**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. 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)

**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**

![Sample Observer Records](image)

- Number of times each person spoke
- Number of times each person spoke to whom

**Next Steps**

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