



Consultation Group Questionnaire

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Now that you have re-sketched your puzzle and reflected on a previous failure, take a moment to put yourself back into a recent executive leadership team (ELT) or whole team meeting where the adaptive challenge you want to move was in play.

STEP 1: Take a full minute and use your senses (and calendar if needed) to recall:

- Where the meeting took place? Was in indoors or outdoors, in an office or conference room? Loud or quiet, brightly lit or dim, etc.
- What time of day was the meeting, and how long did it last?
- Who was there and where/how were they seated? Was there a presentation, etc.

STEP 2: Now take another full minute (in silence) to review the questions below. Mark 1 or 2 that draw your attention, make you curious, or challenge you in some way.

STEP 3: Pick a few questions to explore in group consultation using your puzzle and your acquired awareness of how your presence and influence was at work in the meeting you recalled.

Questions

NAME THE DEEP PURPOSE FOR CONVENING:

- What was the purpose of the meeting?
- What was the task it was seeking to address?
- Was the task of the group a technical problem or adaptive challenge?
- Who held formal authority within the group?

DIRECT ATTENTION TO PREDICTABLE PATTERNS:

- What was the initial event of the group session (i.e. What happened in the first few minutes?)
- What was the primary hidden issue in the meeting?
- What is the history of that issue?
- Did the initial event provide a clue for identifying the primary hidden issue of the group session? If so, what was the connection?

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS ABOUT THE ROLES BEING PLAYED IN THE PRESENT:

- How were you used by the group? Were you used well or poorly? What is your role in the system? Do you need to lead or act beyond your authority?
- How was the formal authority used by the group?
- To whom did the group give informal authority and why?
- Who is most trustworthy in the group? Why?
- Who is the “other” in the group? What faction or “tribe” do they represent?



RECOGNIZE AND COUNTERACT WORK AVOIDANCE:

- Did the group use any work avoidance mechanisms to maintain equilibrium? If so, what were they?
- What issue was being discussed at the time when the group generated a work avoidance mechanism? ,
- Did anyone intervene to redirect the group's attention to the issue?

KEY CONCEPTS

WORK AVOIDANCE ACTIVITY

“The strong, understandable temptation in the face of the conflict, anxiety, and pain of adaptive work to deflect attention from the real issues and displace responsibility from the stakeholders themselves.”

Common Examples: Trying to find a technical solution to an adaptive challenge; Blaming authority; Creating a scapegoat; Creating some other distraction; Insisting on maintaining established procedures; Tuning out

Key Question: How can you help people learn despite resistance? What can counteract avoidant work?

THE HIDDEN ISSUE

“The usually undetected implicit, unspoken dynamics that must be surfaced and named to help the group move beyond it.” Often, hidden issues have to do with unspoken fears, power dynamics, unaddressed concerns, self-protection/sense of safety, etc.

Key Question: What is really going on here? What is this really about?

TECHNICAL ISSUE

An issue that you either already have the resources to solve and/or know where to go to get them.

ADAPTIVE CHALLENGE

An issue or need that can only be addressed with good questions in hand. No one is an expert because it is territory that has never before been navigated.

FUNCTIONS OF AUTHORITY

Orientation, Direction, Norm Setting, Conflict Resolution, Protection, [Healing]

GIVING THE WORK BACK

“The process by which a leader invites others to face the learning embedded in their own experiences of failure, misjudgment, and blindspots to better address adaptive needs.”