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Ground rules for effective groups

A compilation from "The Skilled Facillitator"

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Ground Rules for effective groups

1. Test assumptions and inferences

2. Share all relevant information

3. Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean

4. Explain your reasonining and intent

5. Focus on interests, not positions

6. Combine advocacy and inquiry

7. Jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements

8. Discuss undiscussable issues

9. Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed

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Why?

— Diagnostics framework

— Gained group efficency

— Internal and external observations

— Must be a free and informed choise

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Test assumptions and inferences

When two or more persons communicate, we are usually very quick to infere more meaning than communicated. The meaning that we assume may not be correct, even though we ourselves are certain.

— Be aware of assumptions and inferences that you make during conversations

— Check your assumptions, ask if your perceptions are equal to the other persons communicated intent

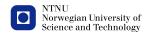— Allways state your inferences, such that missunderstandings does not occur

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Share all relevant information

— If you have information that is relevant to the discussed topic, you must allways share it with the group.

— If your information is percieved by the others in the group as irrelevant, check with previous ground rule.

— If your information is in fact irrelevant, schedule the topic for later if important enough.

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Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean

— If difficult words occur during conversation, it is important to explain the word such that everyone understands the meaning

— Use examples and counter-examples in a way that people both understands what a word means AND what it doesn't mean

— This empesizes the two previuous rules about sharing relevant information and assuming what people understands
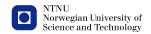
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Explain your reasonining and intent

If one makes a statement about what the group should use their time on, without explaining both with what intention and why the action would help the case, the other group members will most likly assume and infere things that are wrong.

See how each of the previous rules will help to understand why this rule is imporant.

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Focus on interests, not positions

If a group tries to decide when to have the next meating, and each of the members propose dates without telling why, it will be hard to satisfy all needs. One tends to focus on his own positions, that is, what is important for me.
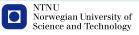
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Focus on interests, not positions cont...

Example

Person A, B and C wants to meet for a discussion on buying a new car for the company. A wants to buy as fast as possible, B wants to do research before running to the store, and C wants to wait two more weeks, since then they have more funds to invest in a new car.

If A starts arguing on why they should start early, without telling with what interests he has, it will be very difficult for the two other persons to understand his statements. The best way to agree is to expose the interests in such a way that one can be informed on everyones interests and decide on the best common choise.
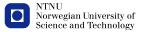
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Combine advocacy and inquiry

To combine advocacy and inquiry means that one should explain ones thoughts and interests in such a way that everyone understands the details, and then encourage the group to give genuine inquirys, that is ask questions.

Genuine inquiry is when the intent is pure learning, like "Can you explain more about that?"

Rethorical inquiry is when the intent is to ease in your oppinion without making it direct. "Wouldn't it be better if we did it this way, now that the situation is like this?" is a generic example.

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Jointly design next steps ...

Jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements means to decide workflow before each task, seems like "omkransning".

Acctually, it's just that. Agree on why, what, how, such that everyone follows.

Also when a decision has been made, explicitly ask everyone if they have comments and if they agree. That way, we don't assume quiet == agreement, but we test for disagreements.

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Discuss the undiscussable

— Problems that makes yourself or others in the group "loose face" is likely to be avoided

— By asserting these issues, one will help the group more than by letting the issues grow

By using the previous rules, one can point out the intent of asserting the problem. If the problem is let alone, group splitting can occur, and that is very counter-effective. Usually, there is no one in the group that intends to destroy the project, and if a person is ineffective, he or she needs to disclose the reason for that.

If a group member tries to fix these kind of issues outside the group, uncertenty is likely to arise within the rest of the group, as they are not part of what is happening.

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Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed

This basically is a pointer to the importance of how decision-making is done. There are presented four models:

Consultative Leader consults group, leader makes decision

Democratic Voting, over 50% wins

Consensus All members totally agree

Delegative A sub-group gets to decide

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Use a decision-making rule cont...

There is also mentioned five levels of commitment to a taken decision, but there are no direct mapping between commitment level and decision-making type.

Internal commitment   Self driven, full commitment

Enrollment   Does all that is nesessary within the given role

Compliance   Does what is formally required

Noncompliance   Does work, but not good enough to follow formal requirements

Resistance   Undermines the work

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Questions or comments?

I do now assume total understanding of the presented material, unless I get questions and comments!

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