mentioning, the feelings involved. A client who disagrees with the trainer might feel disrespected if their feelings aren’t recognized. On the other hand, a trainer might feel frustrated by the client's unwillingness to collaborate if the client does not express his/her feelings. So if there is confusion and misunderstanding, pay attention to the content as well as to the relationship and feelings involved.

Changing your level of communication by switching

How can you avoid the escalation of the conversation, or change the negative atmosphere? First, try to recognize when you are focusing too much on the content alone and forgetting about the level of relation. You will notice this by paying attention to your own feelings, and what you hear from the other. Next, figure out what the other person is actually meaning, not only verbally but mainly non-verbally. What kind of emotion is involved behind the words? Then you may change the conversation by *switching* to the appropriate level of communication.

Level of content: what is the conversation about?

Make sure the goal is clear for you and your client.
Make sure neither of you are straying from the subject.
Give information about the question.
Summarize the information.

Level of procedure: how are we going to have this conversation?

Make procedural proposals.
Make agreements on who does what.
Make agreements on time.
Watch the procedure.
Change the procedure if it does not work.

Level of interaction: how do we interact with each other?

Check how you both react to each other.
Determine what the influence of each other's behavior is on the conversation.
What is needed for your cooperation?
Do not interrupt each other.

Level of emotion: what kind of feelings and emotions do I notice within myself or with the other?

Be aware of your own feelings and emotions and those of the other person.
Be aware of body language and voice intonation.
Express your own feelings and those of the other person.

Source:

Watzlawick, P., Bavelas, J. B., & Jackson, D. D. (2011). Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies and paradoxes. WW Norton & Company.

9. Active listening

Chances are that you think you're a good listener. People's appraisal of their listening ability is much like their assessment of their driving skills, in that the great bulk of adults think they're above average. In our experience, most people think good listening comes down to doing three things: Not talking when others are speaking, letting others know you're listening through facial expressions, and verbal sounds ("Mm-hmm"). Being able to repeat what others have said, practically word-for-word. In fact, much management advice on listening suggests doing these very things – encouraging listeners to remain quiet, nod and "mm-hmm" encouragingly, and then repeat back to the talker something like, "So, let me make sure I understand. What you're saying is…"

However, recent research that we conducted suggests that these behaviors fall far short of describing good listening skills. We analyzed data describing the behavior of 3,492 participants in a development program designed to help managers become better coaches. As part of this program, their coaching skills were assessed by others in 360-degree assessments. We identified those perceived as the most effective listeners (the top 5%). We then compared the best listeners to the average of all other participants in the dataset and identified the 20 items with the largest significant differences. With those results in hand, we identified the differences between great and average listeners. We analyzed the data to determine what characteristics their colleagues identified as the behaviors that made them outstanding listeners. We found some surprising conclusions, along with some qualities we expected to hear.

We grouped them into four main findings:

Good listening is much more than being silent while the other person talks.

To the contrary, people perceive the best listeners to be those who periodically ask questions that promote discovery and insight. These questions gently challenge old assumptions constructively. Sitting silently, nodding does not provide clear evidence that a person is listening, but asking a good question tells the speaker that the listener has not only heard what was said, but has comprehended it well enough to want additional information. Good listening was consistently seen as a two-way dialog, rather than a one-way "speaker versus hearer" interaction. The best conversations were active.

Good listening includes interactions that build a person's self-esteem.

The best listeners made the conversation a positive experience for the other party, which doesn't happen when the listener is passive (or, for that matter, critical!). Good listeners made the other person feel supported and conveyed confidence in them. Good listening was characterized by the creation of a safe environment in which issues and differences could be discussed openly.

Good listening was seen as a cooperative conversation.

In these interactions, feedback flowed smoothly in both directions, with neither party becoming defensive about comments

Source: *Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2016). What great listeners actually do. Harvard Business Review, 14, 1997-2020.*

10. Convey a message, summarizing, asking questions

Convey a message

There are three parts to conveying a message, they work together to form a coherent and effective message. For example: if someone says something and laughs while doing so, this can be an indication that the text is meant to be funny. The more these parts match, the more powerful the message.

- Verbal: use of verbally spoken words.
- Non-verbal: use of body language, gestures and facial expressions. Nonverbal listening skills are minimal encouragers. They keep the conversation going.
- Paraverbal: use of tone, pace, pauses to communicate. Benefit the 3-second rule: use silence-tolerance. Different cultures have different levels of tolerance for silence. In some, silence may be seen as a sign of respect, while in others it may be considered uncomfortable.

Summarizing

- Summarizing means restating key themes. It is a tool to structure and lead the conversation, to ensure for yourself and the other person that you follow your conversation partner intensively. Thus, strengthening the mutual understanding and relationship.
- Paraphrasing means restating in your own words what the other person said.
- Summarizing can be a useful tool to organize the discussion and the thoughts in a useful way. Summarizing can be used when you get off track, to transition between topics, or at the end of a meeting to review what was discussed. Offer an opportunity to your conversation partner to clarify or add anything else.
- When transitioning between topics you might say: “Okay, before we move on, let’s recap. We talked about…. We did …. Did I miss anything?”
- At the end of a meeting, summarize and check: “Does that sound right? Did I miss anything?”

Asking questions

Open-/closed-ended questions

- Open-ended questions are to be preferred in the beginning of the contact. They start with What, When, Who, Where and How. Open questions come from an open mind. Avoid asking ‘why’ questions, they tend to make people defensive. Open-ended questions help to explore events, feelings, and possible courses of action. These are good phrases to turn

to when you want the participant to expand on something and to empower coming up with solutions.
- Closed-ended questions prompt for specifics and start always with a verb.

New/follow-up questions

- New questions come from your own list.
- Follow-up questions probe and investigate to get more meaningful information. By asking follow-up questions, you show interest and you clarify the meaning of what your conversation partner said. A follow-up question comes from the ‘I come from nowhere and I don’t know anything’- mindset. Instead of assuming that you will know what your partner means, you ask for further elaboration.

Examples of probing, deepening questions

Knowledge

- Do you know enough?
- Do you know enough to act?
- Do you know what to do?
- Do you have enough information?
- Where could you possibly get more knowledge from?

Skills

- Can you do it?
- What are you going to do?
- Are your actions effective?
- Do you have the capabilities to carry it out?
- Below the waterline

Self-image

- Does it suit you, do you see yourself doing this?
- Do you think it is important?
- How do you see yourself in the group, how do you see your role?
- How do you think others see you?
- Where do you see yourself in two years' time?
- What hinders you?

Norms and values

- Do you think it is appropriate, do you think this is appropriate?
- Does this suit your role?
- When are you disappointed?

- What role do you think you should play?
- What do you find very important in working together?
- How would you like to be treated yourself?
- What can you get very angry about?
- Suppose..., how would you react?
- How far can a counterparty go with you?
- What do you look for in colleagues?
- What blocks you?

Traits/beliefs

- Is this a pattern of yours?
- Is this an automatic reaction?
- What do you stand for?
- How do you think about...; how do you see...; how do you look at...?
- What is your opinion about?

Motives

- Do you get energy from it now?
- What do you actually want right now?
- What do you enjoy?
- What do you most want to do?
- What drives you?
- What are you going for?
- What motivates you?
- What do you find important in your work, in your life?
- Where do you see yourself in five or ten years?
- What gives you pleasure and satisfaction in your work?
- What is it like for you to?

11. Feedback

How to share useful and respectful feedback

Feedback is information regarding performance and is also information people can act on. Feedback must be shared in a manner that is understandable to them and is perceived by them as being provided in a highly respectful manner. Sharing feedback involves skills such as listening, verbal and non-verbal communications, and working in intercultural environments.

Be clear about what you want to say before you say it. You might have already sensed what feedback you want to convey. However, you should be clear to yourself about what you want to convey and how you want to convey it.

Share your feedback in a concise and specific manner, then you can embellish. People often lose specificity when they speak because they say far too much, rather than not enough. Or, they speak about general themes and patterns. When giving feedback, first share what you saw or heard, what you want instead, and how the person can achieve it. Then you can add more descriptive information if necessary.

Avoid generalization. Avoid use of the words ‘all’, ‘never’, and ‘always’. Those words can seem extreme, lack credibility, and place arbitrary limits on behavior. Be more precise about quantities or proportions if you address them at all.

Be descriptive rather than evaluative. Report what you are seeing, hearing, or feeling. Attempt to avoid evaluative words, such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. It may be helpful to share your particular feeling, if appropriate, quickly, but do not dwell on it or become emotional.

Own the feedback. The information should be about your own perception of information, not about others’ perceptions, assumptions, and motives. Use ‘I’ statements as much as possible to indicate that your impressions are your own.

Be careful about giving advice. When giving feedback, it is often best to do one thing at a time: share your feedback, get the person’s response, and then, when the other person is ready to consider additional information, share your advice.

Source: *McNamara, C. (2023). How to Give Useful Feedback and Advice - Management Library.*

12. Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication is the process of exchanging information and ideas between people from different cultures or countries. It involves understanding and respecting cultural differences, such as language, non-verbal cues, social norms, and values. Differences in culture may occur between families, friends, groups and teams, communities, villages, countries, regions, continents… everywhere!

Effective intercultural communication helps to bridge cultural gaps, reduce misunderstandings, and build meaningful relationships across diverse cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication is challenging, and even more challenging when meeting people from different cultures for the first time, due to several factors:

- **Cultural Differences in Non-verbal Communication**: Non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and gestures can vary significantly across cultures. For example, a gesture that is considered friendly in one culture might be seen as rude or inappropriate in another. This can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations.
- **Different Social Norms and Values**: Each culture has its own set of social norms and values that influence behavior. What is considered polite, respectful, or appropriate in one culture may not be the same in another.
- **Language Barriers**: Language differences can hinder effective communication and lead to misinterpretations. Even if both parties speak a common language, nuances, idioms, and expressions may not translate well, affecting the accuracy.
- **Stereotypes and Biases**: People often have preconceived notions or stereotypes about individuals from different cultures. These biases can cloud judgment and lead to inaccurate impressions. It's important to be aware of these biases and strive to see the individual rather than the stereotype.
- **Contextual Understanding**: Understanding the context in which a person operates is crucial for forming accurate impressions. Without a deep understanding of the cultural context, it can be challenging to interpret behaviors and actions correctly.
- **Different Communication Styles**: Cultures vary in their communication styles, such as direct versus indirect communication. Misunderstandings can arise if one person expects directness while the other uses a more indirect approach.

  Given these complexities, it's essential to approach intercultural interactions with an open mind, patience, and a willingness to learn. Taking the time to understand and appreciate cultural differences can lead to more accurate and meaningful communication.

13. Communication styles and cross-cultural interactions

There are different communication styles. People and cultures have their own preferred styles for communicating. Differences can lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication in cross-cultural interactions. From a sociological perspective, we can distinguish between:

High context:
High-context communication is implicit and relies heavily on nonverbal cues and social context. It's common in collectivistic cultures, such as those in Asia and many African countries.

- Information deals with different elements in a context and must be scanned by the listener to know what the real meaning is
- The listener is responsible for determining the intended message
- Reading between the lines is essential
- Often involves indirect communication

Example: The speaker/writer assumes the recipient is familiar with the technical terms used in climate issues, so they are no longer explained.

Low context:
Low-context communication is direct, explicit, and relies mainly on verbal messages. It's common in individualistic cultures like the United States and the Netherlands.

- Information comes directly from the speaker because each sentence literally means what the speaker means
- The speaker is responsible for expressing themself clearly
- Say what you mean, mean what you say
- Often involves direct communication

Example: You are just new and at the introductory meeting it is explicitly explained how everything works.

Linear:

- I start at A and go through B to C to D etc.
- Discussion happens in one straight line, where causes and effects lead to an end point, which is made explicit
- Little context needed (low context) and much depends on words
- Make your point!

Example: "We need more money to support people who can't afford their energy bills anymore".

Circular:

- A is related to D and Z, then there is also N....
- Also called associative communication
- Discussion goes around in a circle, sketching context around the real point, which is often not made explicit
- Lots of context (high context) needed that is scanned for its meaning
- If you have all the information, you automatically know what is meant according to the speaker

Example: “The drought is making everyone uncertain. This uncertainty is troublesome. It’s important to help everyone in need, especially the farmers affected by this crisis.” (The possible point that is being made, is not explicit: “I would like you to donate some money to the farmers union”).

Direct:

- Meaning is derived from direct 'statements' made by the people involved in the conversation.
- Little context needed such as situation or timing
- What you see is what you get!

Example: “I would like to know more about communication after this workshop. What books have been written about it?”

Indirect:

- Meaning is derived from suggestion, implication, nonverbal behavior and other contextual hints
- What you get is what you manage to see!

Example: “Thank you for this workshop (nods, smiles, shakes hand). I heard a lot and took notes on it.”

Emotionally inexpressive:

- Distant
- Issues are discussed with calmness and objectivity, allowing the speaker to weigh up all factors without getting personal
- If something is important, it should not be colored by personal feelings

Example: “We will have to lay off some of our people because mistakes were made in the budget by management.”

Emotionally expressive:

- Personal

- Matters are discussed with emotional overtones, where the speaker's personal interests are included in the matter itself and in the outcome
- If it is important, you may get excited about it

Example: "'It is very sad and actually ridiculous that our management has made such huge mistakes in the budget that we have to sack our dear people. A disgrace!"

Source: *Definitions based on the Intercultural Communication Institute, Portland, USA. Dr. J. Bennett.*

More information:

Video on Erin Meyer's communication styles explained:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i92yIOSiBkc

Examples by Erin Meyer:
https://erinmeyer.com/speaking/

Feedback, negotiation and connecting within cultures:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P22R8wz6ZXY

Test your communication style:
https://hbr.org/2014/08/whats-your-cultural-profile

COMMUNICATION IN A PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT

14. Personality and interaction

A. Quick scan to find your dominant interaction style in a professional context

Imagine an average professional situation where you communicate with others. What best reflects your personality and behavior?

1. Please score the dimensions below on a scale from A to D

	A	B	C	D	
Following					Leading
Quiet					Talkative
Supportive					Challenging
Indulgent					Dominant
Asking questions					Posing
Cooperative					Competitive
Introvert					Extravert
Thoughtful					Prompt
Accommodating					Taking up position
Inhibited					Open

2. Please score the dimensions below on a scale from 1 to 4

	1	2	3	4	
Cool					Warm
Calm					Irritable
Reserved					Expressive
Task-oriented					Relation-oriented
Serious outlook					Friendly outlook
Talks about work only					Shares personal feelings
Withdrawn					Initiating
Focus on facts					Focus on opinions
Non-emotional					Emotional
Self-helper, focus on inside					Seek help from others, focus on outside

3. Now add up the number of times you scored:

D+C=

A+B=

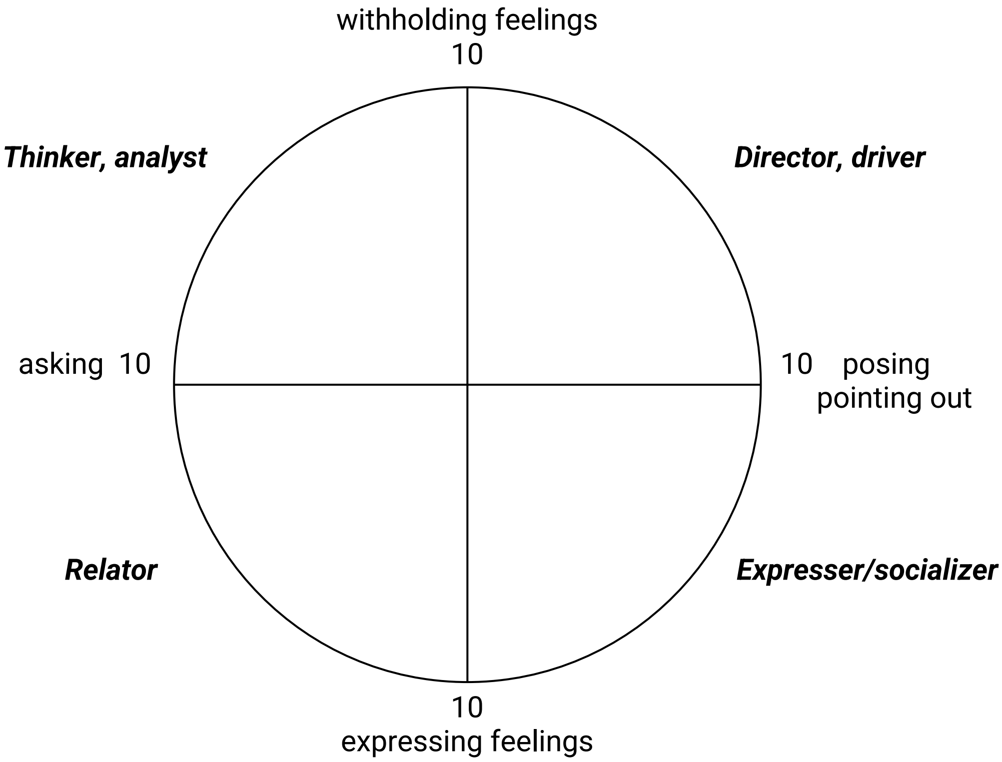
1+2=

3+4=

Compare the outcome of D+C to A+B. The highest number indicates the extent to which you describe the behavior of this person as more asking (A+B) or more posing (C+D).

Compare the outcome of 1+2 to 3+4. The highest number indicates the extent to which you describe the behavior of this person as more withholding (1+2) or more expressing (3+4).

4. See the model below, plot your results and see what style fits the outcome



B. Interaction style in a professional context: The Platinum Rule

We have all heard of the Golden Rule-and many people aspire to live by it. The Golden Rule is not a panacea. Think about it: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Golden Rule implies the basic assumption that other people would like to be treated the way that you would like to be treated.

The alternative to the Golden Rule is the Platinum Rule: "*Treat others the way they want to be treated*." Ah hah! What a difference. The Platinum Rule accommodates the feelings of others. In other words, find out what makes people tick and go from there. The focus of relationships shifts from "this is what I want, so I'll give everyone the same thing" to "let me first understand what they want and then I'll give it to them."

A Modern Model for Chemistry

The goal of The Platinum Rule is personal chemistry and productive relationships. You do not have to change your personality. You do not have to roll over and submit to others. You simply have to understand what drives people and recognize your options for dealing with them.

The Platinum Rule divides behavioral preferences into four basic styles:

- Director
- Socializer
- Relater
- Thinker

The style someone displays depends not only on the individual themselves (personality traits, values) but also on the context, what is requested therein. Everyone possesses the qualities of each style to various degrees and everyone has a dominant style.

For the sake of simplicity, this article will focus only on dominant styles.

Directors

Directors are driven by two governing needs: to control and achieve. Directors are goal-oriented go-getters who are most comfortable when they are in charge of people and situations. They want to accomplish many things-now-so they focus on no-nonsense approaches to bottom-line results.

Directors seek experience and are not afraid to bend the rules. They figure it is easier to beg forgiveness than to ask permission. Directors accept challenges, take authority, and plunge head first into solving problems. They are fast-paced, task-oriented, and work quickly and impressively by themselves, which means they become annoyed with delays.

Directors are driven and dominating, which can make them stubborn, impatient, and insensitive to others. Directors are so focused that they forget to take the time to smell the roses.

Socializers

Socializers are friendly, enthusiastic "party-animals" who like to be where the action is. They thrive on the admiration, acknowledgment, and compliments that come with being in the lime-light. The Socializer's primary strengths are enthusiasm, charm, persuasiveness, and warmth. They are idea-people and dreamers who excel at getting others excited about their vision. They are eternal optimists with an abundance of charisma. These qualities help them influence people and build alliances to accomplish their goals.

Socializers do have their weaknesses: impatience, an aversion to being alone, and a short attention span. Socializers are risk-takers who base many of their decisions on intuition, which is not inherently bad. Socializers are not inclined to verify information; they are more likely to assume someone else will do it.

Thinkers

Thinkers are analytical, persistent, systematic people who enjoy problem-solving. Thinkers are detail-oriented, which makes them more concerned with content than style. Thinkers are task-oriented people who enjoy perfecting processes and working toward tangible results. They're always in control of their emotions and may become uncomfortable around people who very out-going, e.g., Socializers.

Thinkers have high expectations of themselves and others, which can make them over-critical. Their tendency toward perfectionism-taken to an extreme-can cause "paralysis by over-analysis." Thinkers are slow and deliberate decision-makers. They do research, make comparisons, determine risks, calculate margins of error, and then take action. Thinkers become irritated by surprises and glitches, hence their cautious decision-making. Thinkers are also skeptical, so they like to see promises in writing.

Relaters

Relaters are warm and nurturing individuals. They are the most people-oriented of the four styles. Relaters are excellent listeners, devoted friends, and loyal employees. Their relaxed disposition makes them approachable and warm. They develop strong networks of people who are willing to be mutually supportive and reliable. Relaters are excellent team players.

Relaters are risk-aversive. In fact, Relaters may tolerate unpleasant environments rather than risk change. They like the status quo and become distressed when disruptions are severe. When faced with change, they think it through, plan, and accept it into their world. Relaters-more than the other types-strive to maintain personal composure, stability, and balance.

In the office, Relaters are courteous, friendly, and willing to share responsibilities. They are good planners, persistent workers, and good with follow-through.

Relaters go along with others even when they do not agree because they do not want to rock the boat. Relaters are slow decision-makers for several reasons: their need for security, their need to avoid risk and their desire to include others in the decision-making process.

Adapting to Directors: with Directors, in general, be efficient and competent

Directors are very time-sensitive, so never waste their time. Be organized and get to the point. Give them bottom-line information and options, with probabilities of success, if relevant. Give them written details to read at their leisure.

Directors are goal-oriented, so appeal to their sense of accomplishment. Stroke their egos by supporting their ideas, and acknowledge their power and prestige. Let Directors call the shots. If you disagree, argue with facts, not feelings. In groups, allow them to have their say because they are not the type who will take a back-seat to others.

Adapting to Socializers: with Socializers, in general, be interested in them

Socializers thrive on personal recognition, so pour it on sincerely. Support their ideas, goals, opinions, and dreams. Try not to argue with their pie-in-the-sky visions; get excited about them.

Socializers are social-butterflies, so be ready to flutter around with them. A strong presence, stimulating and entertaining conversation, jokes, and liveliness will win them over. They are people-oriented, so give them time to socialize. Avoid rushing into tasks.

Adapting to Thinkers: with Thinkers, in general, be thorough, well-prepared, detail-oriented, business-like, and patient

Thinkers are time-disciplined, so be sensitive to their time. They need details, so give them data. Support Thinkers in their organized, thoughtful approach to problem-solving. Be systematic, logical, well-prepared, and exact with them. Give them time to make decisions and work independently. Allow them to talk in detail.

In work groups, do not expect Thinkers to be leaders or outspoken contributors, but do rely on them to conduct research, crunch numbers, and perform detailed foot-work for the group. If appropriate, set guidelines and exact deadlines. Thinkers like to be complimented on their brain-power, so recognize their contributions accordingly.

Adapting to Relaters: with Relaters, in general, be non-threatening and sincere

Relaters are relationship-oriented, want warm and fuzzy relationships, so take things slow, earn their trust, support their feelings, and show sincere interest. Talk in terms of feelings, not facts, which is the opposite of the strategy for Thinkers. Relaters don't want to ruffle feathers. They want to be assured that everyone will approve of them and their decisions. Give them time to solicit co-workers' opinions. Never back a Relater into a corner. It is far more effective to apply warmth to get this chicken out of its egg than to crack the shell with a hammer.

Source: *Alessandra, T. (1998). The Platinum Rule: Discover the Four Basic Business Personalities and How They Can Lead You to Success.*

Side note: Critical reflection on the model

This model reduces the wide variety of human behavior to a compact model. It is important to be aware of its disadvantages and limitations.

Over-simplification of human behavior

- **Reduces complexity to four types:** Human communication is nuanced and context dependent. Categorizing people into just four styles risks overlooking the richness and variability of interpersonal dynamics.
- **People are not static:** Communication preferences shift depending on context, role, stress levels, and environment. The model implies fixed traits, which may not reflect reality.

Lack of scientific foundation

- **Limited empirical validation:** While popular in training and coaching, the model lacks robust scientific backing. There is little evidence that these four styles are universally applicable or consistent across cultures and contexts.
- **No standardized assessment tools:** There are no widely accepted, validated instruments to determine someone's style, which undermines its credibility.

Risk of stereotyping and narrow framing

- **Overlooks individual diversity:** Labelling someone as a "Driver" or "Relater" can lead to reductive thinking and obscure other important traits or behaviors.
- **Influences interaction prematurely:** Approaching others based on a presumed style can foster confirmation bias and reduce openness in communication.

Cultural Bias

- **Rooted in Western norms**: The model originates from an American context and often fails to account for cultural differences in communication, such as indirectness, hierarchy, or collectivism.

Interaction styles

Withhold feelings

Thinker, analytical

Characteristic behavior:
- seeks for structure and solid evidence before taking decisions
- avoids risk and tries to prevent mistakes
- will not take the initiative when around others
- Works disciplined and task-oriented
- solves problems by seeking for logic and facts
- relies on procedures

Weaknesses according to others:
- working with procedures may make a slow impression
- withholding feelings may seem distant and calculating

Do…
- Give time
- Prepare your case
- Be on time
- Stick to the subject
- Give attention to facts/details
- Go for clear agreements
- Encourage

Don't….
- Put under pressure
- Act too informally
- Force a decision
- Elaborate
- Exaggerate
- Decide for them
- Improvise

Driver

Characteristic behavior:
- takes the lead
- likes risks and decisive
- efficient, hard-working and result-oriented
- direct and to the point in communication
- doesn't show personal feelings
- gets to action quickly

Weaknesses according to others:
- can be dominant and pushy
- takes too little time to listen to other people's viewpoints

Do…
- Use time efficiently
- Be prepared and specific
- Get to the point quickly
- Keep eye-contact
- Focus on most important facts
- Mention short-term results
- Offer some options including pro's and con's and leave the decision to them

Don't….
- Waste time
- Act informally
- Act confused
- Get distracted
- Elaborate on details
- Take decisions fort hem
- Act passive

Ask questions

Point out

Relater

Characteristic behavior:
- accepts others in order to be able to go forward
- works calmly and is cooperative
- easy to get to know and nice to work with
- guiding and offers support
- is willing to see things through the eyes of others

Weaknesses according to others:
- has difficulties taking own decisions
- puts a lot of time in relational aspects

Do…
- Invest in personal contact
- Act informally
- Be patient and encourage
- Be supportive but keep responsibilities where these belong
- Agree on goals and planning

Don't…
- Put them under pressure
- Take too much space
- Make unexpected moves
- Act distant
- Leave them standing alone
- Be overprotective
- Wander for too long

Expresser

Characteristic behavior:
- touched easily, cheerful and talkative
- enthusiastic, expresses emotions
- takes time for jokes and distractions
- motivates, makes others feel comfortable
- energetic
- ambitious and goal-oriented

Weaknesses according to others:
- sometimes works without a plan, chaotic
- can be seen as impulsive
- may make the impression to be messy

Do…
- Keep things going
- Take time for personal contact
- Make a joke, get distracted
- Show yourself
- Make cooperation fun and goal-oriented
- Concentrate on the big picture
- Get to clear task-divisions

Don't…
- Be too formal
- Talk about facts
- Waste time on details
- Come with a concrete proposal for planning
- Be arrogant

Express feelings

15. Exploring an issue and its context

In a professional context of a meeting to explore an issue (dilemma, question, or challenge) and its context, there are several topics and tips to keep in mind to be effective.

1. **Introduction**

   At the start of a meeting, agree on TPPT:

   - **T**opic of the meeting
   - **P**urpose of the meeting
   - **P**rocedure for how the meeting will take place
   - **T**ime: how long the meeting will last.

   Build rapport: develop a genuine connection to the other person. Show respect, be sensitive to (cultural) differences, and find common ground. Facilitate effective communication and collaboration.

2. **Start with an open-ended question.**

   For example: "What issue is on your mind?"

3. **Pay attention and try to understand the other person.**

   Use a skill like probing to get as clear a picture as possible of their dilemma or question. When feelings are involved, you may want to *reflect* on them.

4. **Summarize the question or dilemma.**

   When the dilemma is clear: summarize. Your conversational partner may comment on your summary or add something. In that case, you summarize the dilemma again.

5. **Rounding off**

   Make clear agreements about further proceedings.

Pitfalls

- Fill in the problem or dilemma yourself
- Asking suggestive questions
- Not receiving or not responding to non-verbal signals
- Suggest solutions too early in the process.

16. Acquiring acceptance

In many professional settings, it is important that you ensure you find acceptance from your team, client, customer, etc., for your (future) proposal or results, and that they are actually prepared to act. A good relationship with your conversation partner(s) is a condition for acceptance, but of course, it is not yet a guarantee.

You probably like to make your clients enthusiastic and encourage them to agree with your well-thought-out, carefully formulated ideas and advice. However, to be right about something is only half the battle, and more needs to be done. Unfortunately, many thorough plans and reports meet with resistance; sometimes they even end up in a bottom drawer.

An excellent idea or piece of advice in terms of quality will have no effect whatsoever if your client does not accept it. But the reverse also applies: a fully accepted idea or piece of advice is not effective if the quality is substandard. This premise is known as Maier's law:

Effect = Quality x Acceptance (E = Q x A)

These two criteria, quality and acceptance, both influence the potential effectiveness of a solution. The first criterion is the *objective quality* of the solution or decision. The second is the *acceptance* by those who must execute the decision. You will achieve the highest level of acceptance if you maintain open communication, maintain sincere contact with your client, and involve them in the process from the very first contact through to the final result. Therefore, try not to think of everything from behind your desk, but engage in purposeful meetings with your client.

Increasing acceptance

Suppose you wish to increase acceptance of your advice. In that case, it is also important to remember Maier's law - the relationship between the effect (E), quality (Q), and acceptance (A) of a proposal:

The effect of a proposal is influenced by:

- The quality: How good is the proposal? Is it a fit solution for the other's dilemma?
- Acceptance: How well is the proposal accepted? (Especially those who have to work with it).

A qualitatively very good plan (Q = 100) that is not accepted (A = 0) has zero effect.

Tips for acquiring acceptance

To acquire acceptance, effective communication is key. Effective communication works multiple ways: you create a good connection and build trust, and you gain a deep understanding of the problem and the context of the problem (and thereby enhance the quality). Also, in a trustful relationship, you will probably gain a better insight into the problem. How to build trust in the consultancy setting will be explained in the following chapters.

Do's	**Don'ts**
Take responses to your proposal seriously	Deny or ignore advisee's responses
Ask open questions	Ask closed or leading questions, ask more than one question at the same time, talk a lot
Summarize	Give very long summaries, repeat subjectively, only pay attention to content, draw premature conclusions
Reflect	Stick to content, pay no attention to the emotion of the other person
Signal objections and resistance, interpret and respond to this	Enter into discussion, wanting to be right
Increase motivation by outlining limitations of current situation	Ignore substantive arguments, belittle

17. Decision-making in groups

How much room for decision-making is left?

If the decision has in fact already been made, don't pretend that there is still room to change. A group will feel fooled and remember it for next time. Think in advance about how much space there is to discuss something and be transparent about it. Do you really let people think along? Distinguish between the following variants (cf. Kramer, 2014):

- A thought: you have an idea, but nothing is fixed yet; you are completely open to other ideas and willing to abandon your own. “I want to spend Christmas dinner all together and also go outside, what do you think?”
- A suggestion: you have a clear intention, but other perspectives are more than welcome, you are willing to be influenced, you discuss the different possibilities and opinions, and you decide together on the next step. “I would like to order a simple meal, so we don't have to cook all the time, so we can have a nice stroll together. What do you think?”
- A proposal: you have worked out a concrete proposal. In principle, this will happen unless someone has strenuous objections. There is limited scope for influence and dialogue; to a large extent, the decision has already been made. “I'm going to order a meal so that we can have a nice stroll all afternoon”. Anyone to object?”
- A proposal: you have made the decision. This is going to happen; no more discussion is possible, and no more room for influence. “I have ordered a meal, so no one has to cook. I can't cancel it anymore.”

The more you impose your ideas on others, the less room there is to look at an idea from all sides and make use of the different perspectives in the group. Often, there is also less support for the decision.

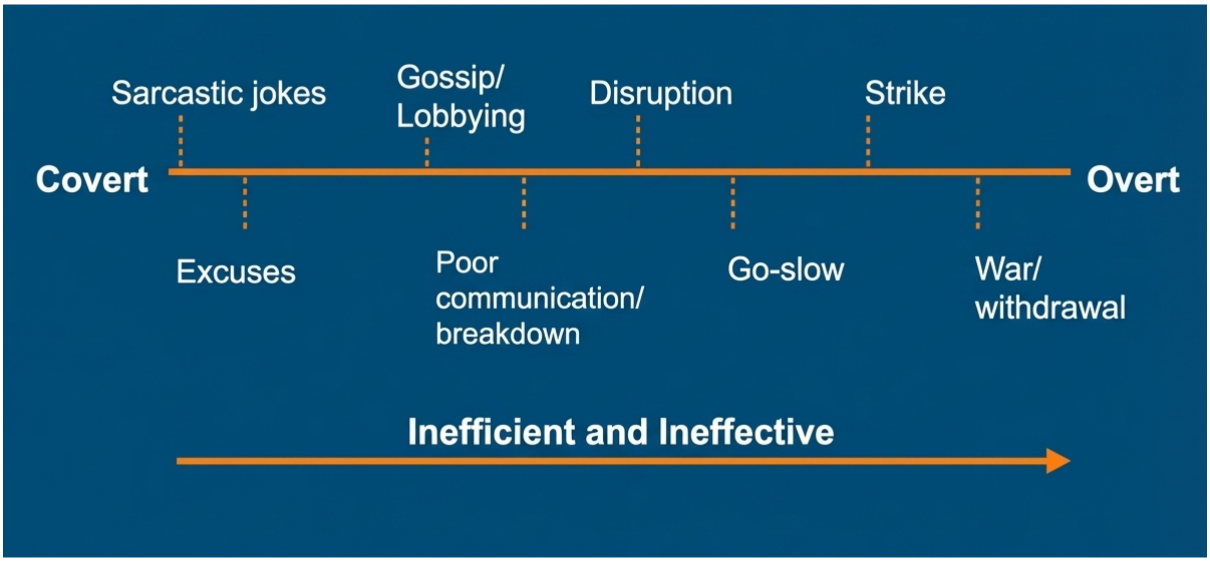
Ways of decision-making

There are different ways of decision-making. One is not necessarily better than the other; it depends on the situation.

- ***An autocratic decision***

The leader decides without consulting stakeholders. This can be a good approach in crisis situations; there is simply no time for consultation then. In other situations, especially when the decision has a high impact on those involved, it often meets resistance, also called sabotage behavior. People experience that what can't be said, what needs to be said needs to be said, and go ‘underwater’. We then see, for example, sarcastic jokes, excuses for not attending meetings, people talking about each other rather than with each other, deliberate antagonism, etc.

See also the attached picture showing how sabotage behavior starts hidden and covered up, and eventually becomes increasingly overt (resistance line)



Source: *Kramer (2014).*

- ***The leader decides based on all information***

The leader ensures that all reliable and relevant information is on the table. On the basis this, he makes a decision that serves the common interest. Disadvantage may be that the leader does not use the wisdom of the group in making the decision. If the group has little trust in the leader, this way of decision-making can be problematic. For example, the group feels that the leader puts self-interest above the group interest.

- ***Most votes count***

The decision can also be made by voting, with the majority deciding. The disadvantage is that nothing is then done with the minority's proposals. Moreover, it is a myth that the minority is then happy to go along with the majority decision.

- ***Consensus***

Deciding by consensus means talking on and on until everyone agrees. The disadvantage is that it leads to long discussions, it can take a long time and quite often it results in weak compromises.

- ***Decision-making based on consent***

In consent-based decision-making, the question is not whether people agree, but whether they are sufficiently in favor. The question is 'can you live with it? If someone predominantly objects it is the responsibility of the whole group to discuss that and not just of the person objecting.

- ***Deep Democracy***

Deep Democracy (Lewis M., South Africa) is a way of decision-making in which great importance is attached to gathering all points of view (facts and emotions), including dissenting opinions. A majority decision is then taken (most votes count) and then the wisdom of the minority is added to this majority decision, by asking: what do you need to go along with the majority decision?' The enriched majority decision is then put to another vote.

Preferably agree on the chosen method at the beginning of your discussion.

Phases in decision-making

In group decision-making, the following four phases can be distinguished successively:

1. Information phase
2. Opinion phase
3. Decision-making phase

These three phases are preceded by another phase. This applies to every discussion. This is the exploratory phase in which you consider:

- What the problem situation, the purpose of the meeting, is
- Whether the meeting makes sense; can the goal also be achieved without having a meeting altogether? For example, if it concerns something that two people can also deal with together?
- Who proposed the topic
- What interests are involved?
- Whether the participants have sufficient knowledge to discuss the topic
- How to put together the agenda (items, time, decision-making phase)
- Who is the chair
- What kind of decision-making method do you choose?

The different phases are explained below.

1. Information phase (imaging)

The information phase aims to arrive at a shared picture of the situation and possibilities. The chair therefore invites the participants to tell what they know about the topic. He/she asks questions such as: What do we know about the topic, who has experience with it, in which situation does the problem occur, how was this dealt with in the past, how will this be handled later, what aspects are involved in the problem, such as technical, social, relational, emotional aspects?

Everyone will have their own perspective on the problem. One often sees that experiences or data of the other person are already contested at this stage. This can take a lot of time, so that only a few get to speak and only a limited amount of information on the table. The chairman should intervene on this and ensure that everyone is heard, including people with a different opinion.

Incidentally, as many misunderstandings and ambiguities as possible should be resolved in this phase. The information phase often ends with (re)formulating the problem in your own words. The main goal of the information phase is to obtain as much data, facts, examples, and experiences that are relevant to the topic.

2. Judgment phase

The judgment phase is characterized by jointly finding possible solutions. It also involves identifying which solutions are acceptable. What criteria does the solution need to meet (e.g., how much time, how much money should it cost, should it be a short-term or long-term solution)? Moreover, the consequences of different solutions should be further considered. The main goal of the judgment phase is to jointly find possible solutions and test them against the criteria and consequences.

3. Decision-making phase

Once you have all the information on the table, you can then make the best possible decision. By going through the previous phases properly, the decision-making phase is not time-consuming anymore. Solutions also need to be found for certain (negative) consequences of the decision. Finally, agreements on implementing the decision. Who does what, in what timeframe, who is informed, how is the decision taken monitored, and who reports the results?

Checklist for group decision-making

Below is a list of possible questions to ask during the various phases of a group decision-making process:

1. Questions to ask in the exploration phase

- From whom does the problem originate?
- Who are helped by having the problem solved?
- What about the intentions and perception of reality among the problem creators?
- What are the expectations of the client(s)?
- What are the terms of reference?
- How can the problem be formulated?
- Does everyone agree with the problem formulation?
- What kind of consultation meeting is this: image-forming, judgmental, decision-making?
- What about the willingness and expertise of the participants regarding this topic?
- What powers does the group have?
- How do we address the issue:
    - ✓ yes/no discussion leader
    - ✓ yes/no report
    - ✓ yes/no action list
    - ✓ yes/no time schedule
    - ✓ yes/no decision-making procedure? If yes, how do we take the decision?

2. Questions to ask in the information phase

- What powers does the group have?
- What do we know about the topic?
  What perspectives are possible (financial, technical, economic, social)?
- Are misunderstandings and ambiguities regarding image formation: recognized and remedied?
- Can the problem be formulated in its own terms?

3. Questions to ask in the judgement phase

- What criteria should the solution meet (cost, time schedule)?
- What possible solutions exist?
- Which solutions meet the established criteria?
- What are the negative consequences of alternative solutions?

4. Questions to ask at the decision-making stage

- What is the best solution?
- How can the adverse effects of this solution be eliminated?
- How can we manage implementation?
  - ✓ who takes action?
  - ✓ what does she/he/they do?
  - ✓ on what deadline?
  - ✓ who will be informed?
  - ✓ how will progress be monitored?

Sources:

Kramer, M. W. (2014). Managing uncertainty in organizational communication. Routledge.

www.ahuis.com

18. Dealing with resistance

What is resistance?

- Resistance is a tension between a fear/concern and a need
- Resistance is dissent, a sign that a voice has not yet been heard
- Resistance is a breeding ground for a learning experience, a key to change
- Resistance is a sign of energy
- Resistance has a function.

Is resistance always manageable?

Resistance can have to do with:

- Lack of conviction: is it really necessary?
- Dislike: nobody wants to be changed
- Fear of the unknown, of one's own failure ('I can't do it')
- Frustration: do we have to change again?
- No trust.

Participation/communication can then help.

But it may also be that:

- People have opposite interests
- People are convinced it doesn't make sense.

How to deal with resistance?

Principles, attitude:

- Never condemn resistance. Move from resistance to curiosity
- Listen, summarize, probe. Try to understand
- Feel empathy for the other person, this reduces tension.

Process handling resistance:

- Recognize resistance in the other person
- Explain, name the resistance
- Ask for the desire, concern/importance behind it
- Acknowledge the other person's need
- Address the central question: "How can the other person: Y (connect with the other, change) AND X (meet own need)?"

- Ask: ”What will the other person do with this?”
- Ask: “What does the other person need?”
- Indicate what your possibilities are, and how you can facilitate the need
- Agree together.

Resistance in the vision of Peter Block

Your conversation partner(s) may have a range of questions or may even show resistance, for example, after your presentation, where you’ve laid out a plan. If it becomes apparent that there are objections or resistance towards your message, you must take the response seriously and listen carefully to the criticism. To do this, good listening skills are indispensable. It is helpful to ask verification questions. Be curious and try to understand the other person's underlying intention.

What are, in practice, the biggest pitfalls in dealing with objections and resistance?

Many of us try to convince others that they are wrong. In this way, a discussion soon turns into an argument. A second pitfall is that you experience criticism or resistance as a personal attack on your competence. Chances are that the other person immediately embarks upon a counterattack, with all due consequences. Realize that you cannot possibly convince the other against their will. When you defend your own ideas at any cost, you will increase the resistance of the other, and this way you are undermining the carefully built and maintained relationship of confidence.

Objections and resistance are not the catastrophes you may think they are. Seize the opportunity to provide truly customized messages.

Finally, a tip to increase others’ *motivation to change*. Show them the limitations of their current situation. In all objectivity, show them where the shortcomings lie and what the consequences are. In addition, you can sketch a picture of the future that is more satisfying than the present situation. It comes down to creating an appetite for more. Obviously, there are limits to the way you influence others. Do not be condescending and make sure that the other does not get the impression that they are being manipulated. Your attempts to increase acceptance of your message will then only turn against you.

Source: *Block, P. (2024). The flawless consulting fieldbook & companion: A guide to understanding your expertise. John Wiley & Sons.*

19. Conflict management

Assessing Your Conflict Style					
This informal quiz is designed to help you think about the way you approach conflict. There are no right or wrong answers, just as there is no right or wrong way to approach conflict. Your results are likely to be most effective if you answer quickly, based on your initial instinct of what you actually do.					
SECTION I: For each question below, rate your response as 5 (always), 3 (sometimes), or 1 (never).	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**
When I become aware of a conflict, I prefer to…					
Take care of the feelings of others by keeping unpleasant thoughts to myself.					
Figure out how to accomplish what others want.					
Focus on understanding everyone's needs in full and honest detail.					
Plan how to use my knowledge to get the group the best outcome.					
Seek a middle ground for resolution.					
When my group is in conflict, I prefer to…					
Use give and take to reach agreement.					
Not bring up the conflict.					
Prioritize the others' points of view.					
Pursue my own perspective.					
Share my honest perspective and listen to others' honest perspectives.					
SECTION II: For each question below, select 5 (agree), 3 (neutral), or 1 (disagree).					
When a conflict comes up, I am most comfortable when I can…					
Keep the conflict to myself.					
Talk until we find a good solution for everyone, without worrying about time.					
Focus on strategy so others see how my idea will help solve the problem.					
Find a middle course to manage an impasse.					
Satisfy the wishes and expectations of others.					
From my past conflicts, I was most satisfied when I was able to…					
Focus on what I could give up so others' needs were met.					
Exchange information so the group could develop a joint solution.					
Use my expertise to put forward the best solution.					
Propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.					
Avoid unpleasant exchanges with others.					
I am most comfortable in a conflict when I can…					
When my perspective is valued and leads the decision.					
Prioritize the suggestions of others.					
Wait to confront others about the conflict until the time is right.					
Integrate my and other's preferences for a joint solution.					
Negotiate with others to reach a compromise.					
Total					
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**

Source: *Adjusted from Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.*

Conflict style reflection assignment

This assessment is based on the **Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Inventory**. This brief assessment, however, has not been statistically calibrated. If you received an outcome with which you disagree, use that result to reflect on what you think your true style is and why you may have received the results you did.

Respond to all questions (see scheme above) by putting one number in each of the blank boxes. After doing so, total up your scores for each column. Your highest score represents your preferred conflict style. You may have more than one column that received an equally high score; this is not unusual.

The columns correspond with the following conflict styles:
A = accommodation
B = avoidance
C = collaboration
D = competition
E = compromise

Once you have determined your preferred style, read about the different styles in this brief summary.

Understanding Conflict Handling Styles

In a dispute, it's often easier to describe how others respond than to how we respond. Each of us has a predominant conflict style or styles that we use to meet our own needs. By examining conflict styles and the consequences of those behaviors, we can gain a better understanding of the impact that our personal conflict style has on other people. With a better understanding, you then can make a conscious choice on how to respond to others in a conflict situation to help reduce work conflict and stress.

Behavioral scientists Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann, who developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, have identified five styles to responding to conflict—competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation. No conflict style is inherently right or wrong, but one or more styles could be inappropriate for a given situation, and the impact could direct the conflict in a positive or negative direction.

1. Competing (letter D on your assessment)
Value of own issue/goal: High
Value of relationship/others' goals: Low
Goal: I win, you lose

People who consistently use a competitive style come across as aggressive, autocratic, confrontational, and intimidating. A competitive style is an attempt to gain power and pressure a change at the other person's expense. A competitive style of managing conflict can be appropriate when you have to implement an unpopular decision, make a quick decision, the decision is vital in a crisis, or it is important to let others know how important an issue is to you – "standing up for your right." The biggest disadvantage of using this style is that relationships can be harmed beyond repair and may encourage other parties to use covert methods to get their needs met because conflict with these people are reduced to – "if you are not with me, you are against me."

2. Accommodating (letter A on your assessment)
Value of own issue/goal: Low
Value relationship/others' goals: High
Goal: I lose, you win

By accommodating you set aside your own personal needs because you want to please others in order to keep the peace. The emphasis is on preserving the relationship. Smoothing or harmonizing can result in a false solution to a problem and can create feelings ranging from anger to pleasure in a person. Accommodators are unassertive and cooperative and may play the role of a martyr, complainer, or saboteur. However, accommodation can be useful when one is strong or when you want to minimize losses when you are going to lose anyway, because it preserves relationships. If you use it all the time, it can become competitive – "I am nicer than you are" – and may result in reduced creativity in conflict situations and increased power imbalances.

3. Avoiding (letter B on your assessment)
Value of own issue/goal: Low
Value of relationship/others' goals: Low
Goal: I lose, you lose

Avoidance is characterized by deliberately ignoring or withdrawing from a conflict rather than facing it. This style may be perceived as uncaring about your own issues or those of others. People who avoid the situation hope the problem will go away, resolve itself without their involvement, or think that others are ready to take responsibility. There are situations where avoidance is appropriate, such as when you need more time to think of how to respond, time constraints demand a delay, confrontation will hurt a working relationship, or there is little chance of satisfying your needs. However, avoidance can be destructive if the other person perceives that you don't care enough to engage. By not addressing the conflict, this style allows it to simmer and escalate unnecessarily, leading to anger or a negative outburst.

4. Compromising (letter E on your assessment)
Value of own issue/goal: Medium
Value of relationship/others' goals: Medium
Goal: I win some, you win some

The compromising style demonstrates that you are willing to sacrifice some of your goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs – give a little, get a little. Compromising maintains the relationship and can take less time than collaboration, and resolutions might mean splitting the difference or seeking a middle ground position. The downside to compromising is that it can be an easy way out and reduces new creative options. This style is also not effective for conflicts where division of resources isn't a viable option. If you constantly split the difference or "straddle the fence," game playing can result and the outcome could be less than ideal.

5. Collaborating (letter C on your assessment)
Value of own issue/goal: High
Value of relationship/others' goals: High
Goal: I win, you win

The collaborative style views conflicts as problems to be solved and seeks creative solutions that address all parties' concerns. You don't give up your self-interest; you dig into the issue to identify the underlying concerns, test your own assumptions, and understand the views of others. Collaboration takes time, and if the relationship among the parties is not important, then it may not be worth the time and energy to create a win-win solution. However, collaboration fosters respect and trust, which provides a foundation for building relationships. To make an environment more collaborative, address the conflict directly and in a way that expresses willingness for all parties to get what they need.

Although all of the approaches have their time and place, you need to ask yourself the basic question, "Is my preferred conflict handling style the very best I can use to resolve this conflict or solve this problem?"

Focus on interests (needs), not positions (wants)

Understanding people's interests is not a simple task because we tend to communicate our positions in ways that are likely to be concrete and explicit. It is helpful to learn to distinguish between a person's positions and interests to assist in creative problem-solving. Positions are predetermined solutions or demands people use to describe what they want – what they want to happen on a particular issue.
Example: "I want the report."

Interests define the problem and may be intangible, unexpressed, or not consistent. They are the main reasons why you say what you want – the motivation behind the position. The conflict is usually between each person's needs, desires, concerns, or fears.
Example: "I need to receive the report by Friday, so I can have time to review and edit before the due date next Wednesday."
Remember that figuring out your interests is just as important as figuring out their interests.

How to identify interests

To identify interests of the other person, you need to ask questions to determine what the person believes he or she truly needs. When you ask, be sure to clarify that you are not asking questions for justification of their position, but for a better understanding of their needs, fears, hopes, and desires.

By asking open-ended questions that encourage someone to “tell their story”, you can better understand their interests. Open-ended questions are the opposite of closed-ended questions, which require a response of ‘yes’ or ‘no’. To illustrate the difference, consider the following example:

- Did you have a good relationship with your supervisor? (closed-ended)
- Tell me about your relationship with your supervisor. (open-ended)

Examples of open-ended questions:

- What’s your basic concern about …?
- Tell me about …
- What do you think about …?
- How could we fix …?
- What would happen if …?
- How else could you do …?
- What could you tell me about …?
- Then what?
- Could you help me understand …?
- What do you think you will lose if you …?
- What have you tried before?
- What do you want to do next?
- How can I be of help?

The most powerful interests to consider are the basic human needs for security, economic well-being, sense of belonging to an organization, identity, recognition of contribution or efforts, and autonomy or control over decisions or work. It is not uncommon to have multiple interests and it would be helpful to write them down as they occur so that they can be organised. This list may be helpful to think through ideas that may meet these interests.

Problem solving on your interests and the other person’s interests leads to more creative and successful resolutions because you meet not only your needs but theirs as well.

Sources:

Fisher, R., Ury, W. L., & Patton, B. (2011). Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in. Penguin.

https://www.dartmouth.edu/~eap/library/understandingconflicthandlingstyles.docx

20. Creative problem solving - six thinking hats

Introduction

Climate change presents one of the most complex and urgent challenges of our time. Addressing it requires not only technological and policy solutions but also significant shifts in awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. Facilitators working with groups — whether in community settings, educational institutions, or organizations — need effective tools to foster creative thinking, collaboration, and behavioral change. One such tool is Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats method, a structured approach to group thinking that enhances creativity, reduces conflict, and supports holistic decision-making. This article explores how the Six Thinking Hats can be applied in training sessions aimed at promoting climate adaptation awareness and behavioral change.

Overview of the Six Thinking Hats

Edward de Bono, a pioneer in the field of creative thinking, developed the Six Thinking Hats method to help individuals and groups think more effectively. Each "hat" represents a different mode of thinking, allowing participants to explore problems from multiple perspectives without confusion or conflict. The hats are:

- **White hat**: Focuses on facts, data, and information.
- **Red hat**: Represents emotions, feelings, and intuition.
- **Black hat**: Identifies risks, difficulties, and potential problems.
- **Yellow hat**: Looks for benefits, values, and positive outcomes.
- **Green hat**: Encourages creativity, alternatives, and new ideas.
- **Blue hat**: Manages the thinking process and ensures structure.

By metaphorically "wearing" one hat at a time, group members can separate different types of thinking, leading to more balanced and innovative discussions.

Applying the hats to climate adaptation training

When training groups on climate adaptation, facilitators often face challenges such as resistance to change, emotional responses to climate threats, and difficulty in generating actionable ideas. The Six Thinking Hats method can help overcome these barriers by guiding participants through a structured yet flexible thinking process.

1. Starting with the Blue Hat: Setting the stage

The Blue Hat is used to define the problem and organize the thinking process. In a climate adaptation workshop, the facilitator might begin by stating the objective: “We are here to explore how our community can adapt to increasing heatwaves and water scarcity.” The Blue Hat also sets the rules for discussion, such as taking turns with each hat and respecting all viewpoints.

2. White Hat: Gathering the facts

Participants then “wear” the White Hat to focus on objective information. This might include local climate data, projections of future risks, and current adaptation measures. The goal is to build a shared understanding of the situation without judgment or speculation.

Example: “What do we know about how climate change is affecting our region?”

3. Red Hat: Acknowledging emotions

Climate change often evokes strong emotions — fear, anger, grief, or even denial. The Red Hat allows participants to express these feelings without needing to justify them. This step is crucial for building empathy and trust within the group.

Example: “How do you feel about the changes we’re seeing in our environment?”

4. Black Hat: Identifying challenges

Next, the group uses the Black Hat to critically assess potential obstacles to adaptation. This might include financial constraints, political resistance, or social norms that discourage change. The Black Hat helps ensure that ideas are realistic and risks are acknowledged.

Example: “What could go wrong if we try to implement this solution?”

5. Yellow Hat: Exploring benefits

To balance the critical thinking of the Black Hat, the Yellow Hat encourages optimism and constructive thinking. Participants identify the potential benefits of adaptation strategies, such as improved health, economic savings, or stronger community resilience.

Example: “What are the positive outcomes if we succeed in this initiative?”

6. Green Hat: Generating creative solutions

With a solid foundation of facts, emotions, risks, and benefits, the group is now ready to think creatively. The Green Hat invites brainstorming of new ideas, unconventional approaches, and innovative partnerships.

Example: “What are some creative ways we could reduce our water use during droughts?”

7. Returning to the Blue Hat: Summarizing and planning

Finally, the Blue Hat is used again to summarize the discussion, identify next steps, and assign responsibilities. This ensures that the session leads to concrete outcomes rather than just abstract ideas.

Benefits of the Six Hats

Using the Six Thinking Hats offers several advantages:

- **Inclusivity**: All participants, regardless of background or expertise, can contribute meaningfully.
- **Balanced thinking**: The method prevents dominance by overly critical or overly optimistic voices.
- **Emotional safety**: The Red Hat legitimizes emotional responses, which are often overlooked in technical discussions.
- **Creativity**: The Green Hat creates space for innovation, which is essential in adapting to uncertain futures.
- **Action orientation**: The Blue Hat ensures that discussions lead to decisions and follow-up.

Conclusion

Climate adaptation requires not only technical solutions but also shifts in mindset and behavior. Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats method provides a powerful framework for guiding group discussions that are inclusive, creative, and action oriented. By systematically exploring facts, emotions, risks, benefits, and new ideas, trainers and facilitators can help groups move from awareness to meaningful behavioral change. As climate challenges intensify, such tools will become increasingly vital in building resilient communities.

Source: *De Bono, E. (1985). Six Thinking Hats: An essential approach to business management. Little, Brown, & Company.*

21. Team charter – effective collaboration

What is a Team Charter?

A team charter is a document that outlines a team's mission, goals, and agreements for collaboration and clarify roles, expectations and responsibilities, ensuring all team members are aligned and can collaborate effectively. Aaron et al. (2014) found that student teams using a team charter had higher-quality teamwork and more effective collaboration.

Why use a Team Charter?

A team charter (team agreement document) is particularly valuable in projects focused on climate adaptation, because these types of projects are often complex and long-term, involve many different disciplines and interests, and are often accompanied by uncertainties and change such as climate models, political choices and financing. A team charter helps to align language and expectations and to make agreements about how to deal with uncertainties, differences of opinion and decision-making in cases of doubt. It enhances team dynamics and can help prevent tensions from becoming personal and misunderstandings from arising ('I thought you would take care of that').

How do you use a Team Charter?

A team charter can be used at the beginning of a new project where people will be collaborating in teams. This can be particularly effective for teams that have not worked together before. However, it is always beneficial at the start of a new project to get everyone on the same page to collaborate effectively. During the work process, the charter can be used for the (interim) evaluation of the collaboration. This may give rise to adjustments or refinements to the behaviour or procedures in practice or agreements in the charter.

Research shows as a trainer, guiding student teams through the process of creating a team charter is important (Hunsaker et al., 2011) and supporting and coaching student teams in using a team charter as well (Aaron et al., 2014).

Sources:

Aaron, J. R. et al. (2014). The Effects of a Team Charter on Student Team Behaviours. Journal of Education for Business, 89(2), 90–97.

Hunsaker, P. et al. (2011). Increasing Student-Learning Team Effectiveness with Team Charters. Journal of Education for Business, 86(3), 127–139.

https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2010.489588

Team Charter as used within the University of Groningen

The team charter in the image on the last page was developed by the Professional Skills Team specifically for Business Administration students at the University of Groningen. The content is also interesting for other teams that will be working together to achieve a shared goal. The components of this team charter are detailed below.

Purpose
This section describes the primary goal of the team or the objective the team as a whole want to achieve.

Example: "Our goal is to complete the group assignment with a grade of 8. Additionally, we want to ensure that everyone feels heard within the group."

Collaboration
In this section, the team defines how they plan to collaborate effectively. This can include agreed-upon working methods, such as meeting structures, decision-making processes, and task distribution.

Example: "We plan to collaborate by dividing the assignments among the group members and merging them before the deadline. We will only make decisions when everyone is present."

Qualities
This part focuses on identifying the unique strengths, skills, and expertise that each team member brings. It also encourages the team to consider how these qualities can be best utilized to achieve the team's goals.

Example: "Jan is very detail-oriented and will therefore maintain oversight and review each section. Frank is good at reading articles, so he will handle the literature review."

Way of Working
This section describes the team's communication strategy. It includes the frequency of meetings, the communication channels (e.g., WhatsApp or email), and the methods for working together.

Example: "We will meet every week after the seminar and create a Signal group for communication. We will work together in a Google Docs document."

Evaluation
Here, the team discusses how they will evaluate their progress over time.

Example: "We will schedule a weekly meeting where we read and review each other's work to ensure quality. In this meeting we can also evaluate the work process if needed (how we work together).”

Challenges
This section helps the team identify potential obstacles that may arise during the project.

Example: "A potential challenge could be miscommunication due to remote work, so everyone is expected to respond to messages within 24 hours."

Any other business
This final section provides the team with the opportunity to note any additional agreements, considerations, or factors that could impact collaboration. This might include constraints such as deadlines, external dependencies, or personal commitments that could affect availability.

Example: "One team member is limited in availability on Fridays so that we will schedule our meetings earlier in the week."

Team Members and Date

This section lists the team members and the date the charter was created or last updated. This ensures accountability.

university of groningen / faculty of economics and business

Team Charter

Purpose
What is our goal?

Collaboration
How do we plan on working together to achieve our goal?

Qualities
What are the strengths of each team member and how could you make use of these?

Way of working
How do we plan on communicating together? What agreements can be made with regard to meetings, communication channels, and how will we handle shared documents?

Evaluation
How do we plan to look back on the progress of our collaboration? (frequency, feedback topics etc.)?

Challenges
What could be challenges for our team?

Any other business
Mention here any other agreements or matters that could influence the collaboration.

Team members:

Date:

Professional Skills

22. Elevator pitch

An elevator pitch (elevator = lift; pitch = sales presentation), abbreviated ‘pitch’ very sometimes also called ‘elevator speech’, is a short presentation style of yourself as a professional, or of an idea for a product, service or project by which you build up an expectation with the other person. The name reflects the length of time in which a lift goes from the bottom floor to the top floor, in about 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

Goal
A pitch can have several goals:
1. To introduce you to a stranger in a business situation to explore whether a useful relationship could develop or whether you could be useful in his network.
2. To make a concrete request to someone with little time, for example an intermediary who can help you broaden your network or contact an interesting client.

A good pitch sparks interest for follow-up.

A professional who can say briefly and powerfully, in well-written sentences, what he stands for, and above all with enthusiasm, exudes self-confidence. If you have prepared a pitch, you will automatically feel more assertive, even at a networking event, for example.

Don't be shy about selling yourself
People often think that a pitch is a sales pitch in which you have to make yourself look better than you are. Many people feel hesitant to put themselves in the foreground. However, in a good pitch you show yourself to another person in a way that gives quick insight about yourself. In a few sentences, he/she will find out what you could do for him or her. See yourself as (a useful contribution to) the solution to a problem or the answer to a question; this makes it easier to talk about what you have to offer.

A pitch for every occasion
In situations where you are meeting a (potential) client, but also when you are looking for a job or a good assignment, it is useful that you can articulate briefly and appealingly what you have to offer and why the other person should have you in particular. Even at unexpected moments, a pitch comes in handy. Your conversation partner at a birthday party is your future client or someone who knows people who need your expertise.

Characteristics of a good elevator pitch
- A pitch is short: thirty seconds or a hundred words maximum. That's how quickly your conversation partner/interviewer determines whether he is interested in more.
- Start with a stimulating opening that makes the other person listen immediately. This could be a statement, something from current affairs about the organization or a question about what might be of need for the other person.
- Make a good assessment of the other person, their situation and their needs. Ask yourself what you have to offer. As much as possible, a pitch should be tailor-made to suit the other

person's needs. Use questions like: ‘Do you recognize...?’, ‘Do you have...?’, ‘Is it true that...?’. In case of an affirmative response, you can then tell what you have to offer in return.

- Keep in touch: keep a close eye on whether your conversation partner is still interested. Don't rush off like a train.
- Use simple and understandable language. If it takes too long to explain it, it's not a good idea.
- Speak actively: in active language, ‘I want’ instead of ‘I would like’, active posture (upright), and clear use of voice. Only in sentences with a question do you raise your voice at the end. If you do that in other sentences, it comes across as hesitant.
- Keep it personal and show your enthusiasm. Be authentic and sincere. Tell what is important to you. Give a short example of what you do, what you have achieved, and what your goal is. For example: ‘My role is…, What I am good at is..., I showed that at..., I enjoy that because..., I like to do that for...’.
- End your story with curiosity about the other person, ask a question, and invite them to follow up.

Request
If your pitch contains a request, note the following:

- start by telling who you are (name, role/profession, program/company);
- give a concrete description of what you will do (e.g., project);
- state clearly what exactly your request entails and why the other person might be the right person you are making this request to;
- indicate what the other person can gain by responding to your request.

If you use your pitch to a group or network, think carefully about what is special that you have to offer and what vision you want to convey. If you struggle to formulate a pitch, it could be a signal that you are unsure of direction and may not even fully believe in what you do anymore.

The best elevator pitch:

- makes it clear what the other person could gain from you;
- has a tantalizing opening;
- lasts a maximum of 40 seconds (about 100 words);
- is delivered with passion;
- ends with a question and/or makes the other person curious to start a conversation with you.

DIDACTIC SKILLS

23. How do people learn?

Learning is a fundamental part of human development. The way people learn can be influenced by factors such as cognitive abilities, personality traits, and environmental conditions. People learn through a multifaceted process that encompasses observing, thinking, and doing. By combining these learning methods, learners can reinforce their knowledge and skills more effectively than with just one method. It ensures that the learning experience is both thorough and impactful.

- **Observing:** learners see how something is done and form a mental model. By observing or modelling, they gain insights from representations of concepts or behaviors, which helps them understand and replicate these in real-life scenarios.
- **Thinking and Reflecting:** learners internalize and make sense of what they observed. Thinking and reflection involve cognitive and reflective learning, in which participants engage in deep thought and analysis to internalize knowledge and connect new and existing information.
- **Doing**, or known as experiential learning, allows learners to apply what they have learned in practical situations, reinforcing their understanding through hands-on experience.

Example: learning to ride a bicycle:

1. **Observing**: The learner watches someone else ride a bicycle, paying attention to how they balance, pedal, and steer. This helps the learner form a mental model of the process.

2. **Thinking and Reflecting**: The learner thinks about what they observed, considering the techniques and strategies used by the experienced rider. They might also consider their own previous experiences with balance and coordination.

3. **Doing**: The learner gets on the bicycle and starts practicing. They apply what they observed and thought about, adjusting their actions based on the feedback they receive from their own attempts. Through repeated practice, they gradually improve their skills and confidence.

This process of observing, thinking, and doing helps the learner effectively acquire and internalize the new skill of riding a bicycle.

Understanding differences in learning preferences

Not everyone learns in the same way. People have different learning patterns that influence how they absorb, process, and retain information. Understanding these differences in how people learn is crucial for creating effective educational and training programs.

Sensory preferences

The VARK model categorizes learners into four sensory preferences for learning: Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, and Kinesthetic.

- **Visual** Learners: learn best through seeing. They prefer using images, diagrams, charts, and other visual aids to understand information. Visual learners often benefit from color-coded notes and mind maps.
- **Auditory** Learners: excel when they can hear information. They prefer listening to lectures, discussions, and audio recordings. These learners often find it helpful to read aloud or use mnemonic devices to remember information.
- **Reading/Writing** Learners: prefer to interact with text. They learn best through reading and writing activities, such as taking notes, reading books, and writing essays. They often excel in traditional academic settings where reading and writing are emphasized.
- **Kinesthetic** Learners: prefer a hands-on approach. They learn best through physical activities, experiments, and real-life experiences. These learners benefit from role-playing, building models, and participating in interactive activities.

Preferences in how to process and understand information

David Kolb categorizes learners based on how they prefer to process and understand information. His learning styles model distinguishes a preference for:

1. **Feeling and Watching** (diverging): imaginative and emotional learners who prefer to observe rather than take action. They excel in brainstorming and generating ideas, often viewing situations from multiple perspectives.
2. **Watching and Thinking** (assimilating): logical learners who thrive on understanding complex information. They excel in creating theoretical models and prefer structured, analytical tasks over practical applications.
3. **Doing and Thinking** (converging): practical learners who prefer to solve problems. They excel in applying ideas and theories to real-world situations, often focusing on technical tasks and problem-solving.
4. **Doing and Feeling** (accommodating): hands-on learners who rely on intuition rather than logic. They prefer learning by experience and are adaptable, often excelling in situations that require quick thinking and flexibility.

Kolb's model emphasizes that effective learning involves a cycle of four stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation.

There are various other ways to distinguish learning preferences:

- **Sequential vs. Global**: Sequential learners prefer to learn in a linear, step-by-step manner. They like to follow a logical order and build on previous knowledge. Global learners, on the other hand, prefer to see the big picture first before they can learn and retain specific information. They may struggle with linear, step-by-step learning and instead thrive when they can see how everything fits together from the start.

- **Reflective vs. Active**: Reflective learners like to think about information before acting on it. They prefer to work alone and take time to process information. Active learners, in contrast, prefer to engage with information immediately. They enjoy group work and hands-on activities.
- **Analytical vs. Holistic**: Analytical learners focus on details and specific components of a subject. They like to break down information into smaller parts and analyze them. Holistic learners, however, prefer to understand the overall concept and the relationship between the different parts. They tend to see patterns and relationships, which helps them grasp complex subjects more intuitively.

Implications for education and training

Recognizing and accommodating different learning patterns can significantly enhance the effectiveness of training programs. Here are some practical tips:

- **Diversify teaching methods**: Use a variety of methods to cater to diverse preferences. Incorporate visual aids, audio recordings, reading materials, and hands-on activities to engage all types of learners.
- **Personalize learning**: Allow learners to choose activities that align with their preferences. Provide options for how they can demonstrate their understanding, such as through written reports, presentations, or practical projects.
- **Encourage self-awareness**: Encourage learners to use strategies that work best for them and to be open to trying new approaches.
- **Create a supportive environment**: Foster an inclusive learning environment that respects and values diversity in learning. Provide resources and support to help all learners succeed.

24. Didactic skills

Introduction

Didactic skills are essential for leaders, community workers, and trainers who aim to effectively communicate, teach, and inspire their own teams and participants of training programs. These skills encompass a range of techniques and approaches that enhance the ability to convey information clearly, engage participants, and facilitate learning. Developing didactic skills requires practice and self-reflection. By focusing on clarity, engagement, adaptability, feedback, non-verbal communication, and emotional intelligence, trainers, leaders, and community workers can enhance their ability to teach, inspire, and lead their communities effectively in the context of climate adaptation. These skills not only improve communication but also foster a positive and productive learning environment.

This document provides an overview of key didactic skills that leaders and community workers can develop to improve their teaching abilities in the context of climate adaptation.

Key didactic skills

1. Clarity

Clarity is the foundation of effective communication. Leaders and community workers must ensure that their messages about climate adaptation are clear, concise, and easily understood. This involves:

- Simplifying complex concepts: Break down complicated ideas about climate adaptation into simpler components.
- Using plain language: Avoid jargon and technical terms that may confuse the participants.
- Providing examples: Use real-life examples to illustrate points and make them relatable.

2. Engagement

Engaging the participants is crucial for maintaining their interest and ensuring that the message about climate adaptation is absorbed. Techniques for engagement include:

- Interactive activities: Incorporate activities such as discussions, role-playing, and group exercises.
- Storytelling: Use stories to make the content more relatable and memorable.
- Visual aids: Utilize charts, graphs, and images to support the message and enhance understanding.

3. Adaptability

Leaders and community workers must be adaptable to the diverse needs and learning patterns of their participants. This involves:

- Assessing the participants: Understand the background, knowledge level, and preferences of the participants.
- Tailoring the approach: Adjust the teaching style and content to suit the participant's needs.
- Being flexible: Be prepared to change the plan based on feedback and the participant's response.

4. Feedback

Providing and receiving feedback is essential for continuous improvement. Effective feedback involves:

- Positive reinforcement: Acknowledge and praise good performance to motivate the participants.
- Constructive criticism: Offer specific, actionable suggestions for improvement.
- Active listening: Encourage feedback from the participants and listen to their concerns and suggestions.

5. Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal cues play a significant role in communication. Leaders and community workers should be aware of their body language, facial expressions, and gestures. Key aspects include:

- Eye contact: Maintain eye contact to build trust and show engagement.
- Body language: Use open and confident body language to convey authority and approachability.
- Facial expressions: Ensure that facial expressions match the message being conveyed.

6. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others. Leaders and community workers with high emotional intelligence can:

- Build rapport: Establish strong relationships with the participants.
- Empathize: Understand and respond to the emotions and needs of the participants.

- Manage conflicts: Handle disagreements and conflicts in a constructive manner.

Dealing with differences among participants: do’s and don’ts

Don’ts

- Avoid moralizing, complaining, and generational stereotypes. Don’t blame participants if your approach doesn’t work.
- Refrain from categorizing participants into fixed boxes.
- Don’t reinforce the idea that personalities and opinions are unchangeable, that they cannot develop new strategies, or that trainers/leaders are there to adjust the world.

Do’s

- Ensure your initiatives meet basic requirements:
  - Know what you want to achieve; have and communicate clear, meaningful goals.
  - Align your strategies constructively.
  - Set expectations for both your participants and you.
  - Support your participants during contact-time and consider the connection with their own activities.
  - Provide a good structure that helps participants integrate new information with what they already know.

Addressing differences in background knowledge and starting levels

- Get an image of relevant prior knowledge of your participants, connections to previous experiences, and any gaps in their knowledge or skills.
- Offer an open initial task that is inspiring and doable for everyone, regardless of their starting level.
- Provide resources to help bridge gaps in knowledge. Invest in additional sessions for crucial topics or phases, such as the beginning of a program.
- Offer advanced tasks and feedback for participants who want more.
- Encourage participants to actively use and learn from different backgrounds, qualities, and perspectives during group tasks.
- Gradually shift more responsibility to the participants as the program progresses and make this clear.

Varying and experimenting

- Within a good structure that supports awareness and learning, vary your methods. Use explanations, direct instruction, plenary discussions, individual tasks, small group tasks, working aloud, working in silence, visualizing what they have read, or explaining a visualization in words.

Staying curious

- Continuously check how your initiatives are received. Regularly ensure everyone is engaged and learning, using questions.
- Take participants' experiences seriously. Ask targeted questions (e.g., "What are you more aware of?" “What did you learn?" "What helped you learn?" "What could help you learn more?"). Consider their input as valuable feedback, not direct instructions to change your approach. Sometimes clients have good points worth trying out. Other times, they express discomfort or short-term needs that you shouldn’t immediately fulfil but can inspire you to improve your initiatives.

Building good relationships

- Explain what you do and why it benefits them.
- Show interest in their development and understanding of their frustrations.
- Ask for feedback and explain why you can’t always meet their wishes.
- Confronting and expressing expectations can be effective; judging and preaching are not.

Promoting awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes (metacognition)

- Make explicit what you do, how you structure your initiatives, and why.
- Encourage participants to reflect on their approach, beliefs, and motivations. Use tools like check questions, ask for exceptions and alternatives, and ask what it looks like when it has succeeded. Expand their repertoire of strategies.
- Encourage participants to expand their awareness, knowledge, and skills. Show why it’s valuable and necessary. Help them by referring to other resources.
- Provide constructive feedback and promote self- and peer feedback.

25. Presenting

Introduction

It takes time and attention to prepare a presentation. For many, giving presentations is a nerve-wracking affair. In this short guide, we offer tips on preparing and delivering your presentation.

Preparing a presentation

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. What is the objective of your presentation?
2. Who is your audience?
3. What topics do you want to include in your presentation?
4. How much time do you have?
5. What visual aids do you want to use?

For each question, your answer should reflect your audience's needs and the assessment criteria.

Writing a presentation

- Script vs. notes: write short notes. On index cards, for example. Do not just rely on a written-out text you read out.
- Spend extra time crafting an engaging introduction and a memorable conclusion.

Structure

- When explaining your ideas, a logical structure is half the battle. Watch the video; it outlines how to structure your presentation to maintain your audience's attention.
- The structure of your presentation contains 3 components: introduction, body, and conclusion. The form and content of those components depend on the goal of your presentation and the audience.
- Goal: do you have to inform, to convince or to persuade your audience: what does your audience know about and what is new to them? What are the needs of your audience?

Video: Structure in your presentation

Convincing pitch

- Introduction: Aim and catch the attention
- Body (can be structured several ways):
    - Arguments
    - Clear and convincing information
    - Evidence
- Conclusion: message and pay off

Use technology

- Learn how to use PowerPoint (or Canva or a similar tool) and ensure your slides are usable and appropriate for your presentation. Don't copy your presentation onto the slides and read from them.
- Use images and graphics effectively. Keep your graphics simple. Avoid unnecessary clutter or distracting transitions (NotebookLM can help create infographics).
- Pay attention to copyright rules for images and quotes. Use royalty-free images or create your own.
- Have a plan B in case technology fails.

Delivering the presentation

- Practice, practice, practice. Ask a colleague or friend to play with your audience and give feedback.
- Be enthusiastic. If you come across as driven and interested in your topic, your audience will be too.
- Body language. Stand relaxed and confident. Smile and maintain eye contact with your heard. Try not to talk too fast and fiddle with your hands.
- Use your voice! Speak clearly and distinctly.
- Mind your pace. Many students get a lower grade because nerves make them race through their presentation like crazy. This hinders understanding. Pause now and then drink some water and slow yourself down.

Video: Fluency - Using your voice

Q&A session

It is common to have a question-and-answer session after a presentation, where your audience can ask your questions.

- Prepare yourself. Try to think in advance about what questions your audience will ask. If necessary, make a slide to support your answer.
- How do you answer? Practice your answers. During the presentation: listen carefully to the question, summarize it and give yourself time to formulate your answer.
- Don't make up an answer if you are not sure! Be honest and admit that you haven't thought of it, or that you don't know the answer right now.

Overcoming nerves

- Nerves are good! Think of nerves as an extra push from your body to perform. Without the adrenaline, you won't be sharp.
- Preparing is key. When you have prepared your presentation well, with a clear structure and lots of examples, your stage fright will naturally diminish.

- Think positive. Your audience will give you the benefit of the doubt.
- Relaxation techniques. There are many ways to make yourself calmer, such as breathing techniques, meditation, and mindfulness.

Five golden tips

1. Show your enthusiasm and interest in the topic
2. A strong introduction and conclusion will hold your audience's attention
3. Practice your presentation and pay attention to time
4. Use PowerPoint (or another app), but only if it adds something
5. Try to enjoy the experience

Delving deeper

a. Prepare a presentation

Focus points

To get started prepared, it is important to focus well in advance on:

a. Objectives.

- What do you want the participants to have understood?
- What action do you want the participants to take following your presentation?
- How can you best design your presentation to meet your objectives?

b. Participants

- How will they already know about the material?
- How can you link new material to things they might already understand?

c. Venue

- What kind of atmosphere do you wish to create?
- How might the room arrangement affect your relationship with the participants?
- What audio-visual aids can you use?

d. Remit

- How much time have you been allocated?
- Are you required to stick to a common format?
- Have any guidelines been set regarding the content of your presentation (a title, a fixed number of slides)

e. Review your presentation.

b. Structure of a presentation

	Content	Tips
Introduction	• Introduce yourself • State objectives tutorial • Outline key areas • What do you expect your participants to do?	• Be clear • Have an attractive opening • Provide outline and structure
Body	• Presentation of key points in a logical, coherent way • Summarize the link and each key point • Link content to previous tutorials and courses	• Include breaks every 10-15 minutes • Use examples, anecdotes or illustrations • Three points in ten minutes
Conclusion	• A review of your subject area • A summary of your main points, • A summary of the process you have been through • A conclusion clearly drawn from your main points • A parting statement to stimulate the participants' thoughts	• "In this presentation I wanted to explore the relation between X and Y." • "We have discussed the following points…" • "By looking at X, we have found that Y…" • Finish on time

c. Attention span

The claim that after ten minutes of listening the attention of participants drops (*Bligh, 2000*), is not supported by literature (*Wilson and Korn, 2007*). However: to prepare an 'unmissable' session, keep the following key points in mind:

a. Provide short breaks to review notes, ask questions.

Ask for summaries, give participants time to solve a problem or discuss an idea. By incorporating this into your tutorial participants are required to *engage* with the material and think for themselves. This will also help to combat the decline in attention.

b. Clear structure to enable participants to identify key points

- A clear structure is a guiding pathway through the morass of information. It helps participants to prioritize information, to identify links and connections between concepts.
- Clearly linking individual learning outcomes of the tutorial with the broader goals of the course itself encourages participants to construct meaning. Structuring is something different than spoon-feeding.

c. Passion and enthusiasm

The enthusiasm of the trainer and the ability to inspire is an important factor in attracting participants' attention. However, your training/lecture can be enjoyable, but still fail to meet important goals. Expressiveness is a tool, not an end to itself.

Capture attention

If you want learners to learn, you need to capture their attention. Use the principles of the psychology of learning:

- Reinforce desired behavior by feedback, compliments, and attention
- Shape by rewarding behavior that is increasingly similar to the desired behavior
- Neglect unwanted behavior (=withholding reward of attention)
- Make sure that participants are watching you and are likely to imitate you (modelling).

Attention

- Paying attention stores information in the working memory
- Expressive teachers attract and keep participants' interest
- Participants who claim to have a memory problem are simply not paying attention
- When attention is divided, performance suffers
- Be clear on each tutorial's objectives, key concepts and questions to consider
- Distribute handouts with the major points or skeleton notes
- Ask (high-level) question
- Be explicit about what participants should focus on: key concepts, definitions, important themes.

Memory

- Working memory is limited (+/- 7 units)
- Don't overload the system
- Organized and meaningful information is easier to recall (chunking)
- Make use of the primacy and recency effects
- Rehearsal stores information in the long-term memory
- Give short breaks to review notes and ask questions
- Ask for summaries, give participants time to solve a problem or discuss an idea.

Sources:

University of Birmingham, Library Services: A short guide to presentation skills.

Academic English UK: Peer Feedback Form.

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Language Centre: Videos on Academic Presentation Skills.

Colophon: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Career Services, Professional Skills.

26. 'Classroom' challenges

Overly talkative or disruptive participants can derail a training. If a participant dominates the 'classroom', try the following strategies to refocus the group and involve other participants:

Preventing conflict

A sensitive approach to your work with learners can save you from many problems.

- By carefully phrasing questions and criticism, you can generally avoid defensive or hostile responses.
- If you are supportive, encouraging, and respectful of participants' ideas in class, you can correct incorrect answers or point out weaknesses without discouraging them.
- Always show participants the courtesy of listening to and responding to their ideas.
- Rather than dismissing a weak or inaccurate idea immediately, ask the learner to clarify it using class material. Often, participants can talk their way into a more thoughtful response.
- You will also want to be careful about teasing or sarcastic humor, since these are all too often easily misinterpreted.

You are also less likely to run into conflict with your participants if you resolve any mixed feelings you have about your authority as a trainer. Participants expect you to set clear boundaries and to hold them to their responsibilities.

Strategies for managing challenges

When arguments erupt in class, or when a learner makes an inflammatory comment

Your role as the trainer is to preserve the learning environment. This task is two-fold:

1. First, maintain a safe environment for your learners, which means preventing the debate from turning into a prolonged attack on any individual or group with whom participants may identify. It also means keeping your cool and staying respectful when a participant challenges you; this helps preserve the participant's trust in you.
2. Second, look for the learning opportunity in the experience. What is the value for participants in hearing opposing viewpoints or challenging commonly held stereotypes? Is there a way to use the content of the argument to serve your training goals? Or is the learner best served by defusing the tension and swiftly refocusing participants?

When a discussion between participants becomes heated

You can use the following strategies to transform arguments into productive debate:

- Take a deep breath and assess what is happening. Is a learner voicing frustration? Is a learner expressing a heartfelt opinion? Are two participants misunderstanding each other?

- Whenever possible, encourage participants to discuss ideas, not individuals, in the classroom.
- If a learner attacks another learner's idea, ask that learner to restate what he or she thinks the other learner meant. Make sure that the interpretation is accurate and allow both participants to clarify their statements.
- Ask the participants to generate all possible evidence for both sides of a debate as a way of suspending judgement and encouraging reflection. Ask participants to find counterexamples as well as examples.
- Offer to continue a discussion after class or ask interested participants to email you their thoughts if the topic of the argument is not central to the goals of the class session.

When a learner challenges or criticizes you

Take the following steps to stay calm and find some value in the exchange:

- Take a deep breath and try to understand the content of the learners' complaint or challenge. Ignore, for a moment, any rudeness; if you respond to the content, the leaner's attitude and approach may soften.
- Remain calm and non-judgmental, no matter how agitated the learner becomes. Your emotional response will only further fuel the learner's anger. This is especially true if a learner makes a personal attack.
- Don't use your authority as a trainer to simply claim superior knowledge or logic; while in some cases it may be true, it will almost never convince your participants, and it discourages their active engagement with the ideas.
- Use evidence when disagreeing with a learner and ask participants to provide evidence for their positions. You may ask other participants to evaluate the evidence that you, or the learner, provide, if the argument is related to course content.
- Never get into a power struggle with a learner. As the trainer, you already have power; any retaliation to a learner's provocation is likely to be viewed as an abuse of power.
- If a learner is agitated to the point of being unreasonable, ask him or her to carry the grievance to a higher authority. Do not continue trying to reason with a learner who is highly agitated.

When one learner dominates the classroom

Over talkative or disruptive participants can derail a class. If a learner dominates the classroom, try the following strategies to refocus the class and involve other participants:

- Ask other participants to comment on the dominant learner's ideas and to propose alternative perspectives.
- Try participation strategies that involve the whole group, such as taking a vote, breaking up into pairs, or doing a "round robin," where every learner gives a brief response to a question, problem, or thought-provoking quote.

- If the dominant learner seems to be well-intentioned, you might meet with the learner privately, thank them for their enthusiastic participation, and ask for advice on how to involve other participants. Let the learner know that you want to distribute participation more evenly and invite her to be your ‘collaborator’ (e.g., by not answering a question right away to give others an opportunity, or by phrasing comments in a way that encourages others to respond).
- If a learner dominates by asking too many disruptive questions, you can ask the full class how many participants would prefer that you spend class time answering a specific question. If the class does not vote yes, let the learner know that you can answer his question after class or in office hours.
- Recognize that talkative and even disruptive participants often think they are displaying enthusiasm and thoughtfulness; show appreciation for their commitment to the class, even as you help them find an appropriate way to channel it.

How to involve participants when they remain silent

Some days, the silence in a classroom can make you long for a little heated debate. If you have participants who never answer a question, offer an opinion, or participate in a demonstration, try these strategies for involving them in the classroom:

- Make sure that you know the names of your participants and that all the members of a class know each other by name.
- Create a safe environment by responding positively to all learner feedback, even if you need to correct a statement. Thank each learner for his or her contribution and try to find the seed of a correct or more developed answer in the learner’s response. Give participants the opportunity to revise or clarify their response.
- Prepare participants for full-group discussion by having them first discuss the topic in pairs or by spending a few minutes writing out their response to a question.
- Do not put a silent learner on the spot unless you have established a norm of calling on participants who have not volunteered. A learner’s embarrassment at being singled out may make it even less likely he or she will want to participate in class.
- If you decide to establish a norm of calling on participants who have not volunteered responses, begin with questions that do not have a single correct answer or questions that ask participants to make a choice between options. This makes it more likely that participants will be able to answer your question without feeling embarrassment or resentment.
- Request all participants in your class to stop by your office hours at the beginning of the quarter. Getting to know each learner may encourage them to participate in class.
- Consider asking quiet participants to email you their thoughts before or after class. Some participants will readily accept this invitation. If they email before class, you will have an opportunity to draw them into the conversation at an appropriate point. If they email you after class, they have the chance to put together a thoughtful response without the pressure of being in the classroom.

- Talking with the learner privately can also help. Reasons for being silent vary. A learner may simply enjoy listening. Another may lack the confidence to contribute. Some participants have quiet personalities; others may be undergoing personal difficulties that inhibit their participation. Some may be unprepared and embarrassed to admit it. Others may come from an educational background that discouraged active participation. Even after you gently encourage them to speak, they may remain silent. This is their right, and ultimately you must respect their privacy.

Above all, have compassion for your participants. Life's little and big disasters do get in the way. You don't need to give participants credit they didn't earn, but you should empathize with their situation and help them formulate a plan.

Source:

https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/resources/teaching-resources/interacting-participants/trainers/classroom-challenges

27. Training: design, skills, and activities

1. Designing a training

Step 1. Intake

Visit the premises of the organization or community where the participants in your training come from. Delve deeper into:

- What is the current, non-desired behavior in the organization, community or group and what is the future, desired behavior?
- What is the desired outcome of the training in terms of visibly different behavior?
- Where and when are things not going well now and from where does it show?
- What has already been tried in the organization, community or group but has not worked well?
- Transfer: how will the results of the training be secured? What can the participants do before, during and after the training to make that happen?

  Examples of possibilities for securing: facilitating peer consultation groups, making a (personal) action or development plan with the participants and monitoring progress, celebrating successes, setting up a mentoring system, organizing follow-up meetings, showing exemplary behavior yourself, paying attention through internal information channels.

Step 2. Noting raids

What ideas do you get about your training content? Gather elements you want to include: models, theory, tips, exercises etc. Search literature, consult with colleagues, brainstorm etc.

Step 3. Goal formulation

Define goals for the training: after the training, participants can:

- at the level of knowledge: retelling, naming, enumerating, …
- at the (next) level of understanding: make connections, argue, explain, indicate difference, explain, compare, …
- applicable at the (following) level: create, design, write, perform, apply in a practical situation, …

Step 4. Draft program

Design the global program. The overall program can be included in the offer and can serve to recruit participants for the training.

Step 5. Intake with participants

Delve deeper to find out the needs of the participants: What do participants want to learn? What do they encounter in them in practice? How much experience do they have? Form: individual or group discussion, attending meeting, company tour, questionnaire, …?

Step 6. Adoption of final program

Sharpen the goals. Link participants' learning questions to program elements. Set the program and build in sufficient flexibility.

2. Trainer skills

Transferring content

- Dealing with resistance: in the resistance, the learning experience awaits
- Connecting with participants' practice
- Being able to play with content
- Doing what you say.

Guide interaction

- Instructing assignments
- Leading debriefings
- Leading discussions
- Timeframe.

Giving feedback

- Positive feedback: complimenting on effort, stimulating
- Negative feedback: confronting, critically constructive
- In the here-and-now
- Focused on the issue, not on the person.

3. Examples of activities in a training

Ensure that you have an appealing training program that suits the different needs and the preferred learning styles of the participants. Below an example of a training program and its different interventions and activities:

1. You begin your presentation/training with specific practical problems and the importance of solutions.
2. You explain the theory: what explains the situation and ask participants to enrich it.
3. You share specific examples and tips for solutions.
4. You demonstrate necessary skills.
5. You invite participants to experiment with concrete plans or behavior in their own recognizable practical situations.
6. You ask participants to think about what generally works well and what could be improved.
7. You facilitate a plenary discussion about the insights gained.
8. You end up with conclusions and agreements for follow-up.

1. Example of activities that suit:
a. the need for collecting, reasoning and concluding
b. participants who like to observe and reflect

- Brainstorming: coming up with as many alternatives as possible based on a question
- Questionnaire: to administer a questionnaire or complete it yourself and reflect on the result
- Teaching-learning conversation: letting students draw conclusions from learning experiences by summarizing and asking questions
- Logbook keeping: after each module, participants answer in writing some questions about what they have learned
- Mind map: participants organize in writing in keywords and line connections their own images or interrelationships around a theme
- Make top 10: individually, then in subgroups, then plenary arrive at a top 10 of best tips, insights etc.
- Wall of jubilation and complaint: participants write down keywords and drawings of what they are positive about and have reservations about on a flap in the plenary. Possibly supplemented with an ambition wall. Discuss together afterwards and identify common threads.
- Multiple choice: participants are presented with a situation with a number of alternatives and discuss what they would do and why.
- Statements: get people to discuss statements. This can also be done by physically taking positions in space or raising a card (left/red = okay, right/green = not okay).
- Brief: group splits into 2: plaintiffs and defenders of a proposal. Playing out summary proceedings, in new subgroups discussion and conclusion regarding 'how to cash in on advantages and how to take away disadvantages?'
- Thinking from different angles and roles: participants look at a situation e.g. from the role of civil servant, child, mother, customer, manager, director. Or: participants reflect in the role of a. the critic who notes problems, b. the dreamer who writes down fantasy images or c. the realist who makes practical observations (Walt-Disney method).
- Collegial/peer consultation methods: methodically reflecting on an issue and arriving at tips. For example: one person introduces an issue, the other participants ask clarification questions and help the introducer to get to the core of his issue. Then the participants share their compliments (what impresses you?) and share their insights and tips. Finally, the collective learning experience is reflected upon.
- Work associatively: do/imagine something that symbolizes the issue: name metaphor, find a suitable picture, cut/paste, draw etc. Discuss the metaphor and conclude 'what seems to be important themes in the issue?'

2. Example of activities that suit: *a. the need for plunging into an experience* *b. participants who like to experience concrete actions*

- Giving a demonstration
- Perform practical assignment in training
- Simulation, role-playing
- Imagining disaster scenario: imagining situation that is the worst of what could happen
- Guided fantasy: taking participants into a situation and letting them fantasize on it
- Inviting wrong behavior in training
- Competition around completing a task with possible prize for the winner
- Initiation stage; stage acting; participants reenact desired situation
- Sharing successes: what is your top experience? What made you succeed?

3. Example of activities that suit: *a. the need for lining up theory and linking it to other models* *b. participants who like abstract conceptualization*

- Explain
- Getting something read and collecting key insights
- Research: participants themselves search for appropriate theory to an issue, e.g. by reading books or interviewing experts
- Formulate questions: subgroups of participants come up with questions to test whether theory is correct; other subgroups/participants answer these questions
- Have a lecture/presentation given by a participant or by an external invitee or representative
- Watching video and gathering key insights
- Mind map: note down in a mind map what has passed in a training session
- Quiz: asking knowledge questions in competition form
- Sorting task: model/theory is cut up into pieces and participants puzzle that back together again
- Diagram: have participants schematically represent how theories/models relate to each other.
- Offering theory appeals to learning style type 'reflector', but also helps the other learning style types through the theory. Do this by quickly going through Kolb's learning cycle in theory.

4. Example of activities that suit: *a. the need to apply a model in an assignment, case or practice* *b. participants who like active experimentation*

- Setting intentions: participants think of elements they will implement in concrete terms

- Action plan: participants create an action plan with concrete steps and time schedule
- Make a checklist: participants make their own list of tips from theory. The best tips can also be made into a product so that they remain within reach afterwards (e.g. write them down on business cards, or put a photo on desks)
- Developing a checklist: having participants apply a checklist to a practical example
- Find the mistakes: participants assess in a case or situation what has been applied correctly or incorrectly from the point of view of theory
- Entry stage: someone puts down a situation, and everyone gets to drop in to give a tip
- Structured demonstration: trainer demonstrates how given tips are applied in a practical situation
- Collegial help: participants work with a buddy who shares concrete tips; e.g. hold up a sign with tips during an exercise.

Sources:

Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Pearson Ft Press.

De Galan, K. (2015). Trainen, een praktijkgids. Pearson Benelux B.V.

28. How to design a working conference

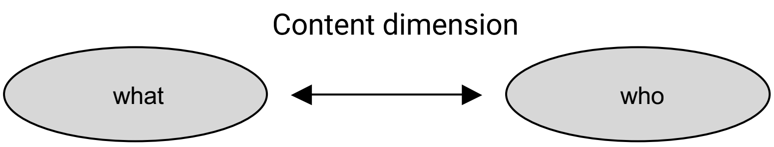
Working conferences are a valuable instrument through which the parties involved work together towards concrete results within a framework of change. As a trainer or facilitator, you can use this format to help organizations to collaborate and to address complex issues through dialogue, reflection, and co-creation. The process builds ownership, strengthens social cohesion, and enhances collective problem-solving. Working conferences may empower people to move from awareness to action, e.g. making climate adaptation more inclusive, context-specific, and sustainable. This article describes the characteristics of a working conference and guidelines for its use as a method of intervention. The model is developed for organizations but may also be of interest for communities and working groups.

1. Design model for working conferences

How can we design a working conference in such a way as to achieve results that have been determined in advance? Working conferences can be regarded as a playing field on which all participants are active together. That field has both a content dimension and a dimension that indicates an orientation in time.

The content dimension has two poles: the what and the who (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The content dimension



The what is the 'cool' side and refers to the aspects of a change; that which is visible, can be described, examined and measured. For example, concepts such as revenue and loss, results, budgets, costs, developments in society, etc., that can be made visible in figures that can indicate trends.

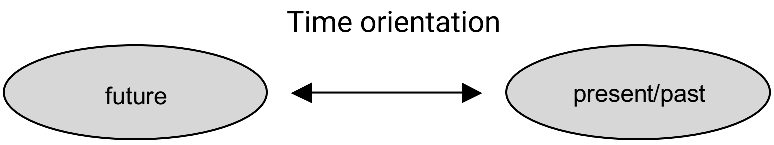
To discuss these is a cognitive action: participants analyze, list all issues, and explore alternatives. They consider the current state of things, use models and hypotheses about cause and effect, and think of possible solutions to problems.

The who is the 'warm side' and refers to the people who are involved in a change. People stand in a certain relation to issues: they can feel responsible or the opposite. Sometimes they see they themselves do not do things perfectly, sometimes they feel others let things slide; they often disagree about what exactly happened. Communication usually runs along fixed patterns that are sometimes productive and sometimes they are not. The assessment and interpretation of 'facts' differ.

Judgments of content can also be connected to the dynamics in a group: you feel more connected with some people than with others, and you may be inclined to go along with the first in his or her argumentation. The what and the who cannot be regarded as separate.

The dimension that indicates orientation in time also has two poles: future-oriented or past/present-oriented (see figure 2).

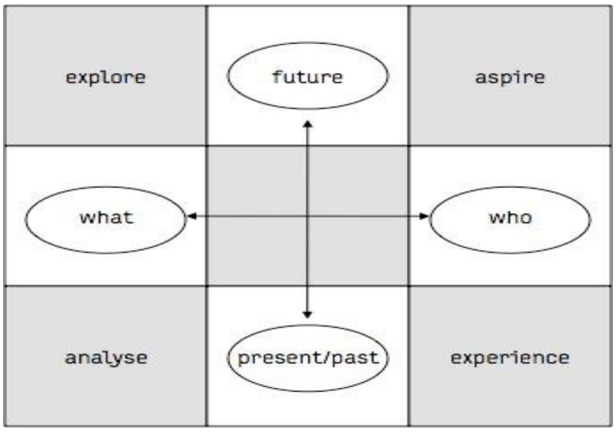
Figure 2: Time orientation



Present and past refer to looking back, reflecting, understanding, analyzing and examining. Curiosity can be a driving factor: comparing one's own situation with that of others, experiencing differences, or wanting to solve puzzles. Another factor can be dissatisfaction or concern: discomfort with a situation and wanting to get to the bottom of it. Future orientation means that people do what they want to do or what they think will become necessary. They start to explore, work from their ambitions or ideals or they work on a vision. They explore possibilities and limitations and consider alternatives.

On this dimension also, the extremes cannot be regarded as separate. Images about the future are often embedded in opinions about how things have come about. Regarding something as a problem often comes from beliefs about what a more desirable situation looks like.

Figure 3: The functions in a working conference



By connecting these two dimensions, a field is created in which the conference takes place. The four corners represent the four basic functions a conference can have (see figure 3). The use of these functions renders a certain result.

Function	*Description*	*Result*
Explore	Looking for possibilities and alternatives, finding applications elsewhere, describing scenario's, extrapolating trends	Alternatives
Analyze	Considering the actual situation, what goes well and what does not, arranging material, evaluating	Insight
Experience	Discussing feelings, examining own relation to situations, reflecting on patterns, bringing up consequences of behavior	Awareness
Aspire	Discussing ideals and dreams, taking inventory of what people want to stand for, what they want to go for	Aspirations

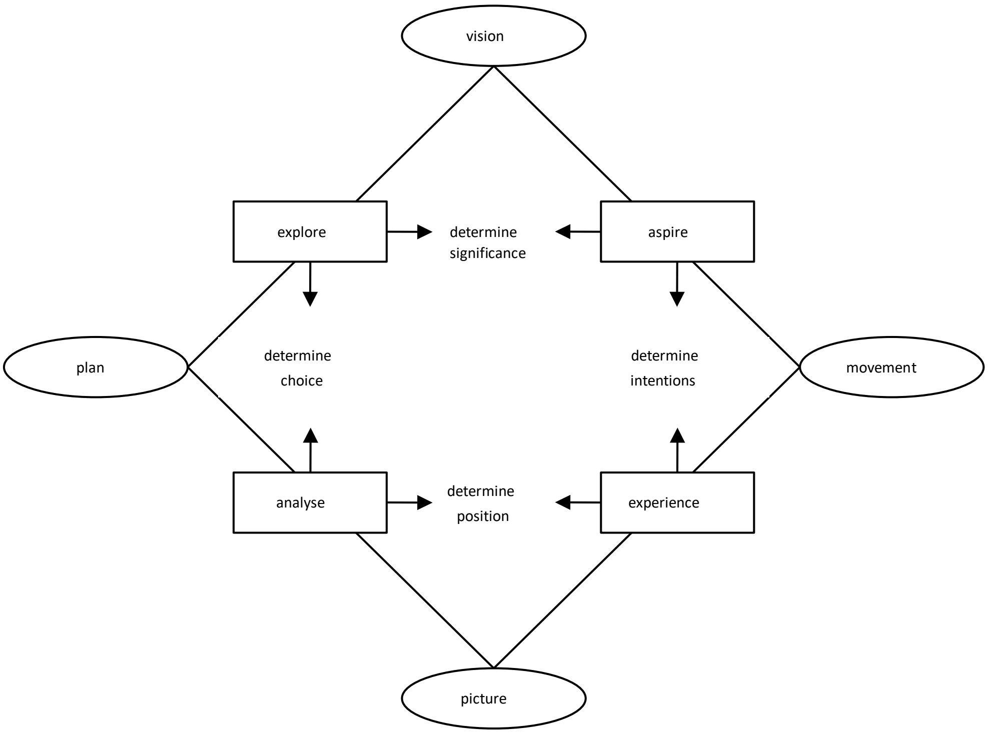
It is the combination of these functions that creates the special value of working conferences. A combination decreases the danger of one-sidedness and getting off balance.
A conference at which people discuss only their ambitions runs the risk of unrealizable dreams arising, which is also known as fantasizing. Limiting participants to analyzing only does not lead to movement, but can lead to gloominess if you are not careful, where is the future perspective? Discussing alternatives is a good thing, but how do you arrive at a choice, and who will commit him/herself to it?

An alternative without an owner is like a lost wallet no one claims. And is experiencing things not often associated with 'navel-gazing', practiced by psychologists and the like? "Are we even talking about anything real?" is what people will wonder. Each of the functions has some value, but on their own, they also have a weakness. That is why the connection of functions is so important. This can be achieved as follows:

Connect	*Features*	*Result*
Analyze and Experience	Determining position: building a picture by connecting one's own role and behavior to issues and taking responsibility for them	Picture
Explore and Aspire	Determining significance: if this is what can be done, what will be of significance to us?	Vision
Explore and Analyze	Determining choice: recognizing a situation, considering alternatives, choosing based on criteria and then plotting a route of action	Plan
Aspire and Experience	Determining intentions: what the teamwork should be like in comparison to existing practices and patterns, formulating intentions for personal behavioral change, practicing	Movement

In figure 4, we have summarized the above.

Figure 4: Functions and results of a conference



2. Preparing a working conference

'Let's do a conference' doesn't usually lead to too much. Greater results can be expected if the conference fits the organization and the change process. The conference has to be embedded in the organization. This starts with sound preparation and intensive involvement of the client and the other colleagues, right from the start.

Sound preparation involves five steps.

Step 1. Orientation on the context and the issue

Questions that need to be discussed are:

- What is the reason for the conference?
- What are the intended changes in the organization (group)?
- What developments in the environment influence this process?
- What issues are under discussion?
- What results should the conference have?
- What opportunities are there to start working with the results after the conference?

Tip: check feasibility:

- Is a conference the appropriate instrument for this issue?
- Purely technical issues are usually not suitable for conferences
- Personal conflicts that are too substantial can lead to a great deal of misery in a group

Step 2. An overall design

Now an overall design should be set up. It consists of:

- The formulation of conference results in terms of the design model
- A decision about the participants in the conference
- A decision about potential temporary visitors (manager, client, etc.)
- A good location
- The order of themes

Tip: Rhythm and dynamics.

Make sure you vary the rhythm and dynamics. An active start with interaction alternated with time for reflection. Alternate exciting topics with relaxation and/or a walk. Use the time to gain momentum or stop for contemplation.

Step 3. The scenario

Translate the overall design into a scenario.

- A time schedule for each program part
- Choice of working methods
- Instructions per theme and exercise

Tip: Use stimulating methods of working and expression.

Do not only use language, but also images or collages, or have a discussion in the shape of a lawsuit, ask for presentations in the form of a one-act play, or a flip-over exhibit.

Offer surprising perspectives. Ask participants to neglect their role of controller for once, and to contribute from a different position (for instance the client of the company), from a different time horizon (what will this problem look like ten years from now?) or a different organizational setting (how do they handle this in a jail?).

Step 4. Invitation

For the right embedment of the results, it is important that participants prepare for what is to come. This starts with a clear invitation in which you direct the expectations: what should they expect and what shouldn't they expect?
Tip: A preparatory assignment.

A preparatory assignment to be made by individual participants or teams helps to create involvement even before the start of the conference.

Step 5. Preparation on location

The trainer/facilitator is present at the location long before the participants, to get everything ready. You will be surprised at how much still needs to be done to make the participants feel welcome and have the conference run smoothly. The set-up in the rooms, instructions ready, tools operational, the organization of the catering, instructing of fellow-trainers, music, etc.
Tip: Choose the right location.

The location is preferably away from the regular meeting place. A tent, a theatre, or a house in a different area. Make sure you have a meeting room that is at least three times as big as the one for a regular meeting with a group of this size. You can choose a set-up for the rooms that gives them a special atmosphere. Small things are important. Sitting in a circle has a different effect from sitting behind tables.

3. After the conference

After the conference, it is time to harvest. Agreements are worked out, progress is monitored, obstacles are overcome and successes are celebrated. In this phase, special attention needs to be paid to communication with those who did not attend the conference.

The better the conference is embedded - during the preparation phase - in the organization's change process, and the more participants are involved prior to the start of the conference, the more successful the embedment will turn out in practice. The same holds for the method used in the conference. After a conference that resonates with positive stories and good intentions, practice can be disappointing. However, if the participants have thoroughly experienced both the beckoning perspective and the possible downsides, the chance of the conference getting a successful follow-up in practice increases.

Sources:

Wortelboer F. et al. How do you design a working conference? https://freerk.net/writing/

www.futuresearch.net

www.openspaceworld.org