
Tools

Fish Bowl

Observing and analyzing group interaction for increased productivity

Background

Group work has two needs: to get the job done efficiently and effectively and to build a collaborative environment that enhances collective learning. Functional group roles include: task accomplishment and the strengthening of group interactions. Self-serving behaviors produce negative results for the organization and for its members. The fishbowl goal is to learn to maximize productive behaviors and minimize self-serving nonproductive behaviors.

When to Use

- When group member statements and behaviors contribute to ineffectiveness and inefficiency
- When collective learning needs to be accelerated.

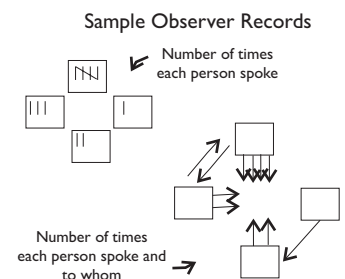
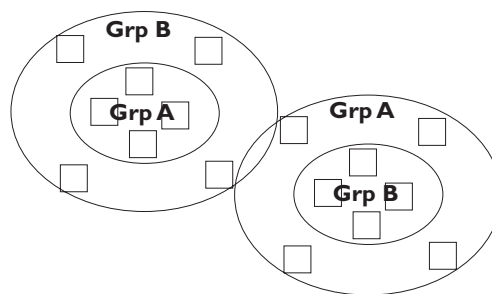
How to Use

1. Divide the large group into two small groups: A and B. Each group takes its turn in the fish bowl and in the observers' ring.
2. Assign each group a task/problem to solve in the fish bowl. (i.e., develop a retreat agenda, where to have the next planning retreat)
3. First five minutes--Group A is in the fish bowl and attempts to solve the assigned task/problem. Group B observes and records productive and non-productive behaviors.
4. Second five minutes--A selected member of Group B provides (1) feedback on productive behaviors that fostered task accomplishment and strengthened group interactions and (2) key non-productive behaviors that contributed to decreased productivity.
5. Repeat the process with Group B in the fish bowl and Group A in the observer role. Assign Group B a different task/problem.

Hints

Record learning generated through group exchanges. Use the learning to increase group effectiveness and increased work satisfaction. (i.e., incorporate preferred group behaviors in ground norms)

How Does It Look



Next Steps

As a group, list productive and nonproductive behaviors to group effectiveness. Provide brief process reflection time after meetings.

