

Episode Sixty

Finding insights through play – A focus on the public sector



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The nutshell

In the context of professional workshops, we don't play for the sake of playing but to reach a certain result. The problem with polarised topics is that groups tend to avoid conflict and converge towards an unsatisfying compromise. Play in terms of metaphores, exercises and prototyping helps groups to work through differences towards solutions.

“Facilitators activate the wisdom that is in the room.”

The tool

Every stakeholder holds a piece of the puzzle, but once they are in the room, they are not aware to what extent each relies on the other to find a solution. Through play, we calibrate the mind to focus on the present moment and minimise the perceived risk of „doing it wrong“.

Why workshops fail

Workshops are prone to fail if expectations are not clear and the stakeholders are not prepared.

“I am not here to solve anything but I am here to bring awareness.”

Nugget 1

After the lunch break or half-time of the workshop, check-in with the group on what they have achieved so far and what they want to do in the remaining time so that they achieve the set goal. Make sure that all participants are still aligned on the agreed objectives.

Nugget 2

Group dynamics are most often driven by power differences. You can contribute to flatten the room by raising awareness from the very beginning. When are participants speaking from the perspective of their „role“ and when comes their contribution from the perspective of an individual? Integrate the professional and personal identity of participants to bring their whole story to the session. Make the group aware that they might use their role to fulfil a need that they may have as an individual.

Do it yourself

A dynamic exercise for large groups to reflect on leadership and communication, try the „caterpillar leader“: (1) Ask for a volunteer to be a leader. (2) Participants line up behind that person. (3) Turn to the last person in the row and appoint them the new leader. (4) Explain that this new leader must give the line directions towards a specific place in the room. (5) No speaking is allowed among the participants. Instead, they have to signal directions by squeezing into each other's shoulders. A squeeze in the left shoulder makes everyone turn left, a squeeze in the right shoulder makes everyone turn right. Everyone stops if both shoulders are squeezed twice.