Recap of the collaborative methods used in the programme

Below you will find the processes of the collaborative group work methods that we used during the programme: the Case supervision process (Case Clinic) and the OPERA process used throughout Days 1, 2 and 3.

Case supervision process used in the Case Clinic

The process we used in the case clinic sessions during Day 1 of the programme is as follows**:**

1.	The **case owner** explains the case in more detail	5 min
2.	Clarifying questions from the **group**	10 min
3.	Hypothesis about the case from the group. Case owner has his/her back towards the group; does not participate in the discussion in any way, only listens in and makes notes	15 min
4.	Feedback from the case owner: which hypothesis were helpful, which not	5 min
5.	Potential solutions from the **group**; in case they were the case owner, what would they do? Case owner listens and makes notes, his/her back towards the group	15 min
6.	Feedback from the case owner: what will he/she do/try out?	5 min
7.	(Optional: how did the process work, what was useful and what not?)	5 min

It is obviously possible to adjust the timing of the phases according to the time available for the process. It is important, nevertheless, to keep enough time for the third step, the hypothesis phase, even though it sometimes feels cumbersome or unnecessary – it often the most useful phase for the case owner!

OPERA – dynamic and effective meetings & group work processes

OPERA is a method for creating agreement about a possible solution when you need commitment or engagement in a group. Its aim is to find a common solution that all will be happy to implement.

The power of the method is in the systematic process that allows everybody to think, communicate, be heard and to actively participate, while changing and developing their thinking based on the most important thoughts from the others. Participants of all temperaments find the process comfortable and effective and all phases are designed to increase the commitment to the final result.

'OPERA' is an abbreviation of the following five phases:
O wn thinking
P airs' / groups' suggestions
E xplaining
R anking
A rranging, alignment

N.B. Before starting the process, you need a sense-making open question that is important for the participants and has many possible solutions.

The question can be about problems (what are the challenges we have?), goals (what do we want to achieve?), ideas (how could we solve this problem/achieve this?) or some other important aspect.

Phase 1 – Own thinking

- Ask everyone to start quietly writing a list of their own thoughts concerning the question presented, thinking, focusing, brainstorming, finding their own original views and alternatives. Set them a minimum goal of different thoughts that is challenging (≈10). All are involved without disturbance from others.
- This gives all a chance to prepare for the next step which is presenting their own ideas, all are also aware that everyone is prepared and thus expected to contribute.
- Do not allow people to discuss anything, this can disturb or even stop the work of the others.

Phase 2 – Pairs' / groups' suggestions

- Create pairs within the participant group, either randomly or actively looking for maximum diversity within the pairs.
- Ask them to go through the lists of both. There is maximum communication; half of the group members are talking, half are listening. Harmony is found in pairs. Ideas combine to new ideas.
- People also practice presenting their views and get reinforcing support & positive feedback from the pair.

N.B. In case you have a larger group, you can also divide it into small sub-groups (of max 6 members in each) instead of pairs.

Phase 3 – Explaining

- Collect one idea at a time from each pair (group) in a round-robin fashion and write them as a numbered list on a flipchart, going around until there are no more different ideas. Alternatively, you can use large post-it notes (A5) and ask each pair to produce 3-4 suggestions, which are placed in a column on the wall.
- With the flipchart the pairs (groups) present while you (or a nominated scribe) are listing them, but with the post-its you ask each pair (group) in turn to explain their written down ideas.
- Do not allow discussion about the ideas at this stage, maybe a clarifying question is ok if others don't understand the thought. The idea is that everyone gets to explain their best combined ideas and all listen well because they need to understand the presented ideas for choosing the best ones, which happens in the next phase.

Phase 4 – Ranking

- After all pairs (groups) have explained their ideas you give each pair (group) a choice of the most important ideas. Think about the criterion, are you looking for revolutionary ideas, best strategic ideas, immediately implementable ideas, suggestions that will bring the biggest benefits or value or things that the people in the room can do next week?
- Ask each pair (group) to choose from the ideas the others have brought to the process, let them choose only one of their own. Normally 3-4 choices are good but that also depends on the overall number of ideas.
- The choices are each marked with a red plus (+). Psychologically here people change their own ideas for the best ones, all supporting the winning ideas. There is public positive feedback and the less important ideas get no energy from anyone.

Phase 5 – Arranging

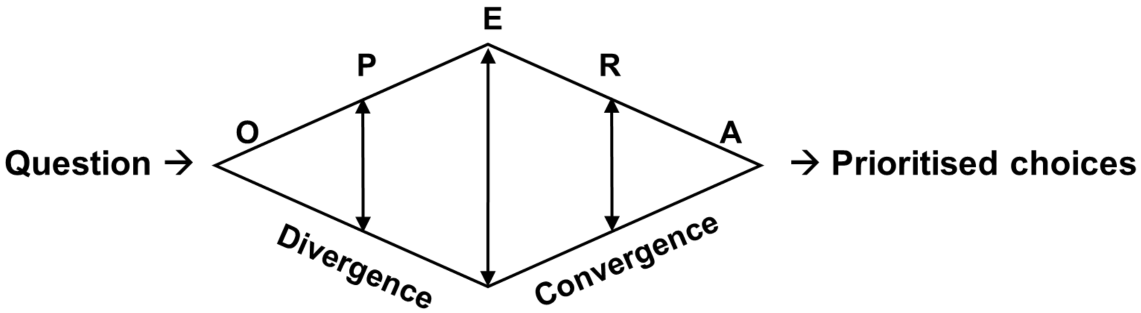
- If you are using post-it's the last step is to set aside the ideas that have no support and to re-arrange the prioritised ideas with the plusses so that similar ones are grouped together. These groups form a basis for the possible solution(s). It feels like getting a result with clarity and focus. The aim is to build a solid base for the next stage in the process. In practice everyone chose the result, so there is commitment.
- If you are working with a list on a flipchart, you can highlight the most popular suggestions by framing them with a suitable colour and you can also connect similar popular ideas by drawing connections between the frames.
- You still need to agree who does what by when and how you follow up on the progress.

N.B. You don't always have to use the full OPERA method to make your meeting more active, you can alternate the combination of steps depending on what your question is, who the participants are, how much time you have etc. E.g. O-P-E, O-E, P-E. It is also possible to spread out the steps over time, e.g.

- ✓ Send the question to the team this week, and ask them to
- ✓ reflect on which ideas or suggestions they have themselves (O), then
- ✓ speak with someone else in the team prior to next week's meeting (P – you can name the pairs/trios you want them have for this so that you know they are built across sub teams / silos;
- ✓ continue the process in next week's meeting (E-R-A).

Why the method?

The OPERA method combines divergence and convergence in an effective manner:

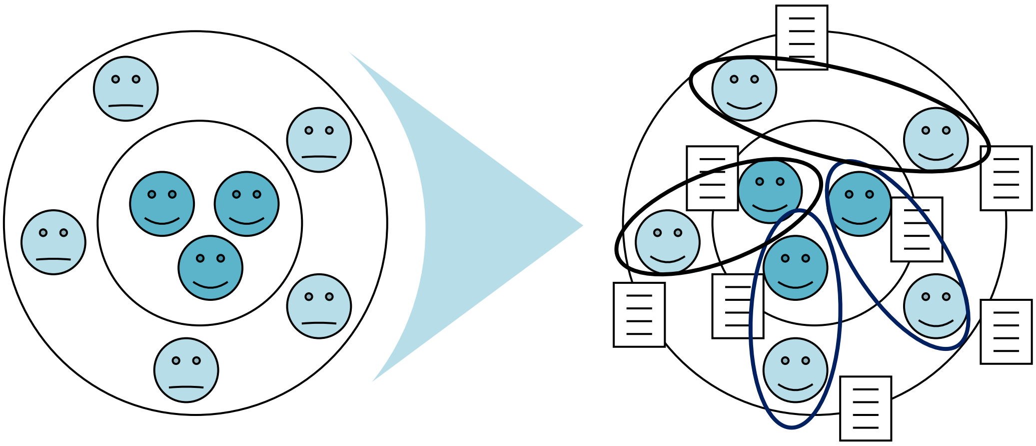


Here are some of the problems of usual meetings that can be omitted by using the method:

- Some speak, some are quiet
- Poor time management
- Debating
- Non-related discussion
- Little commitment
- Politics and confrontation
- Non-participative
- Negativity

In most meetings an inner circle will dominate most of the free discussion. The inner circle is typically populated by people like the boss, the experts, the extraverted people, the people who think by talking and like to talk. The outer circle, however, is often composed of the more junior colleagues, the introverted people (who do their best thinking in their inner world, in quiet), people (who feel they are) in the wrong meeting.

The easiest way to break this structure is to use the first steps of the process, O-P-E:



Example of an OPERA process – Creating the Resilience Wheel on Day 3

On Day 3 of the Sustainable Leadership Journey, we used a collaborative group work process to collectively come up with the diagnostic tool for team resilience, the Resilience Wheel. The steps of this process are an example of how an OPERA process can be adapted for different usages.

This was how our process worked:

Phase 1 – Own thinking

- You were asked to create, based on your experience, the discussions so far during the day, and the article(s) you read, to write a list of elements that in your opinion are relevant for team resilience.

Phase 2 – Pairs' / groups' suggestions

- You were then asked to discuss the lists of elements in three pairs or small groups, and come up with all possible elements of team resilience you could think of – and write each element on a separate facilitation card.

Phase 3 – Explaining

- Each pair / group then presented their cards to the group, and placed their cards on the floor / table with a bit of distance between them, so that the other pairs / groups could then place their cards close to the same / similar ideas → this already created some clusters (phase 5, Arranging)

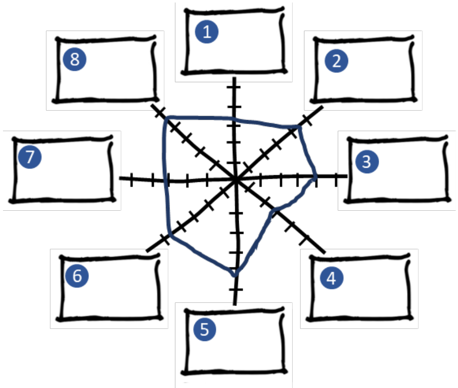
Phase 4 – Ranking

❖ In case there were more several cards that did not fit in any clusters, or more clusters than could be added in the wheel (8), you were asked to prioritise either single cards or clusters in order to find the most relevant contents.

Phase 5 – Arranging

❖ In case the prioritisation took place, some re-arranging of the prioritised content was also probably needed.

The results of the group work process were then used to name the eight spokes of the resilience wheel, which each participant recreated for themselves in order to do the diagnosis of how resilient their team is at the moment.



This diagnosis was the next O-phase, which was again followed by a P-phase of peer sparring and an E-phase of sharing some echoes in plenary…