Learning in Teams

ADB

PARTICIPANT'S WORKBOOK

Contents

Program

A. Introduction
This course was developed and piloted on two occasions in 2010 with staff of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other participants from a range of ADB's partner organizations in the Philippines.
The course was commissioned by Olivier Serrat, Principal Knowledge Management Specialist and Head, Knowledge Management Center at ADB and was written by Bruce Britton of Framework.
The course materials in this Participant Workbook and PowerPoint presentation have been revised to share with a wider audience. Some references to ADB's practices have been retained for illustrative purposes but the more detailed examples have been replaced with more general references.

B. Objectives
This program will help staff develop their skills and understanding of learning in teams. In particular it will focus on:
- The characteristics of learning teams
- Experiential learning in teams
- Creating and maintaining a learning environment in teams
- Making the most of diverse professional mindsets in multi-disciplinary teams
- How to harness emotional intelligence
- How learning styles of individuals can enhance team learning

C. Expected Outcomes
This learning program will enable participants to:
- Understand learning behavior in teams
- Transform teams into learning communities
- Assess individual learning styles and use this knowledge to enhance team learning
- Avoid "groupthink" by using "devil's advocates"
- Use "peer assists", "action learning", "peer feedback", "critical incident technique" and other practical tools for surfacing and sharing learning in teams

Program
SCHEDULE //

| DAY 1	
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome and introductions
09:30 – 09:45	Review of course objectives, program and expectations
09:45 – 10:30	Teams and teamwork
10:30 – 10:50	Break
10:50 – 12:00	Individual and team learning
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:30	Radical Collaboration in teams
14:30 – 14:50	Break
14:50 – 15:50	Creating a learning environment.
15:50 – 16:35	From team to learning community
16:35 – 17:00	Small group reflection on Day 1 Feedback to facilitator / Individual learning logs Briefing on Day 2
DAY 2	
09:00 – 09:30	Review and Preview
09:30 – 10:30	Tools and techniques for strengthening learning in teams.
10:30 – 10:50	Break
10:50 – 12:00	Applying the Learning Before During and After (LBDA) Approach
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:30	Groupthink and devil's advocates
14:30 – 14:50	Break
14:50 – 16:00	Team leadership and team learning
16:00 – 16:30	Personal action planning
16:30 – 17:00	Wrap up Individual and group reflection on the course Course evaluation

Individual & Team Learning

HANDOUT

A. Individual Learning

Individual learning is not just about gaining knowledge and skills; it is about personal growth and development, increasing self-confidence, changing attitudes, and working more collaboratively.

Individual learning can be thought of as a four-stage cycle: acting, reflecting, learning, and planning. In this model individual learning starts by taking action, reflecting on the outcomes (intended and unintended) of that action, making connections with what we already know through the learning stage, and then planning for improved action. The cycle can also begin with the planning stage, but learning really happens when the individual has been through one or more cycles.

The Experiential Learning Cycle
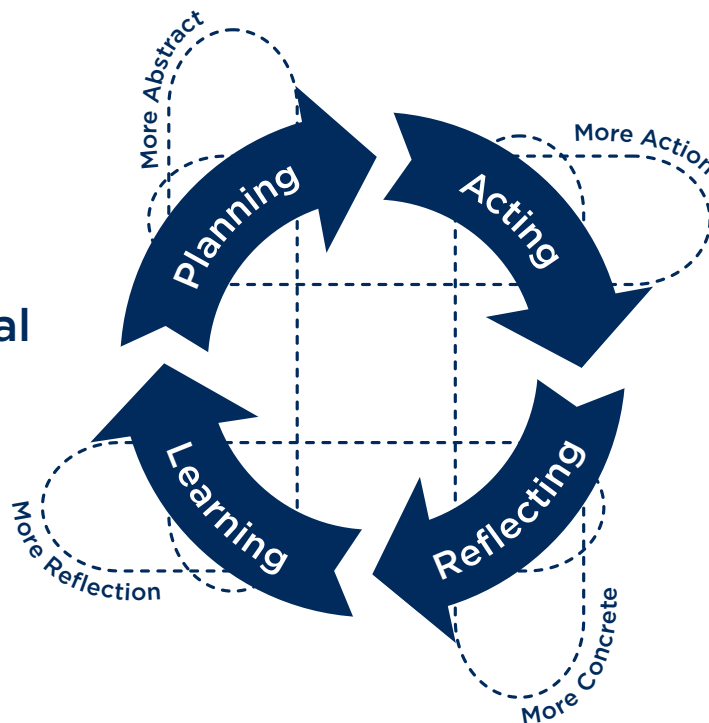
Individuals learn in many different ways and our learning preferences can be related to the four stages of the experiential learning cycle:

- Acting – Activists
- Reflecting – Reflectors
- Learning – Theorists
- Planning – Pragmatists

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Everyone tends to fall under one of the stages in the learning cycle and "borrow" characteristics from the others. For example, when asked to take on a new work responsibility, some people will read as much background information as possible in order to make connections with what they already know (theorists), whereas others will "jump in at the deep end" and try things out in practice first (activists). Reflectors may seek out colleagues who have already held the responsibility or carried out the work and ask for advice. Pragmatists try to understand what is involved and build practical models for how the work can be done. By being aware of our preferences, we can choose to strengthen our ability to use all stages in the learning cycle in order to make ourselves better "all- round" learners.

B. The Team Learning Cycle
Learning in teams follows a similar four-stage cycle, but this time with the stages involving collective activity:
Collective reflection takes place openly. It requires reflective practitioners who are committed to collaborative practice. Shared meaning is the product of collective learning leading to mutual understanding or shared insights. Joint planning involves narrowing down options to reach agreement about what needs to be done and how. Coordinated action need not be joint action but requires agreement about who will be doing what, when, and how.

To ensure the wheel keeps turning, the team needs members who have learning preferences that cover all four stages of the cycle.

Learning from Experience in Teams
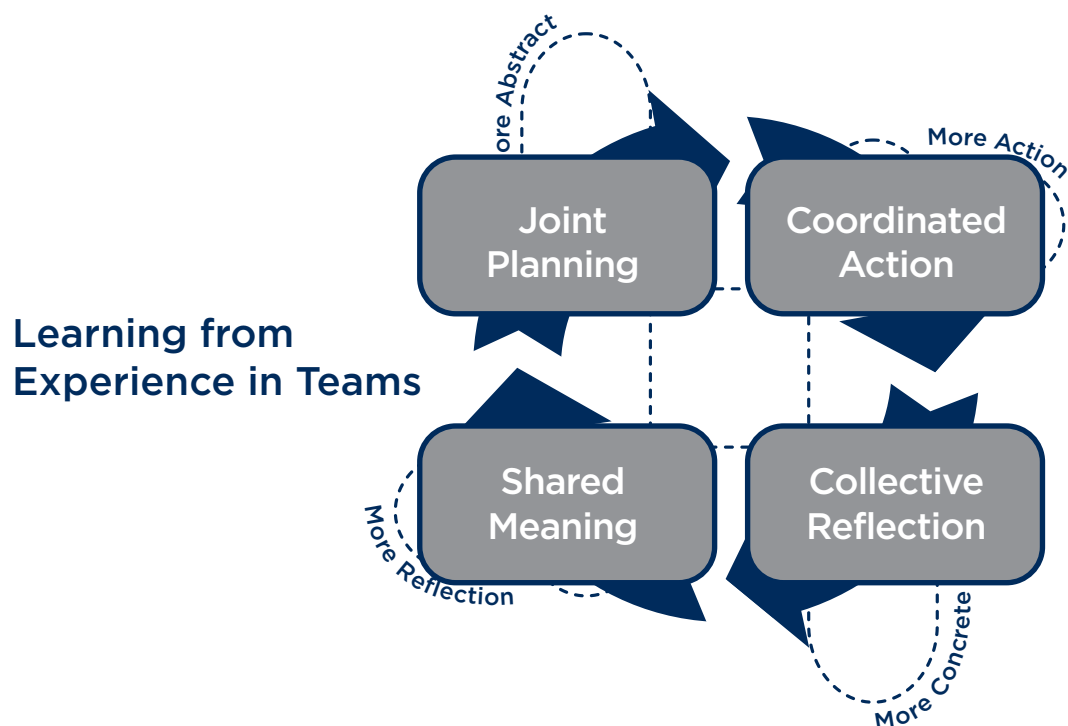
C. Collaborative Learning
Collaborative learning is a relationship among learners that requires:
- positive interdependence (a sense of sink or swim together)
- individual accountability (each of us has to contribute and learn)
- interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence (communication, trust, leadership, decision making, and conflict resolution)
- positive interaction (ideally, face-to-face)
- joint reflection on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better

D. Learning Teams
Know that learning teams are dependent on learning—both individual and collective—for their success. They are made up of reflective practitioners who are willing and able to collaborate and learn together. Learning teams need members who have learning preferences that, together, cover all four stages of the cycle: divergent thinkers, connection-makers, solution-finders, and accommodators in order to ensure the experiential learning cycle keeps turning. Learning teams regularly reflect on their progress, assess their performance, examine what they have accomplished, identify what they have learned, and put that learning to use.

E. Benefits of learning in teams:
- Uncover new information that individuals may have been unaware of
- Limit biases by balancing the views of all the team members
- Build a clear picture of a situation/event/process by bringing together multiple perspectives
- Ensure well-reasoned, meaningful actions that have been tested through group discussion
- Facilitate action that has broad ownership because everyone has had an opportunity to contribute their views and have them heard

(Source: IFAD Guide to Project M&E Section 8, p8-4)

Strategies for Building Radical Collaboration

Working collaboratively is an essential requirement for effective learning in teams. Working collaboratively is not easy, but it is simple. The following strategies are aimed at building a collaborative approach to working in groups.

Go first – be willing to make the first effort to collaborate, don't wait for others.

Be open about your intent to collaborate – communicate your intentions clearly to build more collaborative working relationships.

Pay attention to responses – before assuming negative intent from another person who does not appear to be responding well, ask yourself "What might this mean?" Try to understand the underlying causes of any breakdown in communication.

Keep talking – never pass up the opportunity to communicate (and that means asking questions, and listening as well as talking). Clear consistent communication will not guarantee success; however, poor communication will almost certainly guarantee failure. Don't avoid the "elephant in the room" (the undiscussable subject that dominates the situation but is somehow never acknowledged).

Forgive quickly – respond positively when others cooperate and be open and receptive to opportunities to collaborate.

Conduct regular reviews and monitor progress – collaborative working is a learning process and needs to be reviewed regularly until it becomes a habit.

Use "interest-based" problem solving to negotiate problems – if you have different views about solving a problem try to step back and see the bigger picture. You all want a solution that works, so try letting go of your own "position" and work on what is in everyone's shared interests.

Source: James W. Tamm and Ronald J. Luyet (2004) Radical Collaboration: Five Essential Skills to Overcome Defensiveness and Build Successful Relationships, New York: Harper Collins

From Groupthink to Teamthink

WHAT IS GROUPTHINK?

Groupthink is a type of thought within a deeply cohesive in-group whose members try to minimize conflict and reach consensus without critically testing, analyzing, and evaluating ideas. It is a second potential negative consequence of group cohesion.

Individual creativity, uniqueness, and independent thinking are lost in the pursuit of group cohesiveness, as are the advantages of reasonable balance in choice and thought that might normally be obtained by making decisions as a group. During groupthink, members of the group avoid promoting viewpoints outside the comfort zone of consensus thinking. A variety of motives for this may exist such as a desire to avoid being seen as foolish or a desire to avoid embarrassing or angering other members of the group. Groupthink may cause groups to make hasty, irrational decisions, where individual doubts are set aside, for fear of upsetting the group's balance.

SYMPTOMS OF GROUPTHINK

Irving Janis devised eight symptoms indicative of groupthink:

Group superiority
Illusions of invulnerability creating excessive optimism and encouraging risk taking.
Unquestioned belief in the morality of the group, causing members to ignore the consequences of their actions.

Conformity
Direct pressure to conform placed on any member who questions the group, couched in terms of "disloyalty".
Self-censorship of ideas that deviate from the apparent group consensus.

Active filtering
Rationalizing warnings that might challenge the group's assumptions.
Illusions of unanimity among group members; silence is viewed as agreement.

Reconstruing reality
Stereotyping those who are opposed to the group as weak, evil, biased, spiteful, disfigured, impotent, or stupid.
Mind guards – self-appointed members who shield the group from dissenting information.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF GROUPTHINK

Groupthink, resulting from the symptoms listed above, can result in defective decision making. That is, consensus-driven decisions are the result of the following practices of groupthink.

1. Incomplete survey of alternatives – the group tends to get stuck with one idea.
2. Incomplete survey of objectives – the group loses sight of the purpose of the decision/action
3. Failure to examine risks of preferred choice – the group does not challenge faulty reasoning; hence, decisions are not robust.
4. Failure to reevaluate previously rejected alternatives – the group rushes to a decision without properly testing all the alternatives.
5. Poor information search – people outside the group (even experts) are not consulted as they are "outsiders".
6. Selection bias in collecting information – contradictory information is filtered out, ensuring that group members see only what they want to see. Innovative ideas are rarely considered and the status quo tends to prevail.
7. Failure to work out contingency plans – groupthink generates false confidence that stops groups considering what to do in the case of the plan failing.

FROM GROUPTHINK TO TEAMTHINK

Groupthink	Teamthink
Team members assume they are all in agreement.	The team values the diversity of views in the team.
The team thinks it is infallible	The team recognizes its limitations.
Social pressure stops people voicing the "wrong" view	Individuals are encouraged to express a range of views.
The team believes it demonstrates a highly moral position	The team recognizes the ethical and moral consequences of its decisions.
People in opposing groups are stereotyped	The team rejects stereotyping.
Team members censor themselves from thinking and expressing counter-thoughts.	Team members openly express concerns and ideas.
Team members erect mind guards to protect themselves from disturbing outside information.	Team members actively seek outside views.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING GROUPTHINK

1. Leaders should assign each member the role of "critical evaluator". This allows each member to freely air objections and doubts.

2. Higher-ups should not express an opinion when assigning a task to a group.

3. The organization should set up subgroups, working on the same problem.

4. All effective alternatives should be examined.

5. Each member should discuss the group's ideas with trusted people outside of the group (for example, using Communities of Practice).

6. The group should invite outside experts into meetings. Alternative perspectives from outside the group may help to challenge orthodox thinking, even if they seem strange at first. Group members should be allowed to discuss with and question the outside experts.

7. At least one group member should be assigned the role of devil's advocate. This should be a different person for each meeting.

Challenger – What went wrong?

## HANDOUT //

On January 28, 1986 the space shuttle Challenger was launched. Within 73 seconds the shuttle exploded killing the crew of seven (which included the first civilian astronaut – a teacher).

The disaster was investigated by a Presidential Commission. The Commission reached two conclusions. First, the explosion was caused by the failure of an "O-ring" rubber washer in one of the Solid Rocket Boosters to seal correctly, due to cold temperatures before the launch. The second conclusion was that the decision-making processes, from the earliest stage of the booster design to the night before the Challenger launch, were seriously flawed.

Morton Thiokol, the company that made the Solid Rocket Boosters, and NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center had been working closely together for years. They had a tradition of good working relations and regular contact. They, in turn, relied on the advice of the engineers who developed the O-ring. When doubts were raised about the effectiveness of the O-ring at low temperatures, Morton Thiokol did not consult with other companies, although there were others with significant expertise in this field.

It was part of the informal rules that no large decision would be taken if the team were not in agreement. It was assumed that, because astronauts' lives were at stake, no decision would be carried out if some of the team members were in doubt about the safety considerations.

Morton Thiokol's first reaction to warning signs in earlier launches was to call numerous meetings to assess the situation and decide what to do. They were keen to get as much informed opinion as possible, from as many sources as possible, before making a decision. Their first recommendation was to delay the launch until temperatures rose.
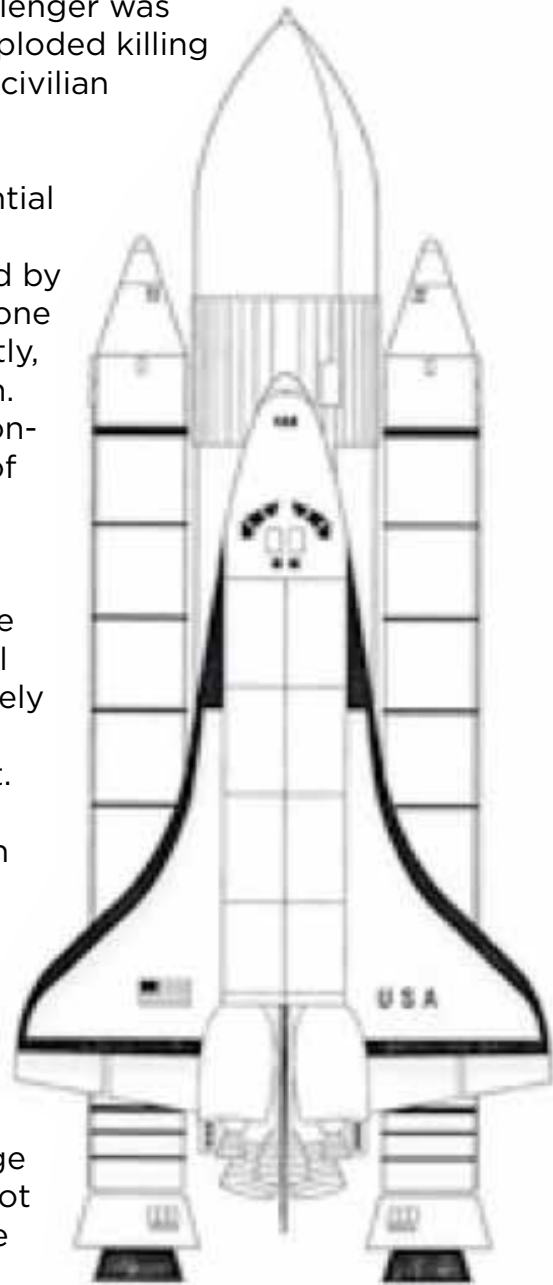
When engineers raised the possibility of a catastrophic O-ring "blow-by" (the term that was used for the failure of the O-ring that would lead to leakage of fuel), NASA manager George Hardy nonchalantly pointed out that this risk was "true of every other flight we have had".

NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center did not accept the recommendation for launch postponement. Larry Mulloy, top manager at Marshall, made an angry statement that the recommendation was wrong. It was January. Temperatures were likely to be low for some time. Millions had been invested in this project. Delays were extremely expensive. He said scornfully, "My God! When do you want us to launch? April?"

A NASA manager said in his testimony to the Commission that, "We were counting on the secondary O-ring to be the sealing O-ring under the worst case conditions." However, the secondary O-ring was identical to the main O-ring and therefore vulnerable to the same low-temperature failure. NASA manager Lawrence Mulloy confirmed that "No one in the meeting questioned the fact that the secondary seal was capable and in position to seal during the early part of the ignition transient."

When Morton Thiokol witnessed the outraged response of Larry Mulloy, they decided to reconsider. Mulloy said exactly what he thought, from the outset, and was not amenable to hearing other points of view. He was scornful of the idea of waiting until the end of winter. He did not seem open to hearing the detailed reasons for a delay. He wanted a quick decision, and it was very clear what he wanted the decision to be. In the end, only four engineers gave their vote in the decision. One of them said sadly that this was a management decision, not an engineering decision.

Morton Thiokol engineer George McDonald said, "I recommend we don't launch below 53 degrees. Lower temperatures are in the direction of badness for both O-rings …"

The onus, therefore, was on Morton Thiokol to prove that it would not be safe to launch the shuttle on such a cold day. This shifted the emphasis away from "fail safe". Engineer Brian Russell noted that NASA managers had shifted the moral rules under which they operated: "I had the distinct feeling that we were in the position of having to prove it was unsafe, instead of the other way around."

The fact that there were concerned people mattered less than the fact that they could not prove that their fears would come to pass.

What Happened to Challenger?
HANDOUT ///

The following symptoms of groupthink can be seen in the Challenger space shuttle disaster.

GROUP SUPERIORITY

Illusions of invulnerability creating excessive optimism and encouraging risk taking.
NASA had a very good success rate with previous missions and this made them over-confident. They believed that the potential problem of O-ring blow-by was not serious as it had happened before, without serious consequences. This is a classic example of "Trust us, we know what we are doing."

Unquestioned belief in the morality of the group, causing members to ignore the consequences of their actions.
Despite the fact that, as engineer Brian Russell noted, the NASA managers had moved from a "fail-safe" position to one where the onus was on dissenting voices to prove that the launch was potentially unsafe, they still believed they had moral authority. No astronauts were involved in the decision-making so those with most to lose had no voice.

CONFORMITY

Direct pressure to conform placed on any member who questions the group, couched in terms of "disloyalty".
NASA put pressure on Morton Thiokol management because President Reagan wanted to speak to the civilian crew member live during the President's State of the Union address the day of the launch. Morton Thiokol management put pressure on their engineers because they had an eye on future contracts with NASA.

Self-censorship of ideas that deviate from the apparent group consensus.
Morton Thiokol engineer George McDonald was sure in his own mind that 53 degrees was the minimum safe temperature at which to launch the shuttle. However, he did not feel confident enough to insist that the launch should be postponed. He merely suggested that "lower temperatures are in the direction of badness for both O-rings".

ACTIVE FILTERING

Rationalizing warnings that might challenge the group's assumptions.
Despite previous problems with the O-ring, the answer was to rely on an identical secondary O-ring. No one saw a pattern in the previous O-ring failures, because no one looked for them. In fact, the pattern was there, but the way in which data had been presented at previous meetings (in chronological rather than temperature order) made it much more difficult to see.

Illusions of unanimity among group members; silence is viewed as agreement.
Prior to the launch, NASA managers were united in the official line. To the Commission they admitted that Morton Thiokol had been half-hearted in allowing the decision to go ahead, but the fact that the Morton Thiokol engineers did not insist on a postponement was taken as agreement that the launch should go ahead as planned.

RECONSTRUING REALITY

Stereotyping those who are opposed to the group as weak, evil, biased, spiteful, disfigured, impotent, or stupid.
NASA managers made derisory comments about the engineers at Morton Thiokol. Mulloy was scathing when he heard the recommendation that they should wait until the temperature rose to at least 53 degrees. Mulloy sarcastically asked if they were expected to wait until April.

Mind guards – self-appointed members who shield the group from dissenting information.
The leading expert on O-rings at Morton Thiokol, Roger Boisjoly, was not even asked to take part in the discussions.

Based on "Developing an Emotionally Intelligent Team" Fenman, 2003

Work Group Mapping

Name of Work Group	Type of Work Group	Ways in which I learn from colleagues in the group	Ways in which I contribute learning to the group	Stage of Development (1-5)

Green Zone Environment
// WORKSHEET

In this exercise you will work in a small group to agree on the relative importance of a set of criteria for creating a Green Zone Environment in teams.
Your small group will be given a set of nine cards each representing a behavioral characteristic of members of effective learning teams.

The characteristics are:
Hospitality – team members are open and encouraging to each other and welcoming to others' ideas and perspectives.

Participation – everyone joins in discussions when they have something to contribute. They don't withhold information; they build on each other's contributions and value others' contributions.

Mindfulness – team members pay attention to each other, listening carefully and tuning in to the "message behind the message".

Humility – team members are willing to admit when their knowledge and experience are limited. They acknowledge that they can learn from others.

Reciprocity – team members care as much about others' self-development as their own. They are committed to the idea of mutual support.

Deliberation – team members are committed to discuss ideas as fully as necessary, to offer arguments and counterarguments backed by evidence, and be open to change their views.

Appreciation – team members express gratitude, e.g., when the insights or ideas of others helps to clarify their own understanding.

Authenticity – team members act with integrity and sincerity towards each other. They say what they mean and mean what they say.

Identity – team members express pride in belonging to a worthwhile and special group. Each individual makes the team's goals their own.

Your task is to agree a rank order for the cards using a "Diamond Ranking" technique (see the following diagram). You should agree who will present the group's agreed ranking.

Most Important

```
            ┌───┐
            │ 1 │
            └───┘
      ┌───┐       ┌───┐
      │ 2 │       │ 3 │
      └───┘       └───┘
  ┌───┐     ┌───┐     ┌───┐
  │ 4 │     │ 5 │     │ 6 │
  └───┘     └───┘     └───┘
      ┌───┐       ┌───┐
      │ 7 │       │ 8 │
      └───┘       └───┘
            ┌───┐
            │ 9 │
            └───┘
```
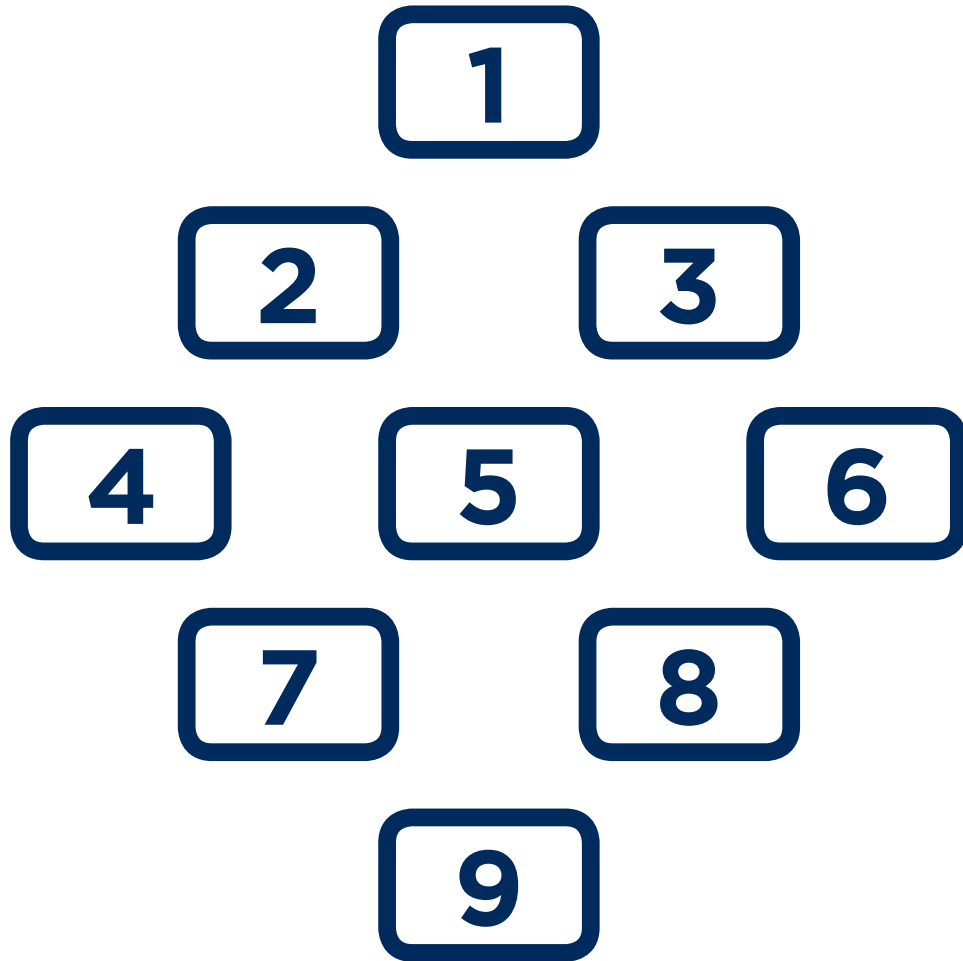
Least Important

The single items at the top and the bottom of the diamond are the most and the least preferred; the two items below the top and above the bottom cards are the next in order; the three items across the centre are of middle-order importance with little to differentiate between them.

When you have agreed on the diamond ranking, please stick your cards to a flipchart sheet.

Lost at Sea
WORKSHEET

You and your team have chartered a yacht. Because none of you have any previous sailing experience, you have hired an experienced skipper and two-person crew. As you sail through the Southern Pacific Ocean, a fire breaks out and much of the yacht and its contents are destroyed. The yacht is slowly sinking. Your location is unclear because vital navigational and radio equipment have been damaged. The yacht skipper and crew have been lost to the fire. Your best guess is that you are approximately 1,000 miles southwest of the nearest landfall.

You and your friends have managed to save the following 15 items undamaged and intact:
1. A sextant
2. A shaving mirror
3. A quantity of mosquito netting
4. A 25-liter can of water
5. A case of army rations
6. Maps of the Pacific Ocean
7. A floating seat cushion
8. A 7.5-liter can of oil/petroleum mixture
9. A small transistor radio
10. 2 square meters of opaque plastic sheeting
11. A can of shark repellent
12. 1.1 liters of 160%-proof rum
13. 4.5 meters of nylon rope
14. 2 boxes of chocolate bars
15. A fishing kit

In addition to the above, you have salvaged a rubber life raft.
The total contents of your team's pockets amounts to one package of cigarettes, three cigarette lighters, and three pieces of paper money.

YOUR CHANCES OF SURVIVAL WILL DEPEND UPON YOUR ABILITY TO RANK THE ABOVE 15 ITEMS IN THEIR RELATIVE ORDER OF IMPORTANCE. GOOD LUCK!

LOST AT SEA SCORING GRID

Items	EXPERT'S RANKING	MY RANKING	MY ERROR POINTS	GROUP RANKING	Group's ERROR POINTS
A sextant					
A shaving mirror					
A quantity of mosquito netting					
A 25-liter can of water					
A case of army rations					
Maps of the Pacific Ocean					
A floating seat cushion					
A 7.5-liter can of oil/ petroleum mixture					
A small transistor radio					
2 square meters of opaque plastic sheeting					
A can of shark repellent					
1.1 liters of 160%-proof rum					
4.5 meters of nylon rope					
2 boxes of chocolate bars					
A fishing kit					
		TOTAL ERROR POINTS ->		TOTAL ERROR POINTS ->	

Five Essential Skills of Radical Collaboration

// WORKSHEET

Thinking about the Zin Obelisk exercise that you have just done, consider your group's performance against the five essential skills of Radical Collaboration.

Skill	Overall score for your Zin Obelisk workgroup (1 is low, 5 is high)	Overall score for your usual workgroup (1 is low, 5 is high)
Collaborative intention Individuals maintain an authentic, non-defensive approach and make a commitment to mutual success.		
Truthfulness		
Individuals commit to telling and listening to the truth and help create a climate that fosters this.		
Self-accountability		
Individuals take responsibility for their circumstances, choices, and intended or unforeseen consequences.		
Self-awareness and awareness of others		
Individuals commit to knowing themselves deeply and are willing to explore interpersonal issues. They seek to understand the concerns, intentions, and motivations of others.		
Problem-solving and negotiating		
Individuals use problem-solving methods that promote a cooperative atmosphere.		
TOTAL SCORE		

Zin Obelisk

WORKSHEET //

In the ancient city of Atlantis, a solid, rectangular obelisk, called a zin, was built in honor of the goddess Tina. The structure took less than 2 weeks to complete.

The task of your team is to determine on which day of the week the obelisk was completed. You have 25 minutes for this task. Do not choose a formal leader.

You will be given cards containing information related to the task. You may share this information orally, but you may not show your cards to other participants.

Traffic Jam Observer

Do not get involved – only observe (even if you are asked to get involved!).

1. Did the group achieve the task?

2. What helped the group achieve the task?

3. What made it difficult for the group to achieve the task?

4. What evidence was there that the group learned from its experience?

5. What evidence was there that the group was acting as a community?

6. What can we learn about learning in teams from this exercise?

7. Any other comments?

Team Learning Techniques

(Note: Prepare five copies each per participant)

My initial thoughts on this technique:

I could try this technique in the following situation:

Name of Technique

The obstacles I might encounter in trying this technique are …

To overcome the obstacles I need …

Team Learning Techniques
WORKSHEET

(Note: Prepare five copies each per participant)

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Team Learning Techniques

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Team Learning Techniques

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To overcome the obstacles I need ...

LBDA Scenarios
WORKSHEET

A. SCENARIO 1
You have been brought together as a multidisciplinary working group for a review of your organization's long-term strategy. You have not worked together before and some of the team members have limited experience of carrying out this kind of task. You need to become productive as quickly as possible.

1. What tools or techniques could you use to develop the working group's collective knowledge and ability to carry out its task? Why would these tools/techniques be useful?
2. What systems could you put in place to ensure that you will make the best use of the team's collective expertise?

B. SCENARIO 2
You are a team that is currently working on the development of a project logframe with a number of partner organizations and you are experiencing some difficult challenges in carrying out the work. A number of unexpected problems have arisen (requiring close-knit multidisciplinary work) for which there do not appear to be straightforward solutions.

There is a lot of pressure on the team to deliver the draft memorandum of understanding in a tight timeframe and this is affecting collaboration between team members. Everyone is focusing on their individual responsibilities and there is little in the way of coordinated teamwork happening.

1. What tools or techniques can you suggest to help the team overcome the challenges they are facing?
2. What would help the team to make the best use of these tools and techniques?

C. SCENARIO 3
You are members of a working group that has been working on the development of a policy on working in partnerships. In the course of the work, the team has encountered some difficult challenges but has managed to overcome the problems.

The work has now come to a successful conclusion and the team will soon be disbanded. You want to make sure that the team's collective learning is not lost either to the team members or the organization as a whole.

1. What tools or techniques could you use to identify the main learning points from the team's work together on the project?
2. How could you ensure that your team's collective learning can be made accessible to others who might be asked to carry out similar projects in the future?

How Does the Team Think?
WORSHEET //

Evaluate your team's decision-making processes using the statements and interpretations below. Then, in groups, discuss the questions at the end. Take about 15 minutes for this.	ALMOST ALWAYS	FREQUENTLY	SOMETIMES	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY
1. The team thinks it is infallible.					
2. People who have doubts tend to be brought into line.					
3. Silence is taken as agreement.					
4. Team members explain away the negative side effects of decisions.					
5. Team members laugh off things that might be going wrong.					
6. Disagreements are quickly brushed aside.					
7. There is a lack of energetic debate before key decisions are made.					
8. The team is defensive when faced with criticism and make excuses for their actions.					
9. Team members believe in their moral superiority.					
10. People keep quiet if they feel unsure about the correctness of the decision.					
11. Rocking the boat is frowned upon.					
12. The team tends to generalize about people outside their group.					
13. The team is self-righteous about what they decide.					
14. Discussions tend to consist of people supporting each others' views.					
15. Different opinions are quickly squashed.					
16. Stereotypes about others affect the team's decision making.					

D. INTERPRETATION

16–28 Low	Groupthink is not usual, but keep alert.
29–40 Low to Moderate	Groupthink happens from time to time. Build in checks.
41–52 Moderate	Groupthink may be a danger when the group is under pressure to make a decision.
53–64 Moderate to High	Groupthink is a significant factor in many decisions
65–80 High	Groupthink is "business as usual" in this group.

Note that this is an approximate measure and does not take into account cultural influences.

Discuss the following questions in your group:

1. How can you be sure that everyone in your team engages in constructive debate and does not fear challenging the status quo?
2. How can you ensure that, in your team, there is a climate of open and constructive sharing of ideas?
3. How can you ensure that outside views and expertise are invited in at the appropriate time, to challenge your team's approach?
4. How can you ensure that, in your team, there is a climate where it is OK to challenge "the way things are done" and to call into question the assumptions underlying the team's habitual ways of thinking (i.e., encourage double- and triple-loop learning)?

Score your answers as follows:

Almost always = 5; **Frequently** = 4; **Sometimes** = 3; **Occasionally** = 2; **Rarely** = 1.

Put the score for each statement in the relevant box below, and then add up each column. Add the totals to reach the final score.

Group superiority Illusion of invulnerability. Sense of moral superiority.		Conformity Group puts pressure on people to conform.		Active filtering Emphasizing the points of agreement and minimizing counter-arguments.		Reconstruing reality People who challenge the rightness of the cause are stereotyped. Unwelcome feedback is rationalized away.		
Statement	Score	Statement	Score	Statement	Score	Statement	Score	
1		2		3		4		
5		6		7		8		Grand total
9		10		11		12		
13		14		15		16		
Totals								

Learning in Teams and All That Jazz!
// WORKSHEET

Principles of playing jazz in groups	How could these principles be applied to working in teams in your organization?
1. **Individual competence** To be a valued member of the group, each member must be an accomplished musician with musicianship skills, a deep understanding of music theory (scales, chords, progressions), and a comprehensive knowledge of compositions that have become jazz standards.	
2. **Continuous reflection** Jazz musicians must be able to improvise and that requires the ability to think carefully about what they are playing as it is being played during a performance. They also discuss after performances and try out different ways of playing during rehearsals.	
3. **Challenge habits and conventional practices** Some musicians repeat familiar routines rather than risk failure. They can be technically brilliant but lacking in imagination and soul. The truly great jazz musicians continually push their own boundaries, move out of their "comfort zones", and question their previous ideas about the songs they play. As the great pianist Keith Jarrett once said, "The music is a struggle. You have to want to struggle."	
4. **Everyone solos** In a balanced jazz group everyone solos. This is seen as both a right and a responsibility – all the musicians are expected to solo but they also want to have the opportunity to show what they can play.	

Principles of playing jazz in groups	How could these principles be applied to working in teams in your organization?
5. Good accompaniment is necessary for good solos In a jazz group, everyone is expected to accompany the soloist in a way that creates space for the soloist's ideas and encourages their creativity.	
6. Dialogue and exchange Jazz musicians continuously "play off" one another, exchanging phrases and chords, interpreting, and building on each others' ideas, and exploring new musical patterns and sometimes deliberately trying to defy each others' expectations!	
7. Embrace errors as sources of creativity and learning Jazz groups thrive on improvisation and that means musicians must take risks with playing – going outside of their comfort zone. Sometimes the risks don't immediately pay off but everyone learns from that because of the continual musical dialogue between the musicians as they play together.	
8. Balance structure with improvisation Jazz music is created by improvising around songs. The songs provide the guiding structure for the music but do not constrain the musicians. In fact, the songs provide a sense of order – a continuous sense of cohesion and coordination (but not the individual notes and rhythm) from which the improvised music flows.	
9. Meet and play with others regularly Musicians frequently take part in jam sessions – informal opportunities to "hang out" together, share ideas, ask questions of experienced players, learn new techniques, and hear stories.	

Motive, Means and Opportunity

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The problem of overcoming organizational barriers to learning comes up as a regular theme in discussions with those with specialist responsibilities for organizational learning and knowledge management in organizations. Specialists and practitioners voice frustration about initiatives that have been put in place to stimulate organizational learning but somehow fail to deliver the desired outcomes. Indeed one exasperated organizational learning specialist exclaimed during the course of an interview with a researcher that it was "almost as if my organization considers learning as a crime rather than a behavior we're trying to encourage".

So, if organizational learning were a crime (and in some organizations it is almost treated as such) - how would we investigate it? Criminologists emphasize the importance of understanding three key factors in solving crimes: the motive, the means and the opportunity (MMO). Motive is the reason for committing the crime, means are the tools or methods used to commit the crime; and opportunity is the occasion that presents itself to allow the crime to take place. For someone to become a suspect in a criminal investigation, all three must be established. So let us examine what happens when we apply forensic science to organizational learning by imagining that organizational learning is, like crime, an undesirable behavior.

If an organization wanted to prevent the 'crime' of organizational learning, the importance of understanding MMO is that it only needs to deny its staff one of the three factors. By failing to provide a strong enough motive for learning, by withholding the means to learn from staff or denying them the opportunity to contribute to the organization's learning, the 'crime' of organizational learning is unlikely to happen. If the organization were really serious about 'learning prevention' it would arrange to withhold two or, better still, all three of the factors.

So if we wanted to design organizational learning out of an organization we should on no account provide staff with a motive. Organizational learning should be viewed as an unnecessary luxury and not part of the 'real' work; it should attract no reward, praise or even acknowledgment. If possible, contributing to organizational learning should not feature in job descriptions so that it is not linked to individual performance appraisal systems or staff supervision arrangements.

It should certainly not appear as an objective in project documents because that would require accountability (if we wanted to be subtle about learning prevention, the need for organizational learning can be mentioned in policy documents but only in ways that do not make it clear what action staff are expected to take). If the organizational culture can be designed to ensure that organizational learning is not spoken about at all or, if it is mentioned, this is done in a critical way – so much the better. Finally, staff could be encouraged to think that what they can contribute is unlikely to be of value to the NGO as this can help to extinguish the flame of interest by building on self-doubt.

Secondly in our attempt to create our 'organizational learning free [organization] we should also ensure (at least as far as we can) that staff don't possess the means to learn or use their learning: we should make sure they don't have the chance to develop the necessary competencies (knowledge and skills) by minimizing our investment in training, coaching and action-learning; we should deny them access to useful information and knowledge; we should not provide them with tools for learning or the technology of communication that encourages learning.

Finally staff should not be provided with the opportunity to contribute to organizational learning. Overloading them with what is referred to as the 'real' work through badly designed or unrealistic job descriptions or allocating unachievable workloads is a good way of doing this. Creating hierarchical structures with little opportunity for peer communication is another. Compartmentalizing people doing similar jobs but in different departments can make learning more difficult. One particularly subtle strategy is to create the impression that organizational learning is someone else's responsibility.

If these descriptions are not so much funny as very familiar it is probably because many NGOs seem to operate as if they are implementing a strategy of 'organizational learning prevention'. This, of course, is unlikely to be a deliberate, planned strategy but one that emerges as a result of a number of small but significant decisions about priorities and resource allocation taken independently, often over a period of years. Together, those small, separate decisions form a pattern[1] and that pattern communicates a message. Whatever the organization says about the importance of organizational learning, what it actually does (or doesn't do) sends a louder message to its staff that organizational learning is not a high priority.

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[1] What the Canadian writer on organisations, Henry Mintzberg, would call an "emergent strategy"

If, on the other hand, an [organization] agrees that organizational learning is very desirable then it must ensure that all three of the MMO factors are reinforced with its staff. As we have seen earlier, focusing on two is not enough – the [organization] must provide the motive, the means and the opportunity for learning if it wishes to take organizational learning seriously.

Adapted from: Britton, Bruce (2005) Organisational Learning in NGOs: Creating the Motive, Means and Opportunity, Oxford, England: INTRAC

Self-Reflection & Action Planning
WORKSHEET //

1. What new ideas have I had from this experience?

2. Which ideas stand out as being most important to me?

3. How can I use these ideas in my work?

4. How did I react to the discussions and activities?

5. How did I relate (positively and negatively) to other people during the experience? What might have caused me to relate in these ways?

6. When, during the experience, did I feel my interest rising? Declining? What might have caused these shifts in my interest?

7. What was it about the experience that facilitated my learning? What made it difficult to learn? What does this say about how I prefer to learn?

8. What do I plan to do as a result of what I have learned from this experience?

Source: Adapted from Gill, Stephen J (2009) Developing a Learning Culture in Nonprofit Organizations, Thousand Oaks, California, Sage

Personal Message

WORKSHEET

Even with the best of intentions, it can be easy to lose track of your action plan ideas after you return to the "busyness" of daily work life following a course.

In order to help a little with this problem you are invited to send a "postcard" to yourself as an "aide-mémoire" via the course facilitator. Please complete the following. The message will be sent to you in 6 weeks' time!

To: (your name)

From: Myself

Email address:

Subject:
Memory jogger from the Learning in Teams Course

Message to myself:

Program Evaluation Form

WORKSHEET ////////////////////////////////////

(Note: Facilitators can adapt this format or use their own.)

Program Title: Learning in Teams

Date / Time:

Venue:

SATISFACTION EVALUATION

PROGRAM AREA	PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION (place an "X" in the appropriate box)						
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Not Applicable	No Answer
Program Content							
Content of the program							
Relevance of content to your work							
Concepts were clearly explained							
Course Duration (Length)							
Program Objectives							
Objectives were relevant							
Objectives were stated clearly							
Objectives were achieved							

Methodology and Materials

Use and quality of presentation materials			
Use and quality of handouts/reading materials			
Opportunities for active participation			
Appropriateness of overall methods used			

Logistics and Administrative Support

Pre-program communication and confirmation			
Venue			

Facilitator:

Presentation style/delivery			
Knowledge of subject matter			
Creating a positive learning environment			
Involving participants			

Learning Evaluation

	Completely	Almost Completely	Partially	Almost Not at All	Not at All	No Answer
To what extent did the program give you the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to achieve the anticipated results?						

Overall Satisfaction and Learning

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Overall, how would you rate your experience of this program?					

Probability of Achieving Results

	Completely	To a Large Extent	Partially	To a Limited Extent	Not at All
How confident are you that you will use the knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in this program in your work?					

Will you recommend the program to others?　　☐ Yes　　☐ No

1. Which sessions did you find most useful for your professional development needs? Why?

2. Which sessions did you find least useful for your professional development needs? Why?

3. Explain any "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" ratings you gave above and tell us what we could do to improve these areas.
(Please answer this only if applicable)

4. List examples of new knowledge, skills and attitudes that you gained from the program.

5. How would you like this program to be followed up?

6. Please make any additional comments or recommendations on how this program and your learning experience could be improved:

Thank you for your feedback.

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