

# hosting meaningful dialogue

## resource guide



## About this Resource Guide

It is designed to be a personal reference journal with the purpose of strengthening your learning by offering the key materials of this training and more.

It shares the basic assumptions and world views underpinning the practice of hosting dialogue.

It includes several methodologies and practices that dialogue practitioners have found simple and helpful. They are for you to use, improve and share.

It also provides you with resources - books, links, and information and where to go next – in your learning and/or reading.

## Honoring contributions

The material shared in this guide comes from the collaborative experience of dialogue practitioners and facilitators from all over the world, most of them are part of the Art of Hosting network [www.artofhosting.org](http://www.artofhosting.org). It has been written up by several people at different times and been re-edited by others to the extent that it is impossible to honor every single contributor. It is a growing, living document . Where possible specific sources been cited. We wish to express our gratitude for the generosity of the many contributors.

Most pictures inserted in this journal were taken during Art of Hosting workshops held in Egypt, Kufunda Learning Village in Zimbabwe, Belgium and the UK (mostly photographed by Simone Poutnik [simone@natural-innovation.net](mailto:simone@natural-innovation.net)).

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# A Few Assumptions

## New Solutions are Needed

Our approach is built on the assumption and experience that we need to find new solutions for the common good. These solutions are more comprehensive and more readily found and owned if they are co-created between us. The time is now.

## New Solutions Grow Between Chaos and Order

If we want to innovate we have to be willing to let go of what we know and step into not knowing. In nature all innovation happens at the edge of chaos, or in the space between chaos and order (the chaordic path). It is in the chaordic space that new connections are created and new possibilities emerge. The way to any major change or transformation will go through chaos into new order.

## Conversation Matters

It is common sense to bring more people together in conversation. It is the way we have done it in generations past, gathering round fires and sitting in circles. It is the way we occasionally taste now, building core relationships that invite real collaboration.

## Meaningful Conversation is Wise Action

Human beings that are involved and invited to work together take ownership and responsibility when ideas and solutions must be put into action.

Conversations that surface a shared clarity on issues of importance foster ownership and responsibility when ideas and solutions must be put into action. – Actions that come out of collective clarity are both wise and sustainable.

*“Instead of looking on conversation as a stumbling block that’s in the way of action, we think of it as an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all.”*

Pericles

## Paradoxes at Work

In hosting strategic and meaningful dialogue we operate in a world that is not black or white – but rather full spectrum. We need to be able to operate in and hold paradoxes such as:

- Action and Reflection
- Content and Process
- Leading and Following
- Hierarchy and Community
- Commonality and Difference



## Two World Views

# Organizations - Machines or Complex Adaptive Systems?

By Trenz Pruca

### Living Systems - the Way Life Organizes

For three hundred years, since Descartes and Newton, our thinking has predominantly been influenced by rationalism. We have been able to figure things out and “be in control”. We tend to view our organizations and communities as we view machines – as consisting of clearly defined parts with clearly defined roles and a predictable output.

In a complex world, this mechanistic view may not always be adequate to meet the complex problems and challenges we face. What if communities and organizations could be viewed as living systems as well?

Living systems exist everywhere in nature – bacteria forming colonies or ants coming together to form a system that is capable of creating an anthill. – Some termite nests even have air conditioning so the temperature stays the same inside the hill!

There are two exciting phenomena in nature and living systems:

- 1) Nature has the capability to self-organize, i.e. it does not require someone specific to direct the organization instead of all who are involved participate in what is needed to achieve a purpose
- 2) Self-organisation can lead to emergence = the emergence of totally new properties and qualities =  $1+1 = 11$  or something totally new and surprising.

What if organizations really are living systems and there could be a simpler way of organizing that opens up the possibility for emergence – provided the right conditions are in place?

**What would our organizations and communities look like then?**

### Some qualities of Living Systems:

- A living system only accepts its own solutions (we only support those things we are a part of creating)
- A living system only pays attention to that which is meaningful to it (here and now)
- In nature a living system participates in the development of its neighbour - an isolated system is doomed.
- Nature and all of nature, including ourselves is in constant change (without ‘change management’)
- Nature seeks diversity – new relations open up to new possibilities. It is not survival of the fittest – but everything that is fit – as many species as possible. Diversity increases our chances of survival.
- ‘Tinkering’ opens up to what is possible here and now – nature is not intent on finding perfect solutions, but those that are workable
- A living system cannot be steered or controlled – they can only be teased, nudged, titillated
- A system changes (identity) when its perception of itself changes
- All the answers do not exist ‘out there’ – sometimes we must experiment to find out what works
- Who we are together is always different and more than who we are alone - possibility of emergence. Our range of creative expression increases as we join others. New relationships create new capacities.
- Human beings are capable of self-organizing – given the right conditions

Self-organization shifts us to a higher order.

## A Note on Worldviews ...

One's worldview, made up of values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and ideas, impact everything from how we understand the nature of reality to how we respond to the environment around us. Each person's worldview influences their goals and desires, consciously and unconsciously shaping perceptions, motivations, and values.

The convergence of our individual characteristics and our unique history, including our life experiences, region, culture, religion, socioeconomic status, and family are expressed through our worldview. Our worldview informs and affects our individual realities and the actions we take in the world. There is an infinite multiplicity of worldviews and more than one "right" way or perspective. Each of us has our own unique worldview.

We are each part of a complex, ever-changing, interconnected living universe. What we do influences the world around us, and the world around us influences us, even when we are not aware of exactly how. Greater understanding of the interdependence of all life leads to a more complete view of reality.

**People are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, and meaning-seeking. Organizations are living systems. They too are intelligent, creative, adaptive, self-organizing, meaning-seeking.**

**Margaret Wheatley**

## Mental Models

# Working with Vision and Purpose

**Vision: Where do we want to go? What is our ideal future?**

Definition: The act or power of seeing.

A vision statement is sometimes called a picture of your organization in the future but it's so much more than that. Your vision statement is your inspiration, the framework for all your strategic planning. A vision statement may apply to an entire company or to a single division of that company. Whether for all or part of an organization, the vision statement answers the question, "Where do we want to go?"

What you are doing when creating a vision statement is articulating your dreams and hopes for your organization or community. It reminds you of what you are trying to build.

**The Purpose of Purpose: Why are we all here collectively?**

Discovering purpose is to discover why something exists. Often we hurry to get into action, before we properly understand why we need to take action. Gaining clarity on purpose, and especially gaining collective clarity is setting the right course for taking action. A purpose, therefore, becomes a navigational tool like a compass as it helps us to discover the direction of travel for our efforts so they can be of service. Purpose can also be described as 'the glue' that brings people's contribution and why it is worth working on this together. In fact, purpose becomes an invisible leader as it both connects different actions taken and supports everyone to know why their contribution is valuable.



A Statement of Purpose defines, with absolute clarity and deep conviction, the purpose of the community. An effective statement of purpose will be a clear, commonly understood statement of that which identifies and binds the community together as worthy of pursuit. When properly done it can usually be expressed in a single sentence.

Participants will say about the purpose, "If we could achieve that, my life would have meaning."

Dee Hock - founder of VISA



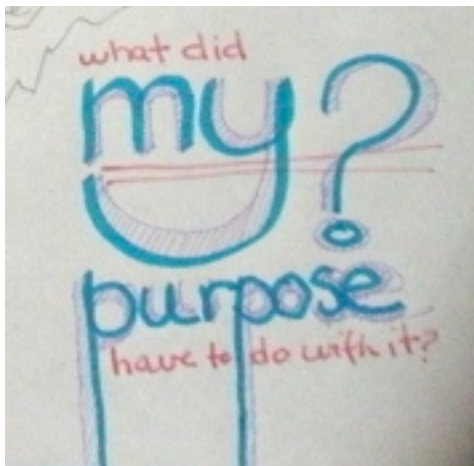
Purpose to be a useful navigational tool in seeking the way forward contains three elements:

**Higher Intent** – why action is needed for the greater good in service of life, e.g. “We are not forming coalitions of states, we are uniting men” - Jean Monnet (one of the founding fathers of the European Community)

**Statement of Purpose** – what effort is needed here and what is being pursued so that direction of action can be set, (does not define the destination, instead it invites and inspires others to participate with clarity

**Intention** – The will to be in pursuit of grounding the higher intent through the actions we take regardless of the challenges that might arise

When these three elements are aligned and collectively understood – the greater good of why we need to take action, the clarity of what we are pursuing in order to ground the higher intent and the will to do this regardless of the conditions – then purpose becomes a powerful attractor that allows people to put their individual efforts to work together on making a difference for all.



**In an organization or a community, many purposes co-exist, and often not enough effort is given to interconnect these purposes so that it can often feel that different and conflicting purposes are at play.**

It is therefore important to remember that different purposes are at play, for example:

- purpose of the stakeholders that the organization serves
- purpose of the whole community / organization
- purpose of the core group
- purpose of each member of the core team

In the light of this, the following questions may inspire your collective inquiry into your shared purpose:

- What is our collective purpose?
- What is the purpose of our function, team, project?
- How does my purpose and the purpose we are all here to accomplish align?
- What is the purpose that is at the heart of this work and that will align us all to
- accomplish it?

Putting effort, therefore in gaining clarity and specifically collective clarity on purpose is a key strategic action that if overlooked, usually ends up confusion and even conflict instead of achieving outcomes that make a difference. Seeking purpose is not something to be done once, either. As action is taken and more is discovered as a result, coming back to check in with purpose – are we still on course or do we have a new one arising is a wise thing to do.

## Collective clarity of purpose is the invisible leader.

**Mary Parker Follett**

# Divergence and Convergence

In entering into an inquiry or multi stakeholder conversation we operate with three different phases in the process – divergent, emergent and convergent. Each of these phases is different, and it is important for a host to know where we are in the process – and what is needed in each phase.

The “breath’ of divergence and convergence, of breathing in and breathing out is at the heart of our process design. Every process goes to a few or more of these ‘breathing’ phases.

In the **divergent phase**, there is as yet no clear goal. This is a “goal-seeking” phase where a clear shared purpose gives the collective direction. Another driver in this phase is asking the right questions.

If you close the divergent phase too soon, the level of newness or innovation will be less. Ideally a group will stay in inquiry in the divergent phase until a new shared and agreed solution or goal is seen by everyone.

Divergent thinking typically generates alternatives, has free-for-all open discussion, gathers diverse points of

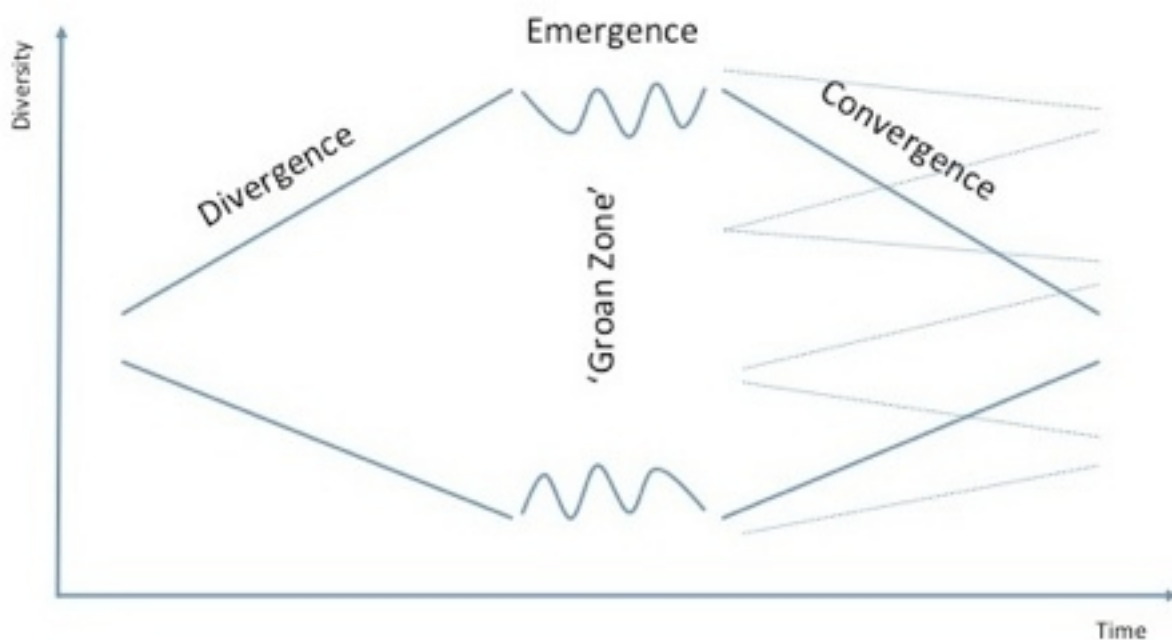
view and unpacks the problem.

The divergent phase is non-linear and needs “chaos time”. It is process-oriented and needs prolonged decision time.

The **convergent phase** is goal-oriented and focused, linear, structured and usually subject to time constraints. It is focused on getting results and may require quick decisions.

Convergent thinking means evaluating alternatives, summarising key points, sorting ideas into categories and arriving at general conclusions.

The **emergent phase**, between the divergent and convergent, is fondly known as the ‘**groan zone**’ – It is the phase where different ideas and needs are integrated. It may require us to stretch our own understanding to hold and include other points of view. We call it the groan zone because it may feel messy - an uncomfortable stretch - but it is also the phase where the new solution emerges.



Divergent Thinking	Convergent Thinking
Generating alternatives	Evaluating alternatives
Free-for-all open discussion	Summarizing key points
Gathering diverse points of view	Sorting ideas into categories
Unpacking the logic of a problem	Arriving at general conclusions

Source: "Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-making" by Sam Kaner et al. (1998)

# Organizing Patterns

Over the millennia, human beings have developed many different ways of organizing together. One of the questions that the Art of Hosting community is continually asking itself is “What are the organizational concepts that we can develop together that are actually good for us, and are good for this time?”

## Four organizational paradigms:

### Circle

The mother of all our organizational forms – humans started sitting in circle as soon as they invented fires to sit around. We told stories, held elder councils and solved problems in this way. This form is very useful for reflection, storytelling, being together. Purpose is in the centre – it is shared.

### Triangle (hierarchy)

Then we stopped our nomadic wandering and settled in one place, we developed agriculture. Some people had more or better land than others, and we began to develop hierarchies where one person or group of people had power and every body else did not. And now we had belongings that we needed to protect. The triangular form of hierarchy is very useful for action, for getting things

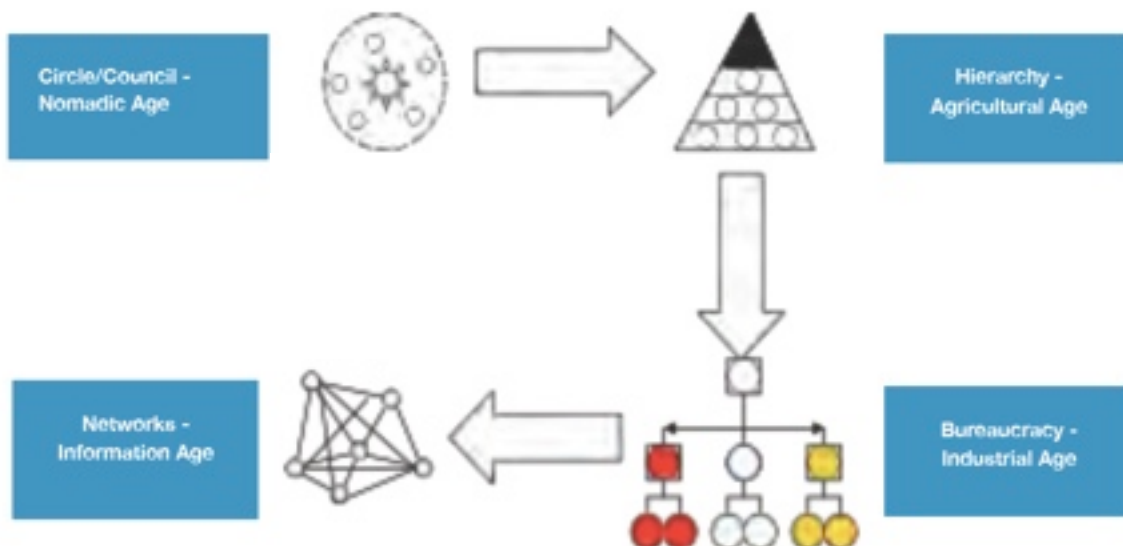
done. The boss says “this is what needs to happen”, and the others say “yes, sir!” and do it. Purpose is at the top.

### Square (bureaucracy)

The more we got settled, the more we had to sustain. Our systems got very complicated, our population exploded, and the bureaucracy developed. It really is a development of the hierarchy, and becomes very complex, with lots of structures and processes involved. Bureaucracy is fantastic for stability and maintaining the status quo, and for managing complex situations. It typically moves slowly. Purpose in the bureaucracy is also at the top.

### Networks

A more recent organizational form, networks are collections of individuals, circles or triangles – nodes that are connected together. We rarely find networked collections of bureaucracies, but networks can and often do spring up inside them. Networks are great for relationship and innovation, and for getting things done fast. The connection is guided by individual purpose. The different nodes are connected together because their respective purposes need each other. Once the need is no longer there, the network connection will most often lapse.



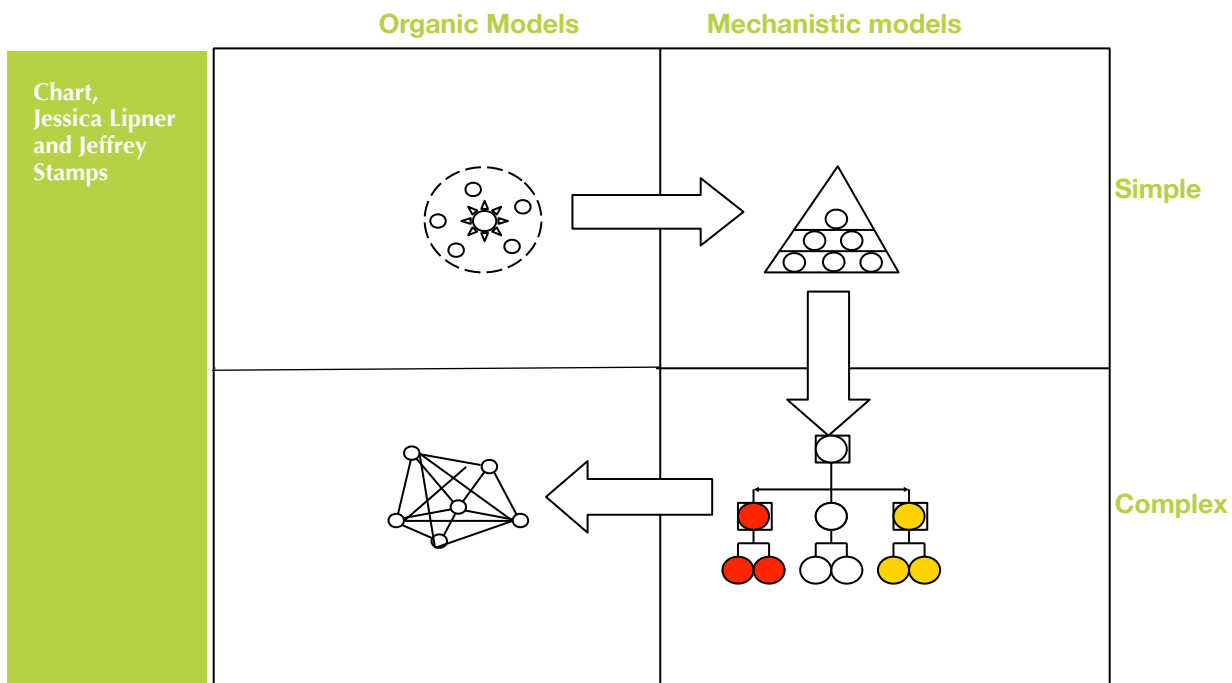
**When a new organizational form emerges, the older ones do not disappear. Each form has both advantages and shortcomings – each is good for different things.**

When we want to start an organisation ourselves or organize something in our lives, which one of these organizational forms do we choose? What we have seen in the Art of Hosting community is that we need to build structures that can use any of these forms at the right time. As need arises, how are we able to respond with the most useful organizational form?

When something needs to get done, then triangle is great. When we need to stop and reflect, circle is useful. When we need stability, it is good to have a bureaucracy. When we need to innovate, networks work best. So what is the next level of organizational form that can hold all of these? The Art of Hosting community is observing the emergence of a new pattern...

**S u c c e s s f u l**  
organizing is based  
on the recognition  
that people get  
organized because  
they, too, have a  
vision.

**Paul Wellstone**



# The Fifth Organizational Paradigm

The fifth organisational pattern is a combination of the circle or council for collective clarity, the triangle or project team (healthy hierarchy) for action and the square or bureaucracy for accountability, structure, and stability and the network for rapid sharing of information, inspiration and linking all the parts together.

At the center, always, is our purpose. Typically, a core team will gather in a circle around a purpose, which will be based on meeting a need that is felt in our life contexts. As we gather around the core purpose, we begin to form relationships with others in the circle that, as we map the connections, start to show up as a network. But while these relationships can help us all with our individual work, they do not necessarily allow us to manifest our shared purpose in the world, which will typically involve making things happen. The first step might be to develop actions to sustain the core team. So individual members take responsibility for different aspects – like organising meetings or raising funds - other members step up in a support role and this leads to the formation of triangles. The triangles will be dictated by the central purpose. Hierarchy forms in response to central purpose – not somebody's ego!

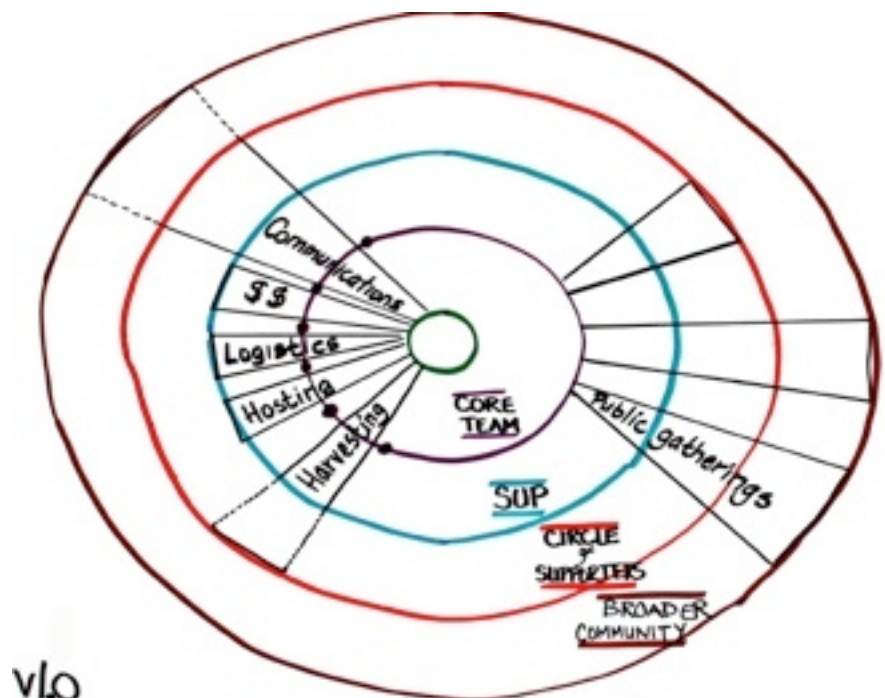
Once the core team is sustainable, the next step is typically to open up the conversation to the wider community that feels the need that informs the purpose at the centre of our circle. A triangle from the core team might then get together to call a larger-scale assembly, which might become a circle of supporters for the larger project. The inner circle is reaching out to the next level, which will in turn reach out to a wider community, creating concentric circles rippling out into our society, each circle connected to the others by triangles animating action informed by the core purpose.

The pattern of core purpose, circles, triangles and networks repeats again and again. Another typical finding is that as the core team goes out into the community and the conversation expands, the core purpose is informed by a broader perspective and is adjusted accordingly, to accommodate the next level of scale and action.

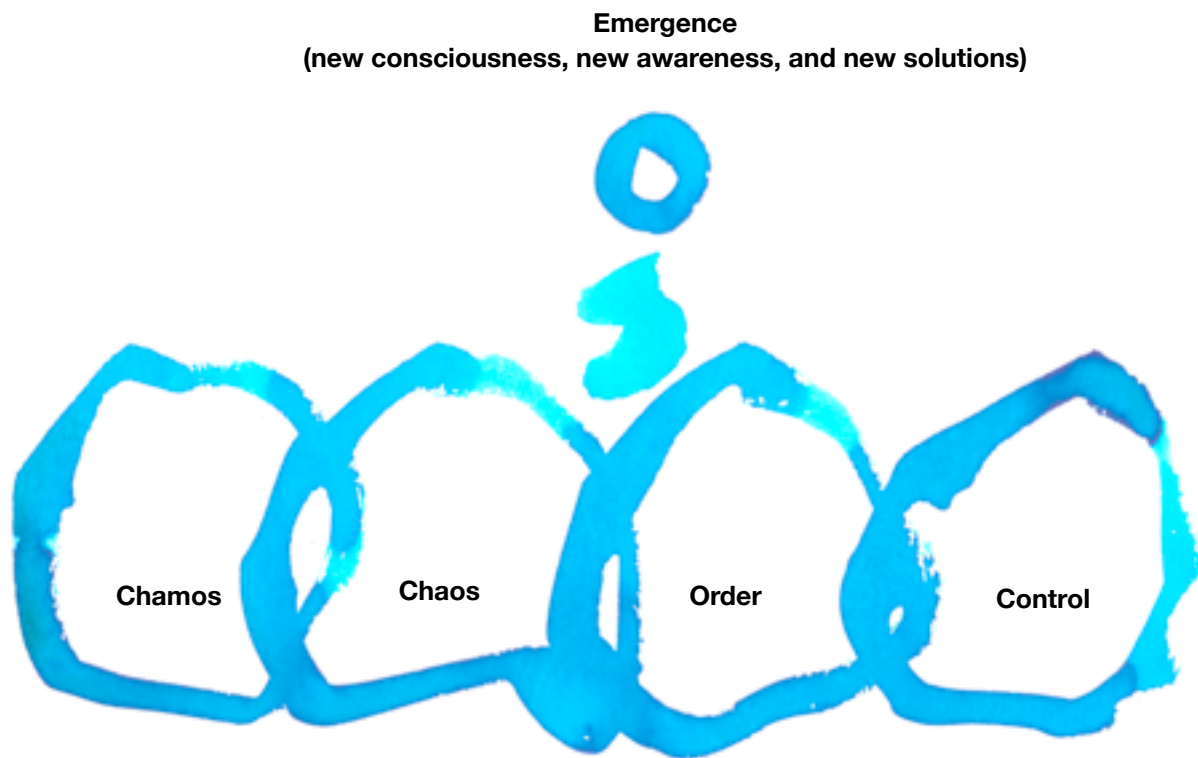
It is important to understand that what we are describing here is not a deliberately designed model, but the description of a pattern that has emerged naturally and spontaneously throughout the global hosting community as we have collectively developed our work of hosting in ever-larger and more complex adaptive systems.

Then perhaps we would discover that 'organizational miracles' are always happening, and have always been happening.

Mario Tronti



# The Chaordic Path



There is a path to take between Chaos and Order that leads us to the new, collective learning, real time innovation. Instead of relying on controlling every detail in our organizations or communities from the top down, many leaders today see the need to access the collective intelligence and collective wisdom of everyone, which can be, at times, a “messy” process until we reach new insight and clarity.

We are beginning to understand and treat organizations and communities more like living systems than static machines. After all, the chaordic path is the story of our natural world – form arises out of non-linear, complex, diverse systems. “At the edge of chaos” is where life innovates – where things are not hard wired, but are flexible enough for new connections and solutions to occur. New levels of order become possible out of chaos.

This “chaordic confidence” – the capacity we need to stay in the dance of order and chaos – supports a generative emergence that allows the new, collective intelligence and wise action to occur. In this space of emergence, we

leave our collective encounters with that which not one of us individually brought into the room. This requires us to stay in a transformative shift, though we may want to move toward either chaos or order.

And in fact, we will move between chaos and order – this is the generative dance, an oscillation often seen in the natural world. A balance between two seeming polarities, which are instead compliments of each other.

As we move between chaos and order, individually and collectively, we move through confusion and conflict toward clarity. We are all called to walk this path without judgement – some will feel more comfortable with chaos, others with order. Both are needed as, together, we walk the edge that is between these two toward something wholly new.

On the far side of chaos is chamos – or destructive chaos. On the far side of order is stifling control. When we move toward either of these extremes, the result is apathy or rebellion. The very opposite of chaordic confidence, where the new cannot be born.





How much order do we need? How much chaos would be helpful here?



There is a path toward common ground, co-creation, and wise and strategic action. There is a “sweet spot” of emergence with tangible results. If we are looking for innovative, new solutions we will find them in a place between chaos and order – the chaordic path.

### **Chaos/Order is the Place for Leadership**

The practice of leadership resides in the place between chaos and order. When facing new challenges that cannot be met with the same way we are currently working, we need to learn new ways of operating. It is during these times of uncertainty and increased complexity, where results cannot be predicted that leaders need to invite others to share diverse knowledge to discover new purpose and strategies and decide the way forward.

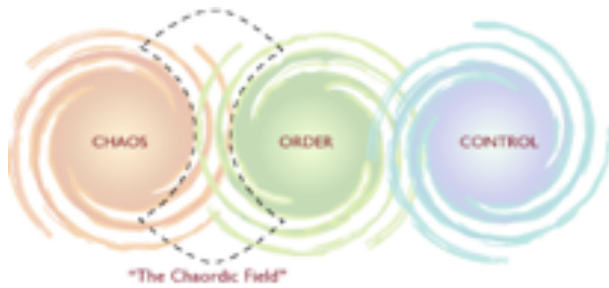
### **Order/Control is a Place for Management**

The practice of management lies between order and control where activities need to be maintained and executed routinely so that a particular standard results. It is the place where “more of the same” is required. Therefore, when predictability is called for and where procedures and standards are clearly defined and need to be adhered to.





# Chaordic Design Pattern



## At a glance

The 'chaordic field' is the space between chaos and order, where there is enough freedom for creativity and innovative ideas to emerge and just enough structure for those ideas to be channeled into wise action. That's the space where real sustainable innovation happens. When we don't know where we are going, or unclear what we need to do to make our vision reality, we can bring a little bit of form and structure to our work. The following steps are intended to create generative and flexible structures, that allow us to work together step by step while always having our purpose clear.

## What to use it for?

There are seven clear strategic steps we take when deciding to work with the 'chaordic field'. These steps allow us to create steps rooted in real need that are sustainable for the community they serve and the people working within them. These steps can be used both as a planning tool and to help understand what you are discovering about an organization, community or initiative.

## Process

In designing an initiative, we use these steps in order. Think of them nested one within the other. You cannot build the next one until the previous one is in place. But it is also an iterative process, just like any other plan it only works if you work with it and keep coming back to it.

Below are some key questions you can ask yourselves within your team to gain the needed insights for each of the steps. You could either do this as an exercise in small

groups of 2-3 (if your team is big enough), or work on all the questions as a whole team. Or make a game out of it, put the questions on a big paper and answer them individually then rotate etc. so each member has answered all questions and at the end merge the best answers together.

## Need

The need is the compelling reason for doing anything. Getting some insight into the need is the first step to designing a meeting, organisational structure or change initiative that is really relevant. The need is outside of our work: it is the thing that is served by the work you are doing.

*What's going on in our world/context right now?*

*What time is it for our initiative?*

*What are the challenges and opportunities we are facing?*

*What do we really need to be able to understand?*

*What are we upset about and care enough for that we are willing to take action?*

*What is the need that this project can uniquely meet? Why do we need to organise this meeting?*

## Purpose

From the need flows the purpose. Purpose statements are clear and compelling and the guide us in doing our best possible work. It's important to be equally bold and grounded with your purpose. As mentioned in section 2, we often call purpose the invisible leader. It's more important for the purpose to be shared, rather than for it to be a clear polished (dead?) statement. Purpose is what you come back to when it becomes difficult and when you seem to be losing focus.

*If this work should live up to its fullest potential, what do you dream (or envision) is possible?*

*What is the purpose we can adopt that will best meet the need?*

*What could this work do/create/inspire?*

*What is the next level for our work? Where should we be heading?*

*What is the simplest and most powerful question we could keep at the core of our work?*

## Principles

Principles of cooperation help us to know **how** we will work together. This is 'the how' which is as important as what we do. These principles need to be simple, co-owned and well understood. They are not rules that are platitudes or that lie on a page somewhere. They are crisp statements of how we agree to operate together so that over the long term we can sustain the relationships that make this work possible.

*How would we most enjoy working together?  
What unique ways of doing work and being together can we bring to this work?*

*What is it important to remember about how we want to work with each other and the participants in our initiative?*

*What do we think is most important to remember as we design our initiative to meet the need and purpose?*

## People

Once the need and the purpose are in the place and we have agreed on our principles of co-operation, we can begin to identify the people that are involved in our work. Mapping the network helps us to see who is in this work for us and who will have an interest in what we are doing.

*Who is in the room? Who is not in the room and how do we bring them in?*

*How do we leverage our relationships to promote the ideas generated by our work together?*

*Who will be interested in the results of our work?  
Who will benefit from our work?*

## Concept

As we start clarifying our ideas and give them some structure, we begin to explore the concepts that will be useful. This is a high level look at the shape of our endeavour. For example, if our need was to design a way to cross a river, we could choose to build a bridge, dig a tunnel or use a ferry. The concept is important, because it gives form to our work. To understand which form will best serve your purpose you need to understand the context within which you want to operate.

*What types of interventions could have the greatest impact?*

*How could we best connect with the networks we wish to involve in our initiative? What would best*

*serve their needs? How could we sustain their involvement (in person and online)?*

*What are communication channels we could use?*

*What works? What hasn't been tried yet?*

## Limiting beliefs

So much of what we do when we organize ourselves is based on unquestioned assumptions and behaviors. They can be helpful but they can also limit us in fulfilling our true potential. We cannot create innovation in the world using old models, approaches and ways of thinking. It pays to examine ways in which we assume work gets done in order to discover the new ways that might serve our work and bring new results. Examining our limiting beliefs helps us alleviating fear and anxiety of the unknown.

*What makes us anxious, and what do we fear about new ways of working together?*

*What will it take for us to fully enter into working in new and unfamiliar ways together?*

*What do we need to learn or unlearn in working together?*

*What do you need from our team to feel supported when feeling anxious?*

## Structure

Once the concept has been chosen, it is time to create a structure that will channel our resources. It is time to make decisions about the resources of the group: time, money, energy, commitment, and attention. One important part of structure, especially when planning a longer intervention or designing a strategy for a new project or organisation is decision making. (See description of Collaborative Decision Making)

*How do we practically support the aspirations of the group?*

*What is the lightest possible structure that will serve our purpose and need?*

*How do we wisely combine various organisational concepts to support our work and sustain the results?*

*How do we make decisions about allocating resources and who makes them?*

*How do we share our work? Who will own the IP (e.g. creative commons)?*

*How can we stay open to more people wanting to get involved? etc*

### Practice

The ongoing practice within the structures we build is important. This is the world of to do lists, conference calls and email exchanges. The invitation here is to practice working with one another in alignment with our principles and purpose.

*What do we need to do to sustain our work together? (Eg. Have weekly conference calls?)*

*What is our own practice of working together?*

*How do we get things done while having fun?*

*How do we extend the spirit of the gathering into future asynchronous environments where we can't be face to face?*

*How do we leverage relationships and support the work that arises from them?*

*How do we sustain and nourish our relationships and collective aspirations?*

*What commitments are we willing to make to contribute to the success of our endeavour?*

*How will we stay open to emergent learning?*

### Harvest

There is no point in doing work in the world unless we plan to harvest the fruits of our labours. Harvesting includes making meaning of our work, telling the story and sharing our results with everyone who might be interested so that they have the desired impacts in the world.

*How do we want to capture the new insights and outcomes of our work to best serve the need and our purpose?*

*What are the artefacts that will be the most powerful representations of what we have created?*

*How will we carry the essence of our work forward to the next initiative?*

*What are the feedback loops that we need to design to ensure that learning and change accelerates itself?*

*What are the questions we need to ask about what we are learning by meeting this way?*

It is very important to note that harvesting is an activity that needs to be planned up front, in the spirit of "we are not planning a meeting, we are planning a harvest." For more details on harvesting see section 4.

### Practical requirements

You need a team, your creativity, enough space and time :)

### Source

Adapted from Chris Corrigan ([chris@chriscorrigan.com](mailto:chris@chriscorrigan.com)) and others from the Art of Hosting ([www.artofhosting.org](http://www.artofhosting.org)) community.

For additional resources see the Chaordic Commons webiste <http://www.chaordic.org/>



# Strategic Process Design

## introduction

The following pages will give a short introduction to how you can combine and apply some of the core methodologies in exercising leadership in a strategic organizational context.

The following qualities or conditions support a successful implementation.

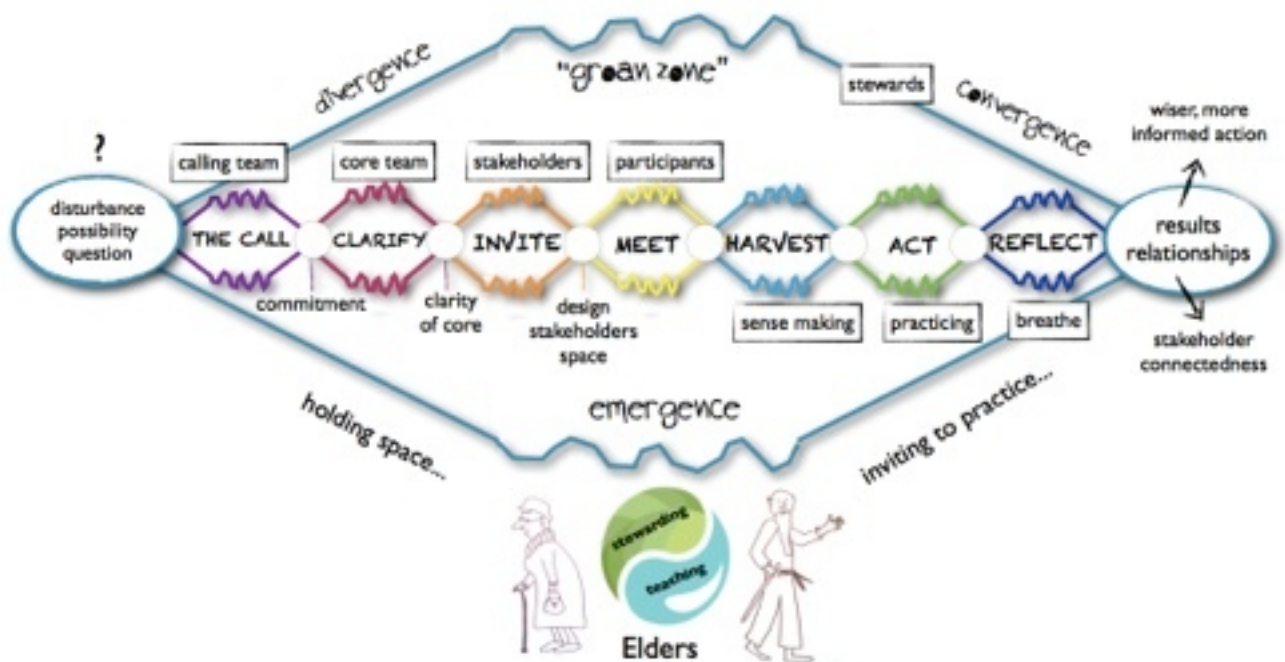
- Leadership and the approach described in this workbook are particularly useful when **working with complexity** (complex problems and situations), but where there are no clear, unambiguous, fixed solutions, but where the context is constantly changing and you have to work flexibly with what is **emerging**.
- To create a successful intervention **you have to plan a process not an event**. This means that there is a preparatory phase or process, the actual engagement process (one event or a series of events), and a follow-up process, each with some steps that need to be clarified before proceeding to the next phase or “breath”. (see 6 breaths of design)
- Planning and designing an **emergent process or strategy** (rather than a prescriptive one) means operating in the “**chaordic space**.” (see see ‘chaordic strategy and planning’ p.48)
- Designing a process in this context means creating a framework or light structure (process design) within which one can operate and produce results in an environment of self-organizing order rather than control.
- The Chaordic Strategy and Planning Process offer a step-by-step approach to structuring and creating progress in this space.
- A good knowledge of the methods and means available will allow you to choose the **right means for the right context and purpose**.
- Good process hosting means **responding to the need in the moment**, allowing yourself to be well prepared but flexible and able to respond to what is actually happening - and not rigidly sticking to your designed process.
- **Fully combining and integrating content with process, each in support of the other is crucial for creating good results**. A good content combined with a poor process or a good process without some real content - both fall short of the mark.
- To be able to operate well in this environment one needs to embrace both the ability to work in a highly structured way as well as in a chaordic way. The 5th paradigm shows a way of organizing that combines both. Read on to learn more about the 5th paradigm.



# The 7 Breaths of Process Design

It's not so much what we do, but "how" we do it. Dialogue events are designed to create a safe environment where participants can build trust and relationships from which lots of positive new things can emerge. The "how" we do this is where all the juice is!

This section explains how to organise and design a collaborative process, starting with 1) a challenge or central question, 2) organising the event up to 3) supporting the outcomes. Although what follows is a step-by-step description, the process is not linear but rather cyclical. And throughout the process, we need to constantly collect the intelligence, make sense of what was said, reflect, re-connect to the original purpose and to the next wise steps.



## *Before You Start : Preparation and Presence*

Emergent collaboration processes with diverse stakeholders are by their nature complex and unpredictable. There is no guarantee that you will converge successfully or generate tangible results, however, you can be sure that through the process there will be new insights and important learning. As a hosting and convening team you are in the eye of the storm, holding the tensions, as well as tracking the creativity and movement that is generated. You and the teams' quality of presence in all this is of crucial importance.

The main feature of a emergent process is that we do not know what will come out of it. Being comfortable with 'not-knowing' is possibly the most important capacity of a convening and facilitation team. Our capacity to work with 'not-knowing' has a lot to do with our ability to embrace uncertainty as something that is full of potential, rather than fear. Also, our ability to hold high levels of tension or other people's anxiety about being in the the "not-knowing" is connected to own emotional, physical and perhaps spiritual resilience. Many conveners and facilitators increase their resilience through practices that center and ground them so that they can be a still point in the chaos, disturbance and excitement of a group. Body awareness through regular physical exercise and practices like meditation, journaling, yoga, aikido work with bringing us in closer contact with our inner resources. Hence the most important time of convening a emergent process, is the time before the process, your personal preparation.



### ***First breath: THE CALL***

Core issues to consider: What is the core-question?

With each new collaborative process, there is nearly always ‘a caller’, a person who deeply holds a question, sees a problem or an opportunity, feels a challenge. Sometimes there are several callers. The callers are the ones who invite the facilitators to help them design the process.

Important aspects in this phase is surfacing the core questions that are driving the callers. What is really at stake here? What is the quest underneath the question? What are the assumptions underpinning the question? It is important to play with the question and what is behind it.

When there is sufficient clarity on the call and the caller has committed to call the process, you can move into the next phase.

### ***Second breath: CLARIFY***

Core issues to consider: clarity of purpose and clarity of roles

The callers and hosts work to create collective clarity of purpose and core-questions. Shared clarity of purpose is the invisible leader, hence taking time to really dive into what are the core-questions and needs of the callers and the wider context is really important. This is the shared clarity you can return to when the process isn’t going as planned and emergence creates surprises.

This is an important moment where the hosting team and its working culture is formed. This initial culture will set the tone for the entire process, and will be what you will invite others into. Hence it is important that besides getting shared clarity on the purpose of the process, there is clear contracting between the callers, facilitators and other supporters in the team.

Clarifying things like roles, expectations, working culture, financial issues and meeting rhythms. A collaborative process will only truly succeed if the hosting team embodies this quality themselves. It is therefore not recommended to facilitate a process by yourself.

This phase is over once sufficient clarity of purpose and roles have emerged.

### ***Third breath: INVITE***

Core issues to consider: Who to invite? How to invite?

The importance of the invitation process is often underestimated, however it, in many ways, will determine the quality of your process before it has even started. The question of who to invite should be informed by the purpose and core question of the process. Who are the stakeholders that care about this issue, will be impacted or can provide a valuable contribution? Will this event be open, semi-open or closed?

Depending on how many pre-existing relationships and networks the caller holds in this particular context, the invitation process might require a research and relationship-building phase, where the callers meet and are connected to potential stakeholders. At the same time it is important to let go of expectations that certain people need to be there.

*How we invite participants will influence to a large extend who and how people will show up. Take time to design an elegant and at the same time clear and simple invitation that reflects the purpose. Sometimes this will be a personal letter other times an attractively designed flyer. In addition, the more personal and welcoming the process of invitation is, in all the communications that precede the event, the more likely participants will show up as themselves rather than simply representatives of their workplaces. The whole process of invitation is one of (re-)building relationships and ultimately a new community.*

### ***Fourth breath: DESIGN***

What it means to actually design your day? This is the time for the hosting team to bring together its skills around building a day, finding the right flow between the methodologies (structured time) and the breaks (where lots of good things happen), from the beginning moments to how to close it. It is the work of creating a “container” that invites people to truly participate in the process of being in the question you have called people around. There is no one “formula”, so this design work takes time to tailor-make it!

### ***Fifth breath: MEET***

Core issues to consider: preparation and space hosting

Hosting roles. There are three main roles during the gathering: 1) space hosting, 2) process hosting and 3) recording and harvesting.

Make sure you have all those three roles covered. The next section 2.3 will explain the design and hosting and chapter 4 discusses harvesting.

Meetings. It is important to meet as hosting team before, during and after the event. Take sufficient time to design the meeting with the entire hosting team leading up to the gathering. Meet in person the day before the event to look at your design, confirm roles, ask questions, and make last minute changes. Take time to re-connect with the purpose of the meeting and why we are all here. Remember that the quality of how the hosting team is together will to a large extent determine the quality of the event.

The space hosting. This role is not to be underestimated. This team takes responsibility for all the logistics involved, but also the quality of the space itself. How is it set-up? Is the space welcoming, friendly, human, spacious and light? Are participants comfortable or need any help? What props do you need? Is there good lighting? Chairs and tables? Will people need to eat or drink? Where are the washrooms?

Script and Flow of the Day. Make sure there is a clear “script” that details timing and who needs to do what, what preparation and materials are needed and the timing for the different sections of the day, including breaks. A good preparation will give the team the space to know the structure and design of the day such that you can improvise when needed and shift other sections or amounts of time allotted - and yes, count on that improvisation will be needed!

Make an Agenda or a Flow for the Day - this is a visual that outlines the moments or phases of the day so participants know just enough about what they have come to.

### ***Fifth breath: HARVEST – MAKE SENSE AND MEANING***

Recording insights and new learning is a way of capturing meaning, a way of “harvesting” the new knowledge. A harvest has different aspects, first the information and insight gathered during the workshop. Chapter four will discuss this in more detail. What is of importance here is that you plan in time for the conveners, facilitators, hosts and harvesters to come together to make sense of what has been captured. Often the ‘raw data’ from the gathering needs an additional round of sense-making to filter out the core-messages from the gathering. These can be taken forward through actions and various communications. It is an opportunity to distill the collective intelligence generated by the participants into new forms and new actions.

### ***Sixth breath: ACT***

The main outcomes of a collaborative process are new initiatives, relationships and collaborative capacities of the participants.

People love to know that the good ideas and new insights are going to make a difference. It is up to the core team to ensure that the energy and action generated at the gathering doesn’t wither away. The task is to create the conditions for participants and new actors to take the actions forward and for self-organisation to flourish. This might require sharing the harvest, helping setting up new communication channels, initiate communities of practice and working groups or matching new initiatives with resources.

The original convening question might now evolved into a new ecology of collaborative activity. Hosting in this stage is permanent and dispersed, and has aspects of incubation support, project management, community organising and process facilitation.

### ***Seventh breath: REFLECT AND LEARN***

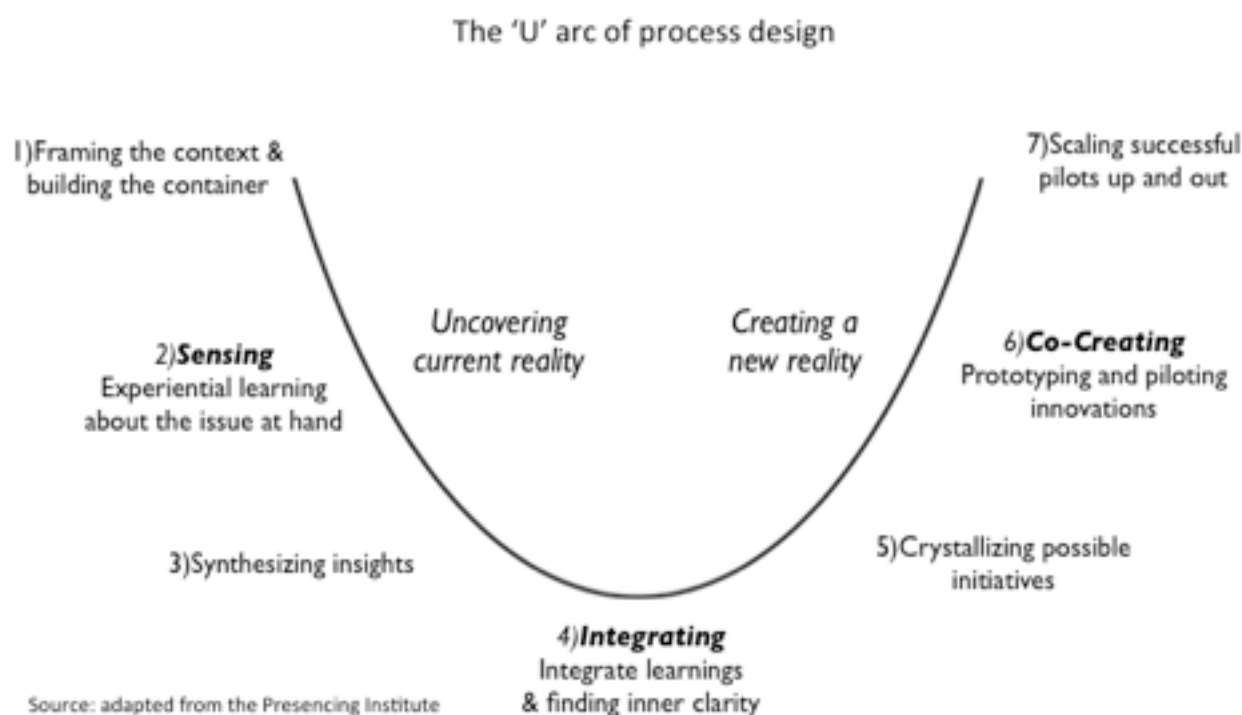
Amidst all this activity it is important to always come back to the original purpose of the process and not to lose sight of it. Take time to reflect with the core-team and with key stakeholder. What have we learned? Have we gained results in alignment with need and purpose? What are the next long term steps? From this reflection the next calling question arises...

# Using the U - Process for Designing a Collaborative Process

Are you ready to design and host a gathering, a meeting, a workshop? This section will help you see when to use which method and how to blend them.

Just like a good story has a narrative arc with a exposition, climax and resolution, similarly a good workshop follows a U-shaped arc. The three main phases in this arc are 'sensing', 'integrating' and 'co-creating', and can broadly be mapped on the three phases of the divergence and convergence model discussed before. Within each phase you can distinguish smaller divergence and convergence processes.

The U arc, as described below provides an overall guide to how to design a process, hold this arc lightly though and don't feel held back to mix and match methods in different ways and discover different process arcs. Additionally some gatherings will follow the arc from beginning to end, other times it might be sufficient to parts of the arc.



## The seven phases of a collaborative workshop or program:

### **1) Framing the Context and Building the Container**

Setting the right context for a workshop and creating a 'safe container' is of crucial importance. This is the moment for the convener(s) to re-iterate their call or convening question in person, share why they are passionate about it, what is the deeper purpose of them gathering and make participants feel welcome. Several other aspects are important for creating a safe space. Make sure you agree with the participants several ground-rules that will help them make safe, such as for example the confidentiality of what is shared during the days. Additionally explain that this will be a different kind of gathering that will be participatory and interactive, which might be a little bit out of people's usual comfort zones.



A second important element of creating a safe container is to start building high trust relationships between the participants. A first step to do this is a *Check-In*, a moment for participants to arrive and to start sharing with each other. Additional methods to build relationships can be *Appreciate Triads* or taking a walk while sharing around a question.

To summarise: share the convening question, agree ground-rules, explain the collaborative approach and start building relationships.

*Methods you can use: Check-In, Appreciative Triads*

## **2) Sensing**

The sensing phase is the start of the divergence phase, where participants explore and learn about the issue at hand and the system it is part of. We use the term sensing here to widen our conventional notions of learning. Sensing involves learning using all our senses and is deeply experiential and conversational. This is the moment to leave the power-point presentations home and invite participants to learn from each other through in-depth conversations, visiting places of interest and interviewing people in the system or listening to engaging stories.

*Methods you can use: learning journeys, world-café, appreciative triads, dialogue interviews, collective story harvesting*

## **3) Synthesising Insights**

Completing the sensing phase, a need for integrating arises. How do all the different insights, conversations, learnings and impressions fit together? What is the bigger picture? This is a moment to collaboratively start harvesting out emerging patterns and story-lines.

*Methods you can use: World-Café, Collective Mind-Map, Collective Story Harvesting, Circle*

## **4) Integrating**

The integration phase, also sometimes called the reflection or presencing phase, is time to slow down and to individually and collectively become aware of what really is at stake in this particular context and to take time to integrate all the new learnings and impressions. Energy wise, this is where the group is often in the middle of the groan-zone, the widest moment of divergence, and often have a hard time to maintain an overview of what is happening. In its most basic, the integration phase is a moment to rest, slow down and take a break from the intensity of sensing and diverging.

On a deeper level this is the moment for participants to deeply reflect on what out of all of this new learning is really significant?, how are you implicated? and what is your responsibility in shifting this particular challenge? An integration phase can be as short as half an hour up to an entire multi-day retreat.

*Methods you can use: Circle, Appreciative Triads*

## **5) Crystallizing Possible Initiatives**

Having explored the issue at hand in depth, reflected on what needs to be done, the co-creation phase is opened with a new divergence and convergence process. In this phase new ideas for possible initiatives, innovations and actions are launched and based on the collective intelligence of the group, converged into several action or innovation areas.

*Methods you can use: Brainstorming Ideas, Collective Mind-Map, Open Space*

## **6) Co-Creating**

Based on the emerging areas of action or innovation, in this phase participants are invited to self-organise into teams to start developing new projects in more detail. The spirit of the co-creating phase is for project ideas to go through several rapid learning cycles, to incorporate feedback from other participants, potential users and stakeholders. The aim here is not to converge on one project or innovation but to create space for several robust enough proto-types to develop into pilot projects.

Methods you can use: Open Space, Pro-Action Café, Chaordic Design

## **7) Scaling-up and Out**

This phase starts within the collaborative process, but clearly can extend far beyond if the incubated initiatives are successful. The successful pilot projects coming out of a collaborative process, depending on what their nature is, setting up a business, developing a project within a organisation, setting up a research group, will need bespoke ongoing support to be successful. Much of which will fall outside the remit of a collaborative process (eg. tax advice or technological support). However what is extremely helpful in this phase is ongoing peer-learning and coaching between the emerging pilots and projects. There are several tools that are helpful in developing these type of peer-learning settings.

Methods you can use: Communities of Practice, Chaordic Principles, Appreciative Triads

# When Practicing Dialogue

## Helpful Hints

The following practices can radically shift the quality of any conversation, whether with one person, or in a small circle or with hundreds of people. As a muscle, they need to be practiced regularly to become natural in any context. Practice them and invite others to practice them with you!

### Focus on what matters

We have no time to lose for what doesn't.

### Suspend judgments, assumptions, certainties

No one knows it all and it is not about knowing who is right or wrong. It is about exploring together and surfacing what we do not know or see yet.

### Speak one at a time

Invite to speak with intention.

### Listen to each other carefully

Invite to listen with attention

### Listen together for insights and deeper questions

Do not remain at the surface of what you already know. Engage fully with others into bringing what we do not know yet to the surface.

### Link and connect ideas

This is how you can learn, surface what do not know yet, and innovate.

### Slow down

We are so often caught in a hectic flow of actions. Slowing down helps to foster more reflection.

### Be aware of your impact on the group

Do not monopolise the speaking time. Make sure everybody can be heard. **Focus on what is in the middle** rather than what is in your mind.

### Accept that divergent opinions are okay

We do not need to reach a consensus on what we are discussing. Innovation comes from putting different perspectives together.



### Contribute with your mind and heart

Bring your full self into the room. Allow yourself to be both a professional and a human being.

### Play, doodle, draw

Use a large sheet in the middle of your group as a space to capture the results of your collective reflection.

### Have fun!

What if enjoying ourselves was the key to improving our learning and performance?

(The above "hints" adapted from world cafe etiquette, circle practice, and theory u.)

**Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.**

**Margaret Mead**

# Powerful Questions

## inquiring about things that matter



**Powerful  
Questions  
Focus  
Attention,  
Intention,  
and Energy**

While answers tend to bring us to closure, questions open up to exploration.

### Asking the right question

Asking the right question is the most effective way of opening up a conversation and keeping it engaging. A high-quality question focuses on what is meaningful for the participants, triggers our curiosity and invites us to explore further.

When inviting people into a conversation that matters, it is helpful to have an overall question, one that itself embodies the purpose of the meeting. This is the key question or the “calling question” for the conversation or meeting. The calling question is best formulated together with key stakeholders.

The conversation may include other questions than the

calling question. The questions you choose or that people discover during conversation are critical to its success. A hosted conversation could explore one question or a series of related questions.

### Some guidelines for choosing questions:

- A well-crafted question attracts energy and focuses attention on what matters. Experienced hosts recommend asking open-ended questions, not ones that have a simple yes/no answer.
- Good questions invite inquiry and curiosity. They do not need to promote action or problem solving immediately.
- You’ll know a good question when it continues to surface good ideas and possibilities.
- Check possible questions with key people who will take part in a conversation. Does it hold their attention and energy?



## HOW CAN I FRAME BETTER QUESTIONS?

Here are some questions you might ask yourself as you begin to explore the art and architecture of powerful questions. They are based on pioneering work with questions being done by the Public Conversations Project, a group that helps create constructive dialogue on divisive public issues.

- Is this question relevant to the real life and real work of the people who will be exploring it?
- Is this a genuine question—a question to which I/we really don't know the answer?
- What "work" do I want this question to do? That is, what kind of conversation, meanings, and feelings do I imagine this question will evoke in those who will be exploring it?
- Is this question likely to invite fresh thinking/feeling? Is it familiar enough to be recognizable and relevant—and different enough to call forward a new response?
- What assumptions or beliefs are embedded in the way this question is constructed?
- Is this question likely to generate hope, imagination, engagement, creative action, and new possibilities or is it likely to increase a focus on past problems and obstacles?
- Does this question leave room for new and different questions to be raised as the initial question is explored?

*Adapted from Sally Ann Roth  
Public Conversations Project c. 1998*

"A PARADIGM SHIFT  
OCCURS WHEN A  
QUESTION IS ASKED  
INSIDE THE CURRENT  
PARADIGM THAT CAN  
ONLY BE ANSWERED  
FROM OUTSIDE IT."

MARILEE GOLDBERG,  
*THE ART OF THE QUESTION*




Download the full article 'The Art of Powerful Questions' from  
[www.theworldcafe.com/store.htm](http://www.theworldcafe.com/store.htm)

**If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would use the first 55 minutes to formulate the right question because as soon as I have identified the right question I can solve the problem in less than five minutes.**

**Albert Einstein**

# Methodologies and Practices

## Overview of Core Methodologies

Method	Uses
<b>Circle</b> 	<p>Adaptable to a variety of groups, issues, and timeframes. Circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. Circle can also be used as a means for “checking in” and “checking out” or a way of making decisions together, particularly decisions based on consensus.</p>
<b>Appreciative Inquiry</b> 	<p>Useful when a different perspective is needed, or when we wish to begin a new process from a fresh, positive vantage point. It can help move a group that is stuck in “what is” toward “what could be”. Appreciative Inquiry can be used with individuals, partners, small groups, or large organisations.</p>
<b>World Café</b> 	<p>Process used to foster interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. Particularly effective in surfacing the collective wisdom of large groups of diverse people. Very flexible and adapts to many different purposes – information sharing, relationship building, deep reflection exploration and action planning.</p>
<b>Open Space</b> 	<p>Useful in many contexts, including strategic direction-setting, envisioning the future, conflict resolution, morale building, consultation with stakeholders, community planning, collaboration and deep learning about issues and perspectives.</p>
<b>Collective Mind Map</b> 	<p>Quick and simple way to create a shared overview of issues and opportunities relevant to a particular subject or challenge. Always has a clear focus that can be captured in a “burning” question, Can be done either on a large sheet of paper or screen, electronically with a mind-map program projected on a screen.</p> <p>When all themes and issues have been recorded on the mind-map, the group can decide on the priorities by voting on the map. This gives a clear indication on which themes or issues have the highest leverage for further action.</p>

# Check-in and Check-out

## At a glance

Checking in and checking out are among the most simple and powerful ways of bringing a group together, starting and ending well, and working with the concept of Divergence and Convergence. Once a group or team becomes familiar with this, it begins to self-regulate and ask

## Purpose

To bring each voice into the room, to become present to the purpose of the meeting, to listen with attention and to speak with intention. It gives us the pulse of the individuals and the group. It affords the opportunity to hear how people are and what they are bringing to this particular meeting to know what is real for them. The Check in opens the space to see who we are and what we are bringing, and the Check out brings completion around what did we learn or what we are leaving with.

## Process

- Have a host who is framing the question and purpose of the meeting. Why we are here etc.
- Have a central question that everyone can respond to.
- Give a general sense of how much time you have. Is it a quickie check in? so people can regulate the amount of time they take.
- No interrupting: Offer a way of people knowing when it is time to speak and when to listen. This could be a talking piece. Whoever has it in their hands speaks with intention and everyone else listens with intention. When they are done, they pass it to the next person or put it in the centre.
- It's good to have a time-keeper so that if someone is no longer answering the question and going on and on, then we have a kind way of getting us back on track.

**A Question:** "What is alive for me as I come to this meeting?" "Why is it important for me to be here today?" "How am I leaving this meeting? What landed for me that I take away with me."

**A Metaphor:** "If you were a weather system, what would be your report?" "If you were a colour, what colour and why?"

**Bodies:** Make a movement to illustrate how you are right now, or what you would like to offer the group.

## Practical requirements

A Check in or Check out can happen anywhere. A talking piece can be a pen or acorn. Time can be fluid or set. Just take the time to stop for a moment and create the space for people to feel comfortable enough to share in words or otherwise, in service to the learning of the group.

## Source

Written by Vanessa Reid.

Quick and easy tips for productive check ins: [http://www.zeggio.com/blog/2011/11/great\\_meetings\\_checkin](http://www.zeggio.com/blog/2011/11/great_meetings_checkin)

# Circle

## practicing an ancient form

The Circle, or council, is an ancient form of meeting that has gathered human beings into respectful conversations for thousands of years. In some areas of the world this tradition remains intact, but in some societies it has been nearly forgotten. PeerSpirit circling is a modern methodology that calls on this tradition and helps people gather in conversations that fulfil their potential for dialogue, replenishment, and wisdom-based change.

[www.peerspirit.com](http://www.peerspirit.com)

One of the beautiful things about circle is its adaptability to a variety of groups, issues, and timeframes. Circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. Circle can also be used as a means for “checking in” and “checking out” or a way of making decisions together, particularly decisions based on consensus. Be creative with circle!

### Principles of Circle:

- **Rotate leadership** among all circle members.
- **Responsibility is shared** for the quality of the experience.
- **Reliance on Wholeness**, rather than on any personal agenda.

### Practices of Circle:

- **Speak with Intention:** Noting what has relevance to the conversation in the moment
- **Listen with Attention:** Respectful of the learning process of all members of the group
- **Tend to the Well-being of the Group:** Remaining aware of the impact of our contributions

### Setting Circle Agreements:

The use of agreements allows all members to have a free and profound exchange, to respect a diversity of views, and to share responsibility for the well-being and direction of the group. Agreements often used include:

1. Listen without judgment (slow down and listen)
2. Whatever is said in circle stays in circle
3. Offer what you can and ask for what you need
4. Silence is also part of the conversation
5. We agree to employ a group guardian to watch our need, timing, and energy.

### General Flow of the Circle

- ~ Intention
- ~ Welcome/Start-point
- ~ Center and Check-In/Greeting
- ~ Agreements
- ~ Three Principles and Three Practices
- ~ Guardian of the Process
- ~ Check-Out and Farewell

Intention shapes the circle and determines who will come, how long the circle will meet, and what kinds of outcomes are to be expected. The caller of the circle spends time articulating intention and invitation.

**Welcome/Start Point.** Once people have gathered, the circle host (or a participant) will typically open the circle with a gesture to indicate that the circle will start. Poems, silence, song, or gesture may be used.

The center of a circle usually holds objects that represent the intention of the circle.

Check-in usually starts with a volunteer and proceeds around the circle. If an individual is not ready to speak, the turn is passed and another opportunity is offered after others have spoken.

To aid self-governance and bring the circle back to intention, having a circle member volunteer to be the role of guardian is helpful. This group member watches and safeguards the group's energy and observes the groups process.

Closing the circle by checking out provides a formal end to the meeting, a chance for members to reflect on what has transpired.

(The above was adapted from a handout which was generously provided by Peer Spirit to the Art of Hosting)





## What is Circle Good For?

One of the beautiful things about circle is its adaptability to a variety of groups, issues, and timeframes. Circle can be the process used for the duration of a gathering, particularly if the group is relatively small and time for deep reflection is a primary aim. Circle can also be used as a methodology of “checking in” and “checking out” or a way of making decisions together. Be creative with circle and be ready for the deep wisdom it can unearth!

### Materials Needed:

- Chairs/cushions arranged into a circle – folks should be able to view each other without impediments (i.e. tables or desks)
- Object for the Center – this can be flowers, a bowl, basket, or even a poster stating the intention or purpose of the gathering
- Talking piece
- Chime, bell, or other gentle noisemaker
- Materials for harvesting conversation

**In helping others, we  
shall help ourselves,  
for whatever good  
we give out  
completes the circle  
and comes back to  
us.**

Flora Edwards

Talking  
pieces and  
a circle  
center (left)

Chairs set  
up for a  
large circle  
to start the  
day (right)



# Appreciative Inquiry

## working with what's possible

Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy for intentional change that identifies the best of 'what is' to pursue dreams and possibilities of 'what could be'; a cooperative search for strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system that hold potential for inspired, positive change. (Cooperrider & Srivastva)

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

### Assumptions

- In every community something works
- What we focus on becomes our reality
- Reality is created in the moment – there is more than one reality
- The act of asking questions influences the community in some way
- People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past
- If we carry forward parts of the past, they should be what is best
- It is important to value differences
- The language we use creates our reality

Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
We focus on identification of the Problem	Appreciating and valuing the best of "what is"
Analysis of causes	Envisioning "what might be"
Analysis of possible solutions	Dialoguing "What could be" Innovating "What will be"
Basic Assumption: An organization is a problem to be solved.	Basic Assumption: An organization is a mystery to be embraced.

### General Flow of an Appreciative Inquiry process:

Appreciative inquiry can be done as a longer structured process going through phases of

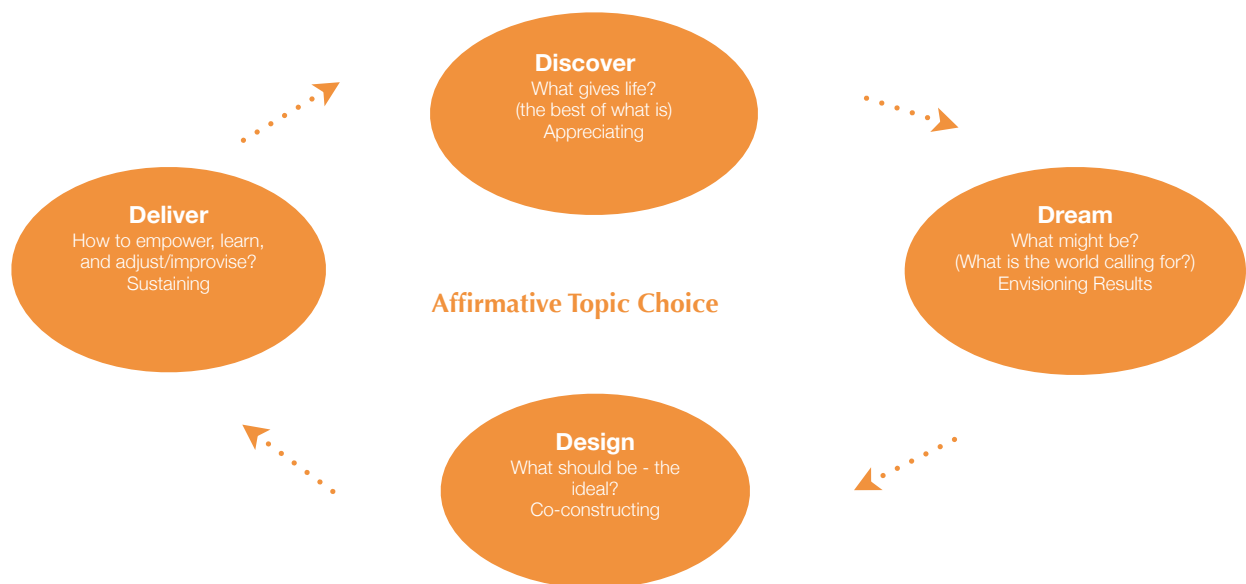
**DISCOVER:** identifying organisational processes that work well.

**DREAM:** envisioning processes that would work well in the future.

**DESIGN:** Planning and prioritising those processes.

**DELIVER:** implementing the proposed design.

The basic idea is to build organizations around what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't.



At the center is a positive topic choice – how we ask even the first question contains the seeds of change we are looking to enact.

Appreciative Inquiry can also be used as a way of opening a meeting or conversation by identifying what already works. What do you value most about your self/work/organization?

#### **What is Appreciative Inquiry Good For?**

Appreciative Inquiry is useful when a different perspective is needed, or when we wish to begin a new process with a fresh, positive vantage point. It can help move a group that is stuck in “what is” toward “what could be”. Appreciative Inquiry can be used with individuals, partners, small groups, or large organizations.

#### **Materials Needed:**

Varies depending on processes used.

**We grow in the  
direction of the  
questions we  
ask.**



# Appreciative Triads



## At a glance

The basic idea is to build on what works, rather than trying to fix what doesn't. And the assumption is that people have more confidence and comfort to think about the future when they have connected to positive experiences of their past that they can build on.

In groups of three, people are invited to share - one person at a time - a positive experience/story and distill some principles or conditions that could be applied to the issue/question at hand. Everyone has a different role in the triad and roles get rotated (see more details below). This makes the triad a safe space for sharing and reflecting on past experience.

Appreciative Triads is not a method on its own as such. It is inspired by and based on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, but only uses a small part of this 'discipline for positive change' (see above).

## Purpose

Appreciative Triads is good to use when a different perspective is needed, or when we wish to begin a new process with a fresh, positive vantage point. It can help move a group that is stuck in "what is" toward "what could be". Triads (groups of three) are a form that most people feel comfortable with. It helps to build relationships between participants at the beginning of a workshop. It is also often used as a peer reflection tool midway or at the end of a process.

## Process

- Prepare the flip chart/slide with the question or topic that you would like people to reflect and share on.
- Also prepare a page on the 3 roles: the person who speaks, listener and witness. See example above. Let

them rotate rolls after min.10 - 20 min each, depending on how deep you want them to go.

- An example question could be: Tell about a time when you have experienced real transparency and fairness with money? What made that possible? What were some of the conditions?
- When you invite people for this part it is important to stress that this is not a three way conversation, but really meant to be more like an interview.
- Ask people to find themselves in groups of 3 with people they don't know so well yet or are curious about getting to know better. When you do this exercise at the end of a longer gathering you can also invite people to get together with their team mates or people they resonated most with. You don't need to control the forming of the groups, it might get a little messy, but don't worry about that. If you have an outdoor space, let them use it, don't if you are short in time. It's sometimes good to have a break after this exercise as people don't always finish at the same time.
- The person who speaks is invited to answer the questions by reflecting on their lived experience and deepening their insight while being asked supportive questions by the listener. They are invited to speak from their heart, not to give an analysis, but rather tell a story of their experience.
- The listener is not there to debate or challenge the person who speaks. Their task is to support/coach them to reflect a little deeper. They could ask questions like: "When you say... what do you mean? Tell a little more about..." It's ok for the listener to follow their own curiosity, but the aim is to ask questions that will help the person who speaks to deepen, not to deviate from their story.
- The witness is the person who just observes, takes some notes and keeps an eye on the time, so the other two don't have to worry about that. The notes are thought as a gift to the person who speaks who might say things they have never said or even thought of before. The witness also pays attention to what is not said, the body language, how the tone in the voice changes etc.
- When each person has spoken in the triad, ask them to reflect if there are any common patterns or insights they could distill to take note of and share in the big group



## Practical requirements

### Materials:

- Flip chart or a ppt slide and projector with instructions (depending on the size of the group)
- Paper for each participant to note down insights for the person and maybe colorful cards or post-its to harvest shared insights (if you want to collect and share the insights or map/cluster them with the whole group)

Enough space for a circle and participants to sit in groups of 3 spread out over the room (or outdoors if available).

**Variation:** Instead of triads you can invite people to team up with one other person and go for a “dialogue walk”. One person answers the question and is supported by the second person who becomes the listener and the witness in one. Instead of taking notes you can invite the pairs to look for common threads of patterns in both their accounts. These can be written down on cards and shared with the big group later. It is also ok not to harvest this as the what is being shared can be quite personal and the purpose here is more for people to reflect on their own experience and build relationship.

### Source

Art of Hosting Network, written by Simone Poutnik. For more detailed info and resources on Appreciative Inquiry see above.



# The World Café

## dialogue method for large and small groups

The World Café is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter in real life situations. It is a provocative metaphor...as we create our lives, our organizations, and our communities, we are, in effect, moving among 'table conversations' at the World Café. (From The World Café Resource Guide)

[www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)

### What is World Café Good For?

A World Café is a great way of fostering interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. It is particularly effective in surfacing the collective wisdom of large groups of diverse people. The café format is very flexible and adapts to many different purposes – information sharing, relationship building, deep reflection exploration and action planning.

When planning a café, make sure to leave ample time for both moving through the rounds of questions (likely to take longer than you think!) and some type of whole-group harvest.

### Operating principles of World Café:

- Create hospitable space
- Explore questions that matter
- Encourage each person's contribution
- Connect diverse people and ideas
- Listen together for patterns, insights and deeper questions
- Make collective knowledge visible

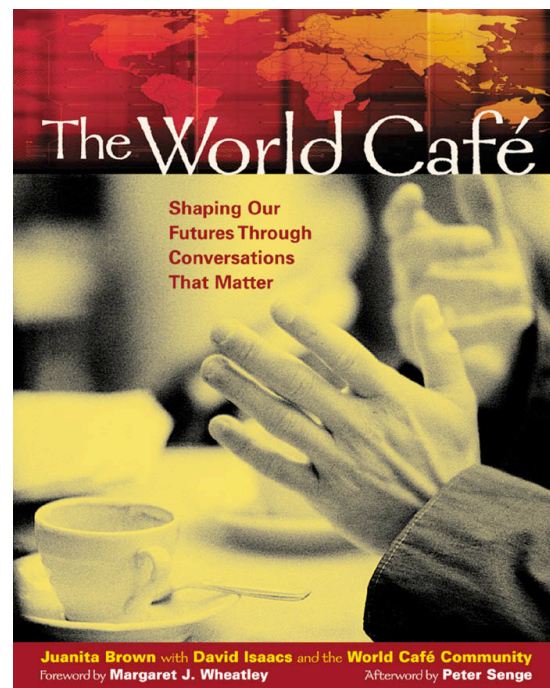


### Assumptions of World Café:

- The knowledge and wisdom we need is present and accessible.
- Collective insight evolves from honoring unique contributions; connecting ideas; listening into the middle; noticing deeper themes and questions.
- The intelligence emerges as the system connects to itself in diverse and creative ways.

### General Flow of a World Café:

- ➔ Seat 4-5 people at café-style tables or in conversation clusters.
- ➔ Set up progressive rounds of conversation, usually of 20-30 minutes each – have some good questions!
- ➔ Ask one person to stay at the table as a "host" and invite the other table members to move to other tables as ambassadors of ideas and insights
- ➔ Ask the table host to share key insights, questions, and ideas briefly to new table members, and then let folks move through the rounds of questions.
- ➔ After you've moved through the rounds, allow some time for a whole-group harvest of the conversations.





[http://www.theworldcafe.com/ibank\\_guidelines.html](http://www.theworldcafe.com/ibank_guidelines.html)

### Materials Needed:

- Small tables (36-42"), preferably round
- Chairs for participants and presenters
- Tablecloths
- Flip chart paper or paper placemats for covering the tables
- Markers
- Flip chart or large butcher paper for harvesting collective knowledge or insights
- Posters/Table Tents of Café Etiquette
- Materials for harvest

(The above info adapted from Café to Go at <http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools.html>)



# Open Space Technology

## participants call the conversation



The goal of an Open Space Technology meeting is to create time and space for people to engage deeply and creatively around issues of concern to them. The agenda is set by people with the power and desire to see it through, and typically, Open Space meetings result in transformative experiences for the individuals and groups involved. It is a simple and powerful way to catalyze effective working conversations and truly inviting organizations – to thrive in times of swirling change.

[www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org)

- Complexity of elements
- Presence of passion (including conflict)
- A need for a quick decision

Open space can be used in groups of 10 to 1,000 – and probably larger. It's important to give enough time and space for several sessions to occur. The outcomes can be dramatic when a group is uses its passion and responsibility – and is given the time – to make something happen.

### What is Open Space Good For?

Open Space Technology is useful in almost any context, including strategic direction setting, envisioning the future, conflict resolution, morale building, consultation with stakeholders, community planning, collaboration and deep learning about issues and perspectives.

**Open Space Technology is an excellent meeting format for any situation in which there is:**

- A real issue of concern
- Diversity of players

### Principles of Open Space:

- Whoever comes are the right people
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- When its over its over

The four principles and the law work to create a powerful event motivated by the passion and bounded by the responsibility of the participants.



### General Flow of an Open Space Meeting:

The group convenes in a circle and is welcomed by the sponsor.

The facilitator provides an overview of the process and explains how it works. The facilitator invites people with issues of concern to come into the circle, write the issue on a piece of paper and announce it to the group. These people are "conveners." The convener places their paper on the wall and chooses a time and a place to meet. This process continues until there are no more agenda items.

The group then breaks up and heads to the agenda wall, by now covered with a variety of sessions. Participants take note of the time and place for sessions they want to be involved in.

## Roles in Open Space

**Host** - announces and convenes a conversation

**Participant** - participates in a conversation

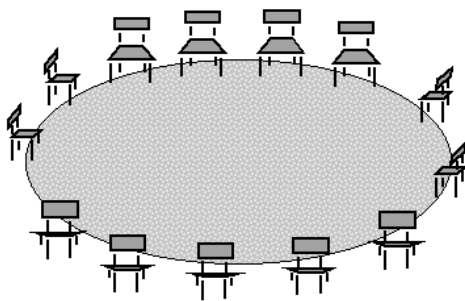
**Bumble bee** - moves between conversations, cross-pollinating

**Butterfly** - takes time out to reflect



**The Law of 2 feet  
(=The Law of Mobility)**

The  
Law  
of  
Two  
Feet



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### *The Four Principles*

Whoever comes is the right people.

Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.

Whenever it starts is the right time.

When it is over it is over.

**If you find yourself in a situation where you are not contributing or learning, move somewhere where you can.**

**Passion and Responsibility**

The host of the group captures the important points on a report / harvest sheet. All of these reports will be harvested in some way and returned to the larger group.

Following a closing or a break, the whole group comes together for convergence, a process to bring the essences and wisdom from the small sessions back to the whole group. Depending on the focus of the whole open space, you might want to invite the group to develop action plans to put the collective wisdom into action. The group then finishes the meeting with a closing circle where people are invited to share comments, insights, and commitments arising from the process.

### Materials Needed:

- Circle of chairs for participants
- Letters or numbers around the room to indicate meeting locations
- A blank wall that will become the agenda
- A news wall for recording and posting the results of the dialogue sessions
- Breakout spaces for meetings
- Paper on which to write session topics/questions
- Markers/Pencils/Pens
- Posters of the Principles, Law of Two Feet, and Roles (optional)
- Materials for harvest

# Pro Action Cafe

## combining world cafe and open space

The real voyage of discovery lies not in seeking new landscapes, but in seeing with new eyes.

Marcel Proust



The Pro Action Cafe is a space for creative and action oriented conversation where participants are invited to bring their call - project - ideas - questions or whatever they feel called by and need help to manifest in the world.

The concept of Pro Action Cafe is a blend of “world cafe” and “open space” technologies. It was first conceived by Rainer von Leoprechting and Ria Baeck in Brussels, Belgium.

### What is Pro Action Cafe Good For?

As a conversational process, the Pro Action Cafe is a collective, innovative methodology for hosting conversations about calls, questions, and projects that

matter to the people that attend. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between cafe tables, cross-pollinate ideas and offer each other new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, organization, or community.

As a process, the Pro Action Cafe can evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of any group, thus increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of good work. Pro Action Cafe can be used with a network of people and/or as a methodology for a specific, group, organization, or community to engage in creative and inspirational conversation leading to wiser and more collectively informed action.

### General Flow of a Pro Action Cafe

A quick check in circle to connect to purpose of the session and with each other. If check-in has already taken place as part of a longer process go straight to building the agenda.

You need 2 1/2 to 3 hours for a good Pro Action Cafe. Invite participants to step forward with their call and in that way ask the community for the help you need to move your project into action. People with a call/project stand up, speak it and write it on the agenda that corresponds to a numbered cafe table.

Count the amount of participants, divide by four - this gives you the amount of callers with projects/sessions that can be worked. (ie. with 40 participants, you can have 10 callers maximum) The principle is first come, first served. If you have less callers, add chairs to cafe tables but no more than 5 at a table. During this process each contributing participant (those who do not step forward) get to support up to three different calls/projects.

When the agenda has been created, invite the callers to go to their numbered cafe tables. There will be three rounds of conversation in cafe style of 20-30 minutes - each guided by a few generic questions to help deepen and focus the conversations.

#### Round 1

What is the quest behind the call/question/project? - to deepen the purpose of the call

#### Round 2

What is missing? - when the quest has been deepened, explore what could make the project more complete and possible

#### Round 3

What am I learning about myself? What am I learning about my project? What next steps will I take? What help do I still need? - to help bring it all together for the caller and their project

Round 3 is in 2 steps:

1. First 20-25 minutes for the callers to reflect by themselves on the 4 questions above and harvest their key insights.

2. Round proceeds as the previous rounds - in conversation with participants. The new participants visit the table to listen to the harvest of the caller, their learning, their steps, help needed - and then offer any insight and any further support they can offer.

Between each round, crate breaks for the participants to have a drink, relax together, and get ready to support another caller in their quest/project.

Last step is to meet in circle and invite the callers from each table to share answers to these two questions:

1. What am I grateful for?
2. What are my next steps?

If there is time, the whole group can shortly reflect on: What applications do we see for practicing proaction cafe in our contexts?

End the Pro Action Cafe with a collective gesture to appreciate the work done and the gifts offered and received.

### Materials and Set Up

- Ideally create a large circle in one part of the room and enough cafe tables with four chairs in another part. (If the size of the room does not allow this, then participants will move the tales and chairs themselves as soon as the agenda is created.)
- Dress the tables with flipchart paper, colored pens, and markers as basic cafe set up.
- Prepare the matrix for the agenda setting of the session with the right amount of sessions according to the number of participants divided by four.
- Have fun and do good work together.

<http://sites.google.com/a/pro-action.eu/pro-action-cafe/how-to-become-a-host/hosting-kit>

# Making visible our thinking

"A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks or other items linked to and arranged radially around a central key word or idea. It is used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organization, problem solving, decision making, and writing." (Wikipedia)

## A collective mind-map

A collective mind-map is a quick and simple way to create a shared overview of issues and opportunities relevant to a particular subject or challenge. The mind-map always has a clear focus that can be captured in a "burning" question, i.e. What are the main issues or opportunities you as a team are facing now?

The mind-map can be done either on a large sheet of paper or screen, electronically with a mind-map program projected on a screen.

## Ground-rules for making a collective mind-map:

- All ideas are valuable! We do not evaluate or discard ideas at this point.

- Whoever presents an idea or issue decides where it goes on the mind-map, and whether it is a major theme or a sub-issue.
- It's OK to have contradicting themes or issues.
- Whenever possible, give concrete examples.

## Making the mind-map

The mind-map process is lead by a host. All participants have access to post-it notes. When anyone has an idea or issue they want to suggest for the mind-map, they write their name on the post-it and hold it up. Runners will collect the post-its and give them to the facilitator, who will then call out the names in the order received. Once a person's name is called, they can present their idea or issue.

If the group is large there will be a need for radio-microphones. These will be provided by the runners when it is the participant's turn to speak.

The actual map is drawn up by two scribes. The central question is at the center of the mind-map. The major

themes – and different issues under each theme, are recorded on the mind-map radiating out from the central question.

## Voting

When all themes and issues have been recorded on the mind-map, the group can decide on the priorities by voting. Everyone gets a number of votes i.e. sticky dots that they can place on the themes or issues they see as most important.

The voting procedure gives a clear indication on which themes or issues have the highest leverage for further action.

(The above process is adapted and inspired by “Future Search” – a social technology developed by Marvin Weisbord & Sandra Janoff)



Example of a mind map created by participants exploring “who” was active in food systems work in the U.S. – participants then voted on where to focus their efforts



# Collaborative Story Harvesting

## At a glance

Storytelling is mankind's oldest knowledge management tool – and still one of the most effective. Our stories contain both the experience and learning that can grow our capacity to function in our complexifying contexts. Collective harvesting allows us to capture many threads or aspects of a single story simultaneously. We can practice targeted listening, group learning and collective meaning making, as well as offering a tremendous gift to the story holder(s).

## Purpose

There are many ways to apply collective story harvesting:

- A group listens to one complex story from another context to harvest learnings and apply them to its own work
- Harvesting an organisation or group's own story for learning, team-building and strategic enhancement.
- Harvesting a variety of stories simultaneously in small groups, then converging the learning across the full group.
- Telling the story of the wider context up to now in order to set the scene for the new work or practice field to arise in find its potent focus. This process might also be used for systemic evaluation.

## Process

### Allow enough time

You need to allow at least 90 minutes for the whole process. If you're working with people who haven't done this type of process before, keep the storytelling to around 30 minutes so people don't get overloaded.

### Select the story with care

- You will need a story that is *relevant* to the purpose and the context or system you wish to serve with this exercise. Ideally it should have enough *complexity*, *scale* and *duration* to make it interesting.
- The best people to tell the story are those who are directly connected to it. It can be more interesting to hear from more than one person involved in the story. More voices add depth and richness, as well as a variety of points of view.
- The story does not have to be an often-told one, or polished in any form. In fact, this process can be used to help polish a story and enable the storytellers to focus and refine it for different audiences.

### Take care with your invitation

Be intentional about how you invite the story holders to come and tell their story. Stories respond to invitation,

and when a heartfelt invitation is present, often a story will come out in a whole new way and offer new learning to those telling it.

### Select the threads

Decide on the threads you want to harvest. Ideally, this should be agreed with the story holders and the listeners, depending on where they want to focus their learning. Take as much time as you need to discuss exactly what you want to get out of this process and what will happen to the harvest afterwards. You'll need at least one person harvesting each thread you've chosen, and more than one person can harvest the same thread simultaneously.

### Possible threads to choose from:

**Narrative thread\*** - The thread of the story – people, events, stages. You might also capture facts, emotions and values that are part of the story.

**Process\*** - What interventions, processes, applications, discoveries happened?

**Pivotal points\*** - When did breakthroughs occur? What did we learn?

**Application** - What can we learn from this story about application in our own or other systems?

**Taking change to scale** – What can we learn from this story about taking change to scale?

**Questions** – What questions arise from this story that we could ask of any system?

**When things just came together** – What were the times when the right people showed up and things just flowed naturally? (synchronicity & magic)

**Specific theme** – Harvest the story using a specific theme (like participatory leadership) and see what it tells you.

**Specific collaborative leadership patterns** – e.g. the six breaths of process design: where did each breath occur during the story? The 5th organisational paradigm: Where did new forms of governance and working occur? Core team/calling team: What did we learn about holding the centre of this work?

**Principles** – What principles of working can be gleaned from this story? What principles of complex living systems were reflected in this work?

**Challenges** - how were they encountered and how overcome?

**The story field\*** - How did the field of the system's story change? Can you name the story or metaphor the system started with and what it moved to?

\* Threads marked with \* might be foundational to any



## Identify other possible harvesting modes

If you have other talents in your group, around graphic facilitation/visuals, poetry, music, mind mapping, art, etc., you might also want to invite harvest in this form. Each of these will add a greater richness, diversity and enjoyment to the harvest.

## Suggested process

**Framing and introduction:** Welcome people to the session. Make the invitation publically to the storytellers. Explain the harvesting threads and ask for volunteers.

**Storytelling:** Ask the storytellers to tell the story and the group to harvest. Be clear about the time allocated for the storytelling. (It can be helpful to use a chime to let the storytellers know when they have 5 minutes left)

**Collective harvest:** Give the storytellers materials to do their 'harvest of the harvest'. Ask each of the harvesters to report on what they found. Take at least as long for this as for the storytelling. Each of the harvests will have more depth than can be told during a first round. It might be helpful to have more than one round of harvest, or for the rest of the group to question each harvester to draw out additional insights.

**Response from the tellers:** What were the gifts to you from this group harvest? What are you taking away from this session?

**Closing the session:** Thank the storytellers and the harvesters. Any final remarks about what will happen to the harvest now that it has been heard. Is there enough here to return to it again and see what else surfaces? Do you want to come back as a group and hear the next version of the story?

## Practical requirements:

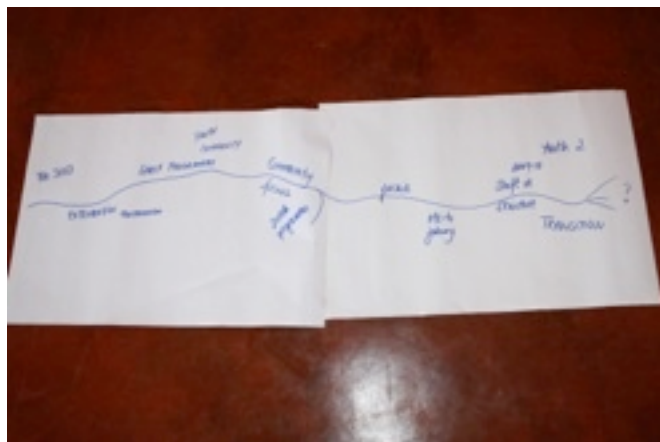
**Room set-up:** Ideally create a large circle with the storytellers as part of the circle. You may need some small tables for those harvesting onto flipcharts (or they may be OK sitting on the floor).

**Supplies:** coloured pens and other art supplies.

**Equipment:** Recording equipment if you want to video the process and results. Camera to photograph any graphic harvest.

## Source

Adapted from the document of the same name by Mary Alice Arthur and Monica Nissen. Updates will be posted at: <http://artofhosting.ning.com/page/core-art-of-hosting-practices>



# The Art of Harvesting

## making meaning of our conversations

What if we were planning not a meeting but a harvest? In taking such an approach, we must become clear about why we are initiating any process. The Art of Hosting and the Art of Harvesting dance together as two halves of the same thing.

Harvesting is more than just taking notes. To get a sense of the complexity of this art, let's begin by picturing a field in which someone has planted wheat. How can that field of wheat be harvested?

We first imagine the harvest from that field as a farmer using equipment to cut down the wheat, thresh it, and separate the seeds from the stalks. The farmer might store the grain, further refine it, sell it quickly or wait for the price to increase.

Now imagine a geologist, a biologist and a painter harvesting from the same field. The geologist picks through the rocks and soil gathering data about the land itself. The biologist might collect insects and worms, bits of plants and organic matter. The painter sees the patterns in the landscape and chooses a palette and a perspective for work of art.

They all harvest differently from the field. The results of their work go to different places and are put to different uses. But they all have a few things in common; they have a purpose for being in the field and a set of questions about that purpose, they have a pre-determined place to use the results of the harvest, and they have specific tools to use in doing their work.

Despite the field being the same, the tools and results are specific to the need, purpose and inquiry. There are eight stages of harvesting, elucidated in the companion book to this one. Briefly they are:

### Stage 1: Sensing the need

Sensing the need may at first be intuitive or very basic – like sensing hunger, but once the sensed need becomes conscious one can act on it.

We sense that we are hungry and from there we plant a garden, knowing that the work of planting and harvesting lies before us but that the end result meets the need for sustenance.

The need is not complicated; it is real and clear and it speaks deeply and inspires invitation and action. Everything begins from this need, and the way we hold it and invite others into it informs the harvest that we take at the end of the day

### Stage 2: Preparing the field

In some cases the caller creates the readiness of the field by creating awareness around the need. Others with a similar need will recognize the call.

In preparing the field – sending out the call, giving the context, inviting etc.– we set the tone of the whole process – the seriousness and quality will determine the quality of what we reap. The work of readying a field for planting can take a whole year during which we condition the soil, clear the rocks and prepare things. What we are doing here is actually harvesting a field so that the seeds can be planted.

**In other words: start thinking about the harvest from the very beginning – not as an afterthought.**

### Stage 3: Planning the Harvest

Planning the harvest starts with and accompanies the design process. A clear purpose and some success criteria for the process of the harvest itself will add clarity and direction.

**What would be useful and add value - and in which form would it serve best?**

Translated into a simple check-list, it becomes:

- What intent are you holding?
- Who is going to benefit?
- How can you add most value to the work at hand – how will the harvest serve best?
- What form or what media will be most effective?
- Who should host or do the harvesting?
- What is the right timing?

### Stage 4: Planting the seeds

The questions around which we structure the hosting become the seeds for harvesting. All gardeners and farmers know that planting seeds depends on the time and the conditions. You can't just plant whenever you want to. You plant once the conditions are right to maximize the yield.

In hosting practice, this means being sensitive to timing when asking questions.



*a harvest example*

In sowing the seeds that will drive the inquiry – *identifying and asking the strategic and meaningful questions* – you determine the output. So in planning the harvest, ask yourself, “What it is that this process needs to yield? What information, ideas, output or outcome will benefit us here and now, and what might take us to the next level of inquiry?”

The process itself is an on-going one. With each part of the process, you harvest something. Some of it you need to use right away, to help lead you into the next process. Some of the harvest you will need later.

So part of planning the harvest is also knowing for *whom, when and how* you need to use it. Another part of the planning is asking yourself in which format the harvest will serve you best.

### Stage 5: Tending the crop

Protect the integrity of the crop. Nurture the crop as it grows, weed it and thin it to keep the strong plants growing and get rid of all that will not nourish or serve. This involves a combination of feeding the field and letting it grow. But it also involves just sitting in the field. Holding space for what is emerging and enjoying it.

During the process, enjoy seeing your work unfold in all its complexity. The more you can welcome the growth you are witnessing, the higher the quality of the harvest. Now you are in the pulse of noticing both the quality of the field and the quality of the crops.

*This is where we engage in conversation and exploration – where the richness of the harvest is born. The richer the conversation or exchange, the richer the harvest!*

### Stage 6: Picking the fruits

Picking the fruits corresponds to recording or creating a collective memory. The simplest way to harvest is to record what is being said and done, the output of the conversations,

etc. This creates a **record** or **collective memory**.

Recording can be done in words.

- your notes, which will be *subjective*
- or transcripts of output from conversations recorded on tapes, etc., which will be *objective*.

Recording can also be done with pictures / photographs / video / film. pictures evoke and recall feelings, atmospheres, situations.

or you can video the conversation - record both verbally and visually

It is helpful to give some thought in the planning phase to how you want to harvest. What kind of records, templates etc. will help you gather the relevant information or knowledge?

### Stage 7: Preparing and processing the fruits

Creating a memory is the first step. As we pick the fruits or seeds for processing, some will be used right away, some will be used for further processing and some will be used as seed for the next season.

The second step is **making collective sense and meaning**. This is where we add value and make the data useful. There are many ways of doing this. The general idea is to take loads of bits of information and transform them into “holons” – wholes that are also parts of greater wholes.



harvest team at work at the 1st AoH in Egypt

Things that can help in this process:

- Harvest in a systemic way. Ask collectively: What did you notice? What gave sense and

meaning to you? Notice the patterns - they indicate what is emerging

- Use metaphors, mental models and stories to make complex issues simple
- Use drawings and graphics to make complex issues manageable and visible

### Stage 8: Planning the next harvest - feeding forward

Most harvesting is done to bring closure to a process or bring us to the next level of understanding. More importantly, it helps us to know collectively, to see the same picture and share the same understanding together.

#### A few comments

The above reflections mainly concern collective harvesting.

Individual reflection and harvest will raise the level of the collective harvest.

During learning processes, individual harvesting can be done intentionally, by using a journal as a learning tool.

Web-based tools open up a whole world of possibilities that are not dealt with here.

Harvesting the “soft” is much more subtle and subjective than dealing with the “cognitive” or more objective, tangible parts. A qualitative inquiry into what we have noticed, what has shifted or changed in our relationships, in the culture or atmosphere may give us some information about the softer part of the harvest.

For the most effective harvest, these eight steps should be planned beforehand, as part of designing the whole process.

(Summary of The Art of Harvesting version 2.6.; written by Monica Nissen and Chris Corrigan with input from the Art of Hosting Community of Practice. The full article can be downloaded at <http://www.interchange.dk/practices/artofharvesting>.)

# Collaborative Decision Making

## deciding wise action together

### At a glance

Decision making is a hot topic especially in collaborative endeavours where we strive for equality and seek to avoid top down decisions. A common mistake when working collaboratively is to go for the extremes. If you try to take all decisions together, you can kill the energy of groups and enthusiasm of individuals. If decisions that affect the whole group/project are constantly taken by individuals without involving the team, you can cause frustration and a feeling of disempowerment by those not involved in but affected by decisions. Motivation and productivity can drop and sometimes people even leave.

It is important to distinguish which decisions need to be taken by who, if they affect the whole group or are more related to certain activities. Applying subsidiarity as an organising principle is helpful to discern who should take a decision. In our case it means that decisions should be taken by the people who are most closely involved with the action and aware of possible consequences for the whole.

You need a good process for group decisions. Consensus oriented decision-making tries to avoid "winners" and "losers". Seeking the approval of the majority and for the minority to agree to come along with the course of action.

### Purpose

To create a shared proposal and shape it into a decision that best serves the purpose of the whole group/organisation/initiative.

### Process

This process can be used as part of regular team or stakeholder meetings or in specifically dedicated meetings. In the latter case it is good to add some time for welcome and framing of the meeting, check-in and check-out (see description).

1. **Framing the topic:** The convenor welcomes everyone and frames the purpose and flow of the meeting. Those who brought proposals to the meeting are invited to briefly provide some context and share the proposal.
2. **Open Facilitated Conversation:** Participants are invited to strive for the best possible decision for the

whole, rather than competing for personal preferences. Multiple concerns and information are shared until the sense of the group is clear. The goal is to identify different perspectives and collect relevant information on the topic/proposal at hand. Conversation could involve [active listening](#) and sharing information. You might want to limit number of times one person can to speak to ensure that each perspective is fully heard.

3. **Collaborative Proposal Building:** Based on the conversation proposals get formulated/amended and noted down visible to the group. Ideas and solutions belong to the group; no names are recorded.
4. **Choosing a Direction:** Ask the group to indicate if they fully agree with the proposal (thumbs up), have questions or doubts they'd like to still raise (thumb sideways), or can't possibly agree with the proposal (thumb down). Give the people with questions the space to ask them and those with concerns to state them. Group the concerns and questions before they get addressed. Ask those with 'thumbs down' what they would need to come along.
5. **Synthesizing a Final Proposal:** The proposal is amended, re-phrased to address the needs and concerns, and voted again.
6. **Closure**

### Important considerations:

- As many as possible of the concerned parties should be involved or represented in the process.
- It is very important to listen to the wisdom of the minority, as they often hold important information that might have been overlooked, or might bring valuable nuances.
- Aim for workable, not perfect solutions/decisions.
- The goal is "unity, not unanimity."
- By articulating the emerging consensus, members can be clear on the decision, and, as their views have been taken into account, will be likely to support it.
- The facilitator is understood as serving the group rather than acting as person-in-charge.



## Practical requirements

- Sitting in a circle without table in the middle helps to remove barriers between people and create a feeling of equality
- You will need a flipchart where you can write down proposals; make sure everyone can see
- Pens and paper for people to formulate their own proposals
- Timing depends of the number of people and proposals, but make sure you calculate enough time or reduce the number of decisions you are striving to make in one meeting

## Source

Adapted from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus\\_decision-making](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consensus_decision-making), by Simone Poutnik



# Communities of Practice

## an introduction

(This is a brief and shortened version of an introduction to communities of practice by Etienne Wenger. More info <http://wenger-trayner.com/map-of-resources/> )

This brief and general introduction examines what communities of practice are and why researchers and practitioners in so many different contexts find them useful as an approach to knowing and learning.

What are communities of practice?

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope.

**In a nutshell:** Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

Note that this definition allows for, but does not assume, intentionality: learning can be the reason the community comes together or an incidental outcome of member's interactions. Not everything called a community is a community of practice. A neighbourhood for instance, is often called a community, but is usually not a community of practice. Three characteristics are crucial:

### 1. The domain:

A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people. (You could belong to the same network as someone and never know it.) The domain is not necessarily something recognised as "expertise" outside the community. A youth gang may have developed all sorts of ways of dealing with their domain: surviving on the street and maintaining some kind of identity they can live with. They value their collective competence and learn from each other, even though few people outside the group may value or even recognise their expertise.

### 2. The community:

In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that

enable them to learn from each other. A website in itself is not a community of practice. Having the same job or the same title does not make for a community of practice unless members interact and learn together. The claims processors in a large insurance company or students in American high schools may have much in common, yet unless they interact and learn together, they do not form a community of practice. But members of a community of practice do not necessarily work together on a daily basis. The Impressionists, for instance, used to meet in cafes and studios to discuss the style of painting they were inventing together. These interactions were essential to making them a community of practice even though they often painted alone.

### 3. The practice:

A community of practice is not merely a community of interested people who like certain kinds of movies, for instance. Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction. A good conversation with a stranger on an airplane may give you all sorts of interesting insights, but it does not in itself make for a community of practice. The development of a shared practice may be more or less self-conscious. The "windshield wipers" engineers at an auto manufacturer make a concerted effort to collect and document the tricks and lessons they have learned into a knowledge base. By contrast, nurses who meet regularly for lunch in a hospital cafeteria may not realise that their lunch discussions are one of their main sources of knowledge about how to care for patients. Still, in the course of all these conversations, they have developed a set of stories and cases that have become a shared repertoire for their practice.

It is the combination of these three elements that constitutes a community of practice. And it is by developing these three elements in parallel that one cultivates such a community.

Communities of practice are not called that in all organizations. They are known under various names, such as learning networks, thematic groups, or tech clubs.

While they all have the three elements of a domain, a community, and a practice, they come in a variety of forms. Some are quite small; some are very large, often with a core group and many peripheral members. Some are local and some cover the globe. Some meet mainly face-to-face, some mostly online. Some are within an organization and some include members from various organizations. Some are formally recognized, often supported with a budget; and some are completely informal and even invisible.

Communities of practice have been around for as long as human beings have learned together. At home, at work, at school, in our hobbies, we all belong to communities of practice, a number of them usually. In some we are core members. In many we are merely peripheral. And we travel through numerous communities over the course of our lives.

In fact, communities of practice are everywhere. They are a familiar experience; so familiar perhaps that it often escapes our attention. Yet when it is given a name and brought into focus, it becomes a perspective that can help us understand our world better. In particular, it allows us to see past more obvious formal structures such as organisations, classrooms, or nations, and perceive the structures defined by engagement in practice and the informal learning that comes with it.

### **Where is the concept being applied?**

The concept of community of practice has found a number of practical applications in business, organisational design, government, education, professional associations, development projects, and civic life.

Organizations. People have adopted the concept most readily in business because of the recognition that knowledge is a critical asset that needs to be managed strategically. Initial efforts at managing knowledge had focused on information systems with disappointing results. Communities of practice provided a new approach, which focused on people and on the social structures that enable them to learn with and from each other. Today, there is hardly any organisation of a reasonable size that does not have some form communities-of-practice initiative. A number of characteristics explain this rush of interest in communities of practice as a vehicle for developing strategic capabilities in organizations:

Communities of practice enable practitioners to take collective responsibility for managing the knowledge they need, recognising that, given the proper structure, they

are in the best position to do this.

Communities among practitioners create a direct link between learning and performance, because the same people participate in communities of practice and in teams and business units.

Practitioners can address the tacit and dynamic aspects of knowledge creation and sharing, as well as the more explicit aspects.

Communities are not limited by formal structures: they create connections among people across organizational and geographic boundaries.

From this perspective, the knowledge of an organization lives in a constellation of communities of practice each taking care of a specific aspect of the competence that the organisation needs. However, the very characteristics that make communities of practice a good fit for stewarding knowledge—autonomy, practitioner-orientation, informality, crossing boundaries—are also characteristics that make them a challenge for traditional hierarchical organisations. How this challenge is going to affect these organisations remains to be seen.

The web. New technologies such as the Internet have extended the reach of our interactions beyond the geographical limitations of traditional communities, but the increase in flow of information does not obviate the need for community. In fact, it expands the possibilities for community and calls for new kinds of communities based on shared practice.

The concept of community of practice is influencing theory and practice in many domains. It has now become the foundation of a perspective on knowing and learning that informs efforts to create learning systems in various sectors and at various levels of scale, from local communities, to single organizations, partnerships, cities, regions, and the entire world.

(Further Resources on Communities of Practice are listed in the Resources Section.)

# Resources

## recommended books, articles, websites

### **Isaacs, William.**

Dialogue and the art of thinking together

### **Kahane, Adam**

Solving Tough Problems

Power and Love

### **Meg Wheatley's books:**

Leadership and the New Science

Turning to One Another

Finding Our Now

A Simpler Way (with Myron Kellner-Rogers)

Perseverance

Walk out walk on! (with Deborah Frieze)

So far from home - lost and found in our brave new world

### **Articles:**

[Leadership in the Age of Complexity: From Hero to Host](#) (PDF)

[Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale](#) (PDF)

[Can I Be Fearless?](#) (PDF)

[What is Our Role in Creating Change?](#) (PDF)

Download these articles at <http://www.margaretwheatley.com/writing.html>

### **Baldwin, Christina**

Calling the Circle – The First and Future Culture

Storycatcher – Making sense of Our Lives through the Power and Practice of Story

[www.peerspirit.com](http://www.peerspirit.com)

### **Brown, Juanita with David Isaacs & the World Café Community**

The World Café – Shaping Our Futures Through Conversations That Matter

[www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)

### **Cooperrider, David and Srivastva (2000)**

Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change

[www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu)

[www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/whatisai.pdf](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/uploads/whatisai.pdf)

### **Whitney, Dianna and Trosten-Bloom, A.**

The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: a Practical Guide to Positive Change

### **Owen, Harrison**

Open Space Technology – A Users Guide

Expanding our now - The Story of Open Space Technology

The Spirit of Leadership - Liberating the Leader in Each of Us

[www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org)

### **Holman, Peggy (Editor), Tom Devane (Editor)**

The Change Handbook

### **Kaner, Sam et. al.**

The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making

**Scharmer, Otto**

Books: Presencing, Theory U

<http://www.presencing.com/tools/>

**Wenger, Etienne (Communities of Practice)**

Cultivating Communities of Practice: a Guide to Managing Knowledge. (with Richard McDermott and William Snyder)

**Corrigan, Chris**

The Tao of Holding Space

Open Space Technology – A User's Non-Guide (with Michael Herman)

[www.chriscorrigan.com](http://www.chriscorrigan.com)

**Tenneson Woolf**

[http://tennesonwoolf.com/Tenneson\\_Woolf/Resources.html](http://tennesonwoolf.com/Tenneson_Woolf/Resources.html)

# What is Art of Hosting?

The Art of Hosting is about inviting people into open and participatory conversations about issues that are too meaningful and complex for a single leader or stakeholder group. More than a set of methods, it's a leadership approach, an approach to live life authentically.

As conversation hosts we blend different dialogue and collaboration approaches, like World Cafe, Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space etc, and create the conditions for conversations to lead to wise and practical action.

We work with different tools that are based on living systems and complexity theory. The aim is to activate the collective intelligence of groups and create space for the emergence of new insights, innovations and collaborative action. From a living systems perspective real innovation happens in the space between chaos and order. The tools we use help us to navigate that space.

## What we will explore

- How to design, host and harvest small or large scale conversations
- Interactive processes that help to move beyond power dynamics and conflict, to heal relationships and create shared commitment to wiser action (like appreciative inquiry, world cafe, and open space)
- The Art of Hosting as a fundamental organizing pattern that puts into action how "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts"
- How to be creative collaboratively
- The experiences and lessons others have gained through their own Art of Hosting experience
- How to unite rather than divide
- How to apply these processes in our work and communities
- Ways to develop our skills and practices beyond this training

## Multiple Levels of Focus

AoH invites us to operate at four interconnected levels at once. The learning at each of these levels informs and is present in the subsequent levels, so that a natural hierarchy results. These four levels operate as characteristics of a whole and not as a linear path, but rather as characteristics of work.

### Individual

- Continue connecting to our passion and reasons for choosing a different way of leading in our communities
- To strengthen individual courage to lead as hosts

### Team

- To train on the competencies of collective reflection and wise action
- To practice co-creating, co-deciding and co-hosting in order to host strategic projects, meetings, community conversations...

### Community/Organization/Etc.

- To experience working in unity with other leaders
- To experience new organizational forms and work of co-creating relationships that serve the deeper needs and patterns in our community and world

### Systemic

- To understand the bigger context that we are always part of
- To benefit from knowledge and experience of a global or "trans-local" network of practitioners and learners in this field

To learn more about the Art of Hosting community of practice

<http://artofhosting.ning.com>

<http://www.artofhosting.org/home/stayconnected/>



## Resources - Articles

# Basics of Hosting: Hosting in a Hurry (V.)

written by Chris Corrigan, Steward, Canada-Vancouver Island

### **Putting the Art of Hosting into practice**

A quick reference for convening conversations that matter.



All conversations are opportunities for us to connect a little deeper with one another. In the Art of Hosting practice we often talk of the four fold way and the seven little helpers: the simplest tools for convening any conversation.

By far most of the conversations we host in our lives at work or in the community are conversations with small groups. These simple processes are offered as a quick reference for bringing depth and life to those conversations.

### **The Four Fold Way of Hosting**

We have learned that quality conversations leading to close teamwork and wise action arise when there are four conditions present:

1. Be Present
2. Participate and practice conversations
3. Host
4. Co-create

We call these four conditions the Four Fold Way of Hosting, because you can practice these any time. They form the basis for all good hosting.

## Be Present

### Questions to help you become present

What am I curious about?

Where am I feeling anxiety coming into this meeting and how can I let that go?

What clarity do I need? What clarity do I have?

...host yourself first - be willing to sit in the chaos - keep the space open - sit in the fire of the present...

Being present means showing up, undistracted, prepared, clear about the need and what your personal contribution can be. It allows you to check in with yourself and develop the personal practice of curiosity about the outcomes of any gathering. Presence means making space to devote a dedicated time to working with others. If you are distracted, called out or otherwise located in many different places, you cannot be present in one. For meetings to have deep results, every person in the room should be fully present. Collectively, it is good practice to become present together as a meeting begins. This might be as simple as taking a moment of silence to rest into the present. If an Elder is present, a prayer does this very nicely. Invite a collective slowing down so that all participants in a meeting can be present together.

## Participate and practice conversation

...be willing to listen fully, respectfully, without judgment and thinking you already know all the answer – practice conversation mindfully...

Conversation is an art, it is not just talk. It demands that we listen carefully to one another and that we offer what we can in the service of the whole. Curiosity and judgment cannot live together in the same space. If we are judging what we are hearing, we cannot be curious about the outcome, and if we have called a meeting because we are uncertain of the way forward, being open is a key skill and capacity. Only by practicing skilful conversation can we find our best practice together.

If we practice conversation mindfully we might slow down meetings so that wisdom and clarity can work quickly. When we talk mindlessly, we don't allow space for the clarity to arise. The art of conversation is the art of slowing down to speed up.

## Host conversations

...be courageous, inviting and willing to initiate conversations that matter - find and host powerful questions with the stakeholders – and then make sure you harvest the answers, the patterns, insights learnings and wise actions...

Hosting conversations is both more and less than facilitating. It means taking responsibility for creating and holding the container in which a group of people can do their best work together. You can create this container using the seven helpers as starting points, and although you can also do this in the moment, the more preparation you have the better.

The bare minimum to do is to discern the need, prepare a question and know what you will do with the harvest. If there is no need to meet, don't meet. If there is a need get clear on the need and prepare a process that will meet that need by asking a powerful question. And always know how you will harvest and what will be done with that harvest, to ensure that results are sustainable and the effort was worth it.

Hosting conversations takes courage and it takes a bit of certainty and faith in your people. We sometimes give short shrift to conversational spaces because of the fear we experience in stepping up to host. It is, however, a gift to host a group and it is a gift to be hosted well. Work in meetings becomes that much better.

## Co-create

...be willing to co create and co-host with others, blending your knowing, experience and practices with theirs, working partnership..

The fourth practice is about showing up in a conversation without being a spectator, and contributing to the collective effort to sustain results. The best conversations arise when we listen for what is in the middle, what is arising out of the centre of our collaboration. It is not about the balancing of individual agendas, it is about finding out what is new. And when that is discovered work unfolds beautifully when everyone is clear about what they can contribute to the work. This is how results become sustainable over time – they fall into the network of relationships that arise from a good conversation, from friends working together.

So contribute what you know to the mix so that patterns may become clear and the collaborative field can produce unexpected and surprising results.

## The Seven Helpers

Over the years, we have identified seven little tools that are the source of good conversational design. At the bare minimum, if you use these tools, conversations will grow deeper and work will occur at a more meaningful level. These seven helpers bring form to fear and uncertainty and help us stay in the chaos of not knowing the answers. They help us to move through uncomfortable places together, like conflict, uncertainty, fear and the groan zone and to arrive at wise action.

1. Be present
2. Have a good question
3. Use a talking piece
4. Harvest
5. Make a wise decision
6. Act
7. Stay together

### 1. Be Present

Inviting presence is a core practice of hosting, but it is also a key practice for laying the ground work for a good meeting. There are many ways of bringing a group to presence, including:

- Start with a prayer
- Start with a moment of silence
- Check in with a personal question related to the theme of the meeting
- Pass a talking piece and provide space for each voice to be heard
- Start well. Start slowly. Check everyone in.

### 2. Have a good question

A good question is aligned with the need and purpose of the meeting and invites us to go to another level. Good questions are put into the centre of a circle and the group speaks through them. Having a powerful question at the centre keeps the focus on the work and helps a groups stay away from unhelpful behaviours like personal attacks, politics and closed minds.

A good question has the following characteristics:

- Is simple and clear
- Is thought provoking
- Generates energy
- Focuses inquiry
- Challenges assumptions
- Opens new possibilities
- Evokes more questions

It is wise to design these questions beforehand and make them essential pieces of the invitation for others to join you. As you dive into these questions, harvest the new questions that are arising. They represent the path you need to take.

### 3. Use a talking piece

In it's simplest form a talking piece is simply and object

that passes from hand to hand. When one is holding the piece, one is invited to speak and everyone is invited to listen. Using a talking piece has the powerful effect of ensuring that every voice is heard and it sharpens both speech and listening.

It slows down a conversation so that when things are moving too fast, or people begin speaking over one another and the listening stops, a talking piece restores calm and smoothness. Conducting the opening round of a conversation with a talking piece sets the tone for the meeting and helps people to remember the power of this simple tool.

Of course a talking piece is really a minimal form of structure. Every meeting should have some form of structure that helps to work with the chaos and order that is needed to co-discover new ideas. There are many forms and processes to choose from but it is important to align them with the nature of living systems if innovation and wisdom is to arise from chaos and uncertainty.

At more sophisticated levels, when you need to do more work, you can use more formal processes that work with these kinds of context. Each of these processes has a sweet spot, its own best use, which you can think about as you plan meetings. Blend as necessary.

### 4. Harvest

Never meet unless you plan to harvest your learnings. The basic rule of thumb here is to remember that you are not planning a meeting, you are instead planning a harvest. Know what is needed and plan the process accordingly. Harvests don't always have to be visible; sometimes you plan to meet just to create learning. But support that personal learning with good questions and practice personal harvesting.

To harvest well, be aware of four things:

Create an artifact. Harvesting is about making knowledge visible. Make a mind map, draw pictures, take notes, but whatever you do create a record of your conversation.

Have a feedback loop. Artefacts are useless if they sit on the shelf. Know how you will use your harvest before you begin your meeting. Is it going into the system? Will it create questions for a future meeting? Is it to be shared with people as news and learning? Figure it out and make plans to share the harvest.

Be aware of both intentional and emergent harvest. Harvest answers to the specific questions you are asking, but also make sure you are paying attention to the cool stuff that is emerging in good conversations. There is real value in what's coming up that none could anticipate. Harvest it.

The more a harvest is co-created, the more it is co-owned. Don't just appoint a secretary, note taker or a scribe. Invite people to co-create the harvest. Place paper in the middle of the table so that everyone can reach it. Hand out post it notes so people can capture ideas and add them to the whole. Use your creative spirit to find ways to have the group host their own harvest.

### **5. Make a wise decision**

If your meeting needs to come to a decision, make it a wise one. Wise decisions emerge from conversation, not voting. The simplest way to arrive at a wise decision is to use the three thumbs consensus process. It works like this:

First, clarify a proposal. A proposal is a suggestion for how something might be done. Have it worded and written and placed in the centre of the circle. Poll the group asking each person to offer their thumb in three positions. UP means "I'm good with it." SIDEWAYS means "I need more clarity before I give the thumbs up" DOWN means "this proposal violates my integrity...I mean seriously."

As each person indicates their level of support for the proposal, note the down and sideways thumbs. Go to the down thumbs first and ask: "what would it take for you to be able to support this proposal." Collectively help the participant word another proposal, or a change to the current one. If the process is truly a consensus building one, people are allowed to vote thumbs down

only if they are willing to participate in making a proposal that works. Hijacking a group gets rewarded with a vote. Majority rules.

Once you have dealt with the down thumbs, do the same with the sideways thumbs. Sideways doesn't mean "no" but rather "I need clarity." Answer the questions or clarify the concerns.

If you have had a good conversation leading to the proposal, you should not be surprised by any down thumbs. If you are, reflect on that experience and think about what you could have done differently.

For more, refer to The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making.

### **6. Act.**

Once you have decided what to do, act. There isn't much more to say about that except that wise action is action that doesn't not over-extend or under-extend the resources of a group. Action arises from the personal choice to responsibility for what you love. Commit to the work and do it.

### **7. Stay together**

Relationships create sustainability. If you stay together as friends, mates or family, you become accountable to one another and you can face challenges better. When you feel your relationship to your closest mates slipping, call it out and host a conversation about it. Trust is a group's most precious resource. Use it well.

Method	Requirements	Best uses
Appreciative Interviews	At least 20 minutes per person for interviews, with follow up time to process together. Can be done anywhere.	Discovering what we have going for us and figuring out how to use those assets in other places.
Circle	A talking piece and a space free of tables that can hold the group in a circle.	For reflecting on a question together, when no one person knows the answer. The basis for all good conversations.
Open Space Technology	A room that can hold the whole group in a circle, a blank wall, at least an hour per session. You have to let go of outcomes for this to realize its full power.	For organizing work and getting people to take responsibility for what they love. Fastest way to get people working on what matters.
World Cafe	Tables or work spaces, enough to hold three to four at each, with paper and markers in the middle. You need 15 to 20 minutes per round of conversation and at least two rounds to get the full power. People need to change tables each round so ideas can travel.	For figuring out what the whole knows. World Cafe surfaces the knowledge that is in the whole, even knowledge that any given individual doesn't know is shared.

#### **Acknowledgements and contact information.**

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Please share this document and contact me at [chris@chriscorrigan.com](mailto:chris@chriscorrigan.com) if you need to. My website at [www.chriscorrigan.com](http://www.chriscorrigan.com) has links to or copies of most of the resources discussed here.