



Delft University of Technology

Connect: The Secret Formula of Coaching Design Teams

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CONNECT

THE SECRET FORMULA OF
COACHING DESIGN TEAMS



Illustrations
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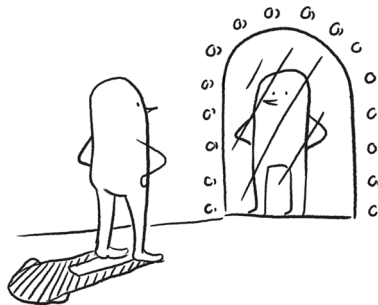


2024

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REFLECTIONS ON COACHING STUDENT DESIGN TEAMS



As coordinators of large design courses, we have had the opportunity to guide over 200 student teams in developing innovative and complex product systems. Our team of coaches is committed to helping these teams achieve their full potential, and many students consider this course a highlight of their master's program.

We are proud of our students' achievements, including several annual Dyson awards and numerous patents resulting from their research. However, what we value most are the lasting friendships formed during the course. Our students work diligently, face and overcome challenges, reinvent themselves, and often describe their projects as a 'once-in-a-lifetime team experience.' Their dedication and growth make this course a truly rewarding experience and is considered as the highlight of their master's program.

This book is based on our journey of coaching various student design teams in the creation of highly complex product systems. Throughout this annual course, we have encountered a variety of coaching challenges. While some issues relate to project management and technical content, the most significant ones stem from the diversity in cultures, educational backgrounds, emotional dynamics, and individual competences among team members.

In our journey of dealing with diversity, we stumbled upon some eye-opening realizations about our coaching team. Cultural disparities within our international teams posed a significant challenge, particularly for our predominantly white male coaches. Seeking guidance, we turned to experts in cross-cultural collaboration. Erin Meyer was one of them. Her culture mapping approach sparked meaningful dialogues among team members, shedding light on our values and unique traits. As we navigated these differences, we found ourselves not only learning from each other but also refining our teamwork skills on the fly. It was a process of growth and adaptation, as we collaboratively tackled issues and worked towards effective solutions.

Every new year marks the beginning of fresh adventures for us. With each adventure, our team gains insights into navigating various challenges, from interpersonal conflicts (yes, there was a breakup) to confronting issues of racism (resulting in team dissolution). As you may have experienced, students often hesitate to flag team troubles promptly. Their fragile trust in you and fear of failure when facing failing team dynamics create significant barriers to communication. They opt to wait, hoping problems will resolve themselves or attempting to manage them alone until it's too late to intervene. Recognizing dysfunctional team behaviour poses a challenge for us coaches. To address this, we've developed the Coach Journal, drawing on the principles of Theory U, to proactively identify early signs of dysfunction. Employing connective conversational techniques such as 'dialogue,' we foster a space for active listening and asking probing questions, moving beyond mere discussion or debate. Dialogue facilitates understanding, uncovering common ground, and reaching solutions that all team members can endorse. Sometimes this leads to renewed team synergy, while at other times it results in choosing the least unfavourable outcome. These dialogue sessions cultivate empathy, deepen interpersonal connections, and enhance collaboration by subordinating individual egos to the collective good of the team. While it's often said that 'Trust takes years to build, seconds to break, and forever to repair,' we've found that aspects like credibility, intimacy, and other-orientedness are qualities of trust rather than mere functions of time. Establishing 'quality-based trust' proves essential and resilient within teams.

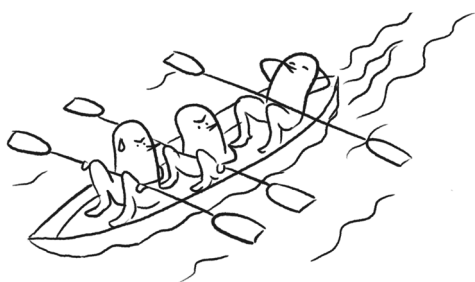
This book shares our experiences through anecdotes, inviting you to see yourself in them. From these stories, we've crafted a series of questions and answers to prompt reflection on your own coaching experience. Alongside, we've developed workshops and tools aimed at assisting you, your coaching team, and student groups in addressing various team-related challenges. Organized into three chapters — TRUST, PROGRESS, and VISION — the book guides you through key stages. TRUST delves into initial contact and transitioning a

student group into a high-performing team. PROGRESS highlights common difficulties and offers practical suggestions for managing them. Lastly, VISION explores your role within a broader context, shaping design students into design professionals.

This book serves as a gateway to further readings for those intrigued by the subject. It's just the beginning of your coaching journey — a launchpad into the realm of professional coaching. Dive in, absorb, and let the content provoke your reflections on coaching. Here's to encountering countless dysfunctional teams and the boundless learning opportunities they present in your future endeavours.

Bas Flipsen and Stefan Persaud

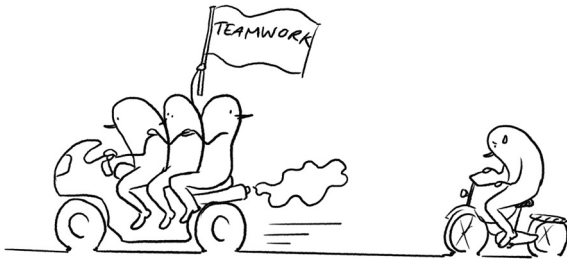
01 TRUST



The coach is expected to guide the student team. Her name doesn't matter. It could be you. The coach may have earlier experience in this kind of work. She can also be new to the job.

It is challenging and it can be fun, but you're never sure what is going to happen and how your engagement with new participants will develop. All coaches are different. All teams are different.

The chapter TRUST introduces general principles of starting to work with a new team. There is always a slight unease when people with different backgrounds embark on a project. They don't know each other and you, as their coach, usually don't know them. Nevertheless, you will have to start building the mutual trust that cooperation requires. The story illustrates what happens when you and your team members get to know each other and together are confronted with the job to sink your teeth in.

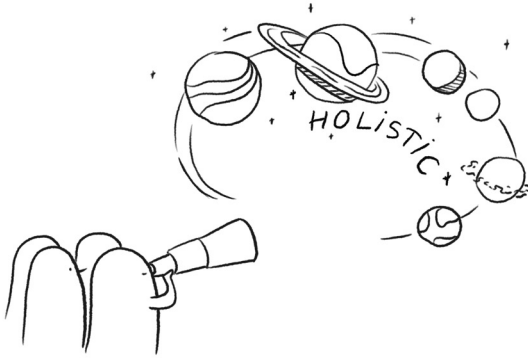


TEAMWORK WILL GET YOU TO THE FINISHLINE
MOST EFFECTIVELY

For a starter: a coach is like a parent. Some of you need to imagine what this means.

Mum and dad want to allow their kids to learn by experience and not tell too much beforehand. And your kids can totally surprise

you. Parents always start as rookies. They want the best for their offspring, but it can be excruciating for them to not interfere when things go slightly wrong. There is always this *dilemma between control and letting go*. That's life.



THE PROCESS IS LIKE A SMALL UNIVERSE

Coaching is an intuitive and *fast* balancing act between many roles. In behaviour and interaction, the brain spends no time on conscious reasoning. Intuition thrives on instinct and experience and develops continuously. It needs training and, in any context, emerges from subconsciously recognizing situations. You may have gone through these personally, or you may have learned about them from others. Or from a book like the one you are currently reading. Intuition requires input.

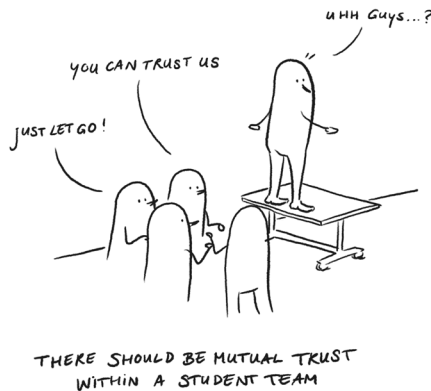
When you're guiding a team, you continuously *swap perspectives*. Often, the coach is the initiator, but she can also be an eager participant, a change maker, or a gruesome pain in the ass. Or just a quiet observer. In the end she will also be the only one with assessment authority. As a coach you're part of the team, but then you're not. *You are an authorized spy.*

In any case you need to be conscious of your role. You must always be open to what happens and help your team to make the next step.

Coach responsibility concerns the experience of successful team effort. From that the project result will emerge.

Standard procedure used to be about control of technical aspects of a given project based on individual achievements. Now the focus has shifted to relations between team members, for a very simple reason. The work they do is more effective when they understand and trust each other, than when they are just operating as smart individuals. A team with participants that support common team goals is far more effective than a *mob of individuals that are only out for themselves*.

Observing what is going on in the group is paramount. Everything noteworthy must be written down, or else you will only remember the things that happened most recently and overlook important occurrences from earlier on. Later a journaling system is pointed out. Regular moments of team reflection about observations and experiences provide understanding and inspiration.



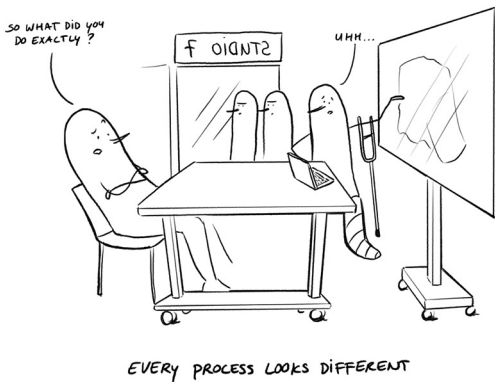
TRUST

The coach responds to the group and to individual team members. She observes and guides the team, like a shepherd.

But a coach is of course also a response recipient, listening and being open-minded. Listening requires you to stop your own flow of thoughts. This is quite hard.

The coach is not a know-it-all.

She does provide direction and focus to the team and its members.



There are no general rules for coaching. There are only principles of handling situations.

Interpretation depends on the individual coach. It doesn't matter whether you are strict or take things lightly, as long as the team members know what to expect from you. To gain trust as a coach, you need to provide clarity about your own behavioural characteristics.

Coaching students always starts from scratch. A coach must be aware that more than two thirds of human time spending concerns fulfilling relational needs. Therefore, that is also a major part of guiding a student team. That is what coaching is about. It does not so much concern the design result.

Even a veteran coach may yet have to discover what a project provided by a client contains. It would be a total coincidence if she would have knowledge of the subject at hand. And even if she does, it is not her task to use that as some kind of benchmark.

The coach learns how to coach on the go. She guides the creative process. And learns.

For in the first couple of weeks the team will develop its very own rudimentary culture.

The coach sees to it that values get the chance to grow. And be part of that process.

It is not the aim of coaching to make sure the team runs smoothly.

Instead, you must guide what goes on. That includes when things get conflicting, or ugly, or fantastic.

Showing what is going on is where your value is.

Students often think that making mistakes is not an option.

Which is not the case. Faults are instructive.

Some coaches superimpose their own way of thinking on others. They shouldn't.

Coaches all have different backgrounds. When he is a self-employed designer, for instance, he may not be accustomed to closely working in teams. A sociologist, on the other hand, may understand group dynamics but probably has had little experience in design.

Coaches also have different styles. Variation in guidance by different people can contribute to robustness in the way students think by themselves, provided they are not traumatised by confused coaching during a project.

Of course, a coach is only human. She can always come back to an outlier and discuss it.

Coaching is a process of becoming.

Clarify who you are and explain your approach. Show engagement. Be visible. Be there. A question that nobody asks is: How many

coaches start without any experience?

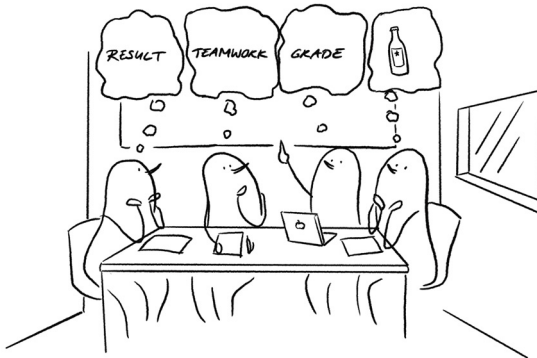
The simple truth is that there is no simple truth.

To find out more a line-up of six example students is available.

You may think you have met one or two of the six team students before, but this is highly unlikely for they are all made up. Yet they seem a fine bunch of people to work with. They can safely undergo the team experience.

Elfriede Offenbach (EO) is a woman from Weimar, where she studied Product Design at Bauhaus University. She should be perfect to work with. Teaching there is organized around projects and cooperation with different disciplines. Team material. Her application shows that she is all about systems.

Joost Vermeer (JV) is likely to have an entirely different perspective. He studied Biology in Utrecht and is very much interested in designing scientific experiments to measure physical properties of living organisms. Sticking force of gecko feet, the flapping speed of bat wings, that sort of thing. His contribution could prove surprisingly technical.

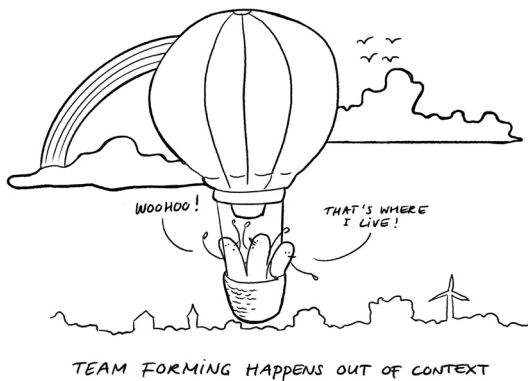


SETTING A MUTUAL GOAL WITH THE TEAM

The third participant graduated at Seoul Sasada Fashion School and worked for Samsung, one of the largest industrial conglomerates in the world. Hyun Park (HP) was temporarily employed by this company as a designer. In addition, she had a considerable income as a Samsung influencer. Now she is developing a focus on sustainability.

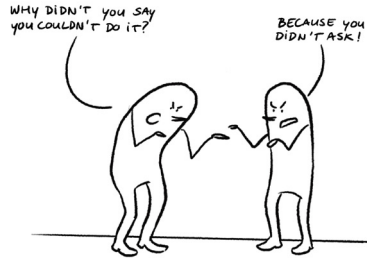
In Italy design is an architecture specialty. Pedro Bonacorsso (PB) originates from Sicily. He graduated at the Polytechnic University of Milan at the New Architecture Campus on an energy landscape development project. He has a surprising ability to express his intentions in text and seems a man of wide-open perspectives.

The next participant studied in Paris at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs. Bonaparte Mugisha (BM) is Rwandese. His main interest is in solution development within communities. As an intern he has been involved in the design of a drone port for delivery of medicines and equipment to remote areas. Embedding technology in social structures may stimulate helpful insights.



Toronto is Tim Bronco's (TB) home city. He graduated at OCAD, the largest art, design and media university in Canada and developed

an interest in development of materials with special properties. He combines this with an unexpected historical vision and a critical view on product design.



THERE IS NO GUARANTEE FOR TEAMWORK

As a team these participants certainly have a strong potential. Ingredients for a good outcome are all there: system thinking, technical insight in life itself, identity consideration, landscaping ideas, community design and material analysis.

But knowledge of backgrounds is just scratching the surface. There is no way to predict how these people will work together. They will have to, but friction may arise. Their backgrounds may form a perfect match, but if one delves deeper into their motivations and personalities collisions or unexpected incidents may occur.

Who are these people anyway?

One may be friendly, the next shy. Submissive is possible or, on the other hand one of them could be a bully. Or two, which may cause real conflicts. There are the helpful and the lazy and the plainly pig headed and obstructive. Step by step participants will reveal their drive to work together.

So, for now, let us assume that they really want to learn how to operate in a team.

Only Joost is a few minutes late when the team has its first meeting. Now they need a place to work together. Studios are not easy to get. There are numerous requirements. Elfriede says: 'I'd like to leave my laptop there, safe and sound.' Hyun would like that too, plus a place to work in the evenings. Walls to hang drawings on and tables to make and exhibit models are crucial according to Joost and Pedro.

'And there is more,' says Tim, 'suppose we get visitors, advisers, clients, where can we meet them.' Bonaparte has a point as well. With gestures he explains that having coffee together in the studio would be great. And there should be some comfortable chairs or cushions.

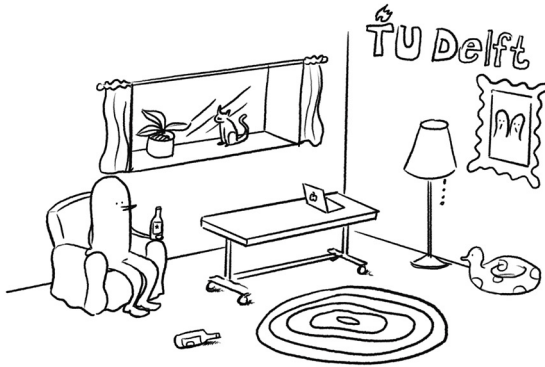
'I have picked just the right space for you,' says the coach. 'Just follow me.' She leads the fresh team downstairs into the cellar. In the corner is a door that opens to a small storage room. There are some tables, broken printing machines. Pieces of cardboard and paper are lying around. The coach: 'you clear this up. In an hour or so I will be back, and we start.'



THERE ARE MULTIPLE POSSIBILITIES WITHIN A TEAM

The coach helps a bit: 'We can't abide by all your wishes, but it may be possible to make a smart combination. A team locker shouldn't

be too difficult, and I can offer my office if people come over to visit you. There is ample space for conversation anywhere. To put things on walls and tables, well you could create your own solution. You could make it a part of the assignment.'

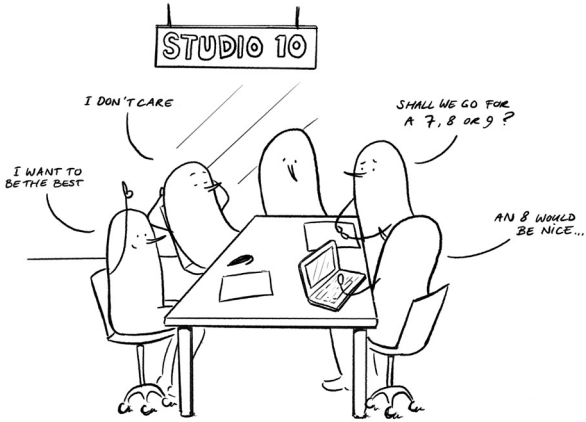


STUDENTS CREATE THEIR IDEAL WORKSPACE

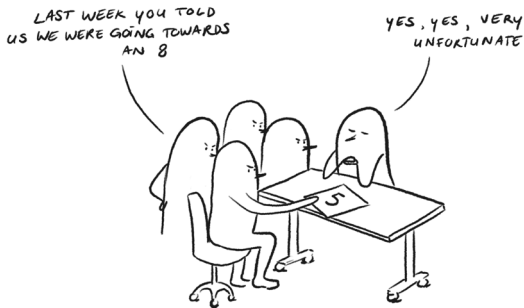
Tim makes an offer too: 'For my other project I have a large table in one of the labs. I have a lot of table space left over because I'm working on tiny metamaterial specimens. We can start from there and gradually create our own spot.' Everybody agrees that this is a promising launch. They get coffee or tea in the restaurant and join in Tim's place, which instantaneously is turned into the name of the group's own studio.

When they have all found a spot the coach takes the word: 'We have now officially started as a team, but we haven't really met yet. We need to know more about each other. Therefore, I propose that we all briefly introduce ourselves. Tell us your name and background and the reason why you joined this type of study project.'

CONNECT



TEAM MOTIVATION REVEALS ITSELF
WHEN DISCUSSING GRADE EXPECTATIONS



THE CRITERIA ARE CLEAR THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT

‘Now, I have some experience with people introducing themselves to each other and we all know that this doesn’t really work (*Workshop 1 The Trick of Connecting*). You may try to figure out what to tell the group, and maybe brag about what you have done. You are not listening anymore, and you forget what you have just heard so easily. But the sooner you know who you’re working with the better.’

‘Therefore, I propose — and I brought A2 sheets — that each of you draws a selfie with felt pens, in 20 minutes or so. I will do mine too. Then we will all stick them to one of these panels and explain. We will have instant mementos. And what’s more: we can update them. As an extra I propose we all tell something about our culture and describe why we are exceptional. Pedro for instance already told me that despite being Italian he does like an ordered pizza with a pineapple topping. We call this the pineapple paradox (*Workshop 2 Sharing Your Many Sides*).’



A project doesn’t really start until the team can lay its hands on the assignment. All team members are quite excited. Today they will have their first meeting with ‘the client’. He will introduce them to the theme they will be working on and the problem that aches to be solved. Talking to somebody who represents professional practice has indispensable educational value.

This sentence covers an interesting paradox. Clients provide a peek into the situations they have to deal with, but they are not supposed to participate in the assignments they provide. If a client representative attends every team meeting and takes part in the project, which is sometimes proposed, it would disturb the educational intentions of the team effort.

The team is not seriously involved in solving the client’s problems, although the outcome can be of some support. Students are not employees or contractors. It is the other way around. The client, in this case Gijs Gerbrandi from travel organization TUI, provides a service to the university by providing a realistic assignment to help educate students and thereby contributing to graduate quality. Project results may provide new perspectives, but a client mustn’t



THE DESIGN BRIEF SHOULD BE INTRIGUING

count on it. This should be made clear from the outset.

So, the coach introduces the client: ‘This is Gijs. He is innovation manager in a large travel agency. Over the past few years, sustainability has become a very important issue. Flying to far away destinations and contributing to disruption of daily life all over the world is now turning doubtful. You will help Gijs with developing alternatives.’

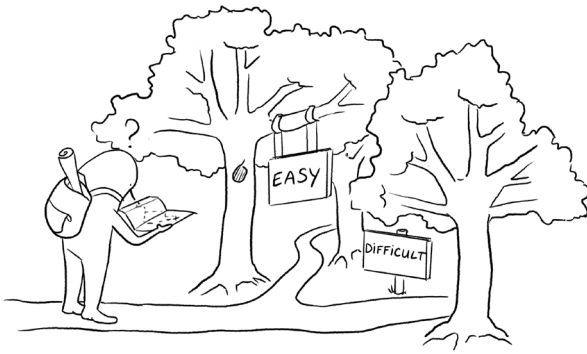
Gijs briefly introduces himself and TUI. Travel agencies feel the urgency of change. Some propose far away ‘green’ destinations with the option to compensate damage by flying. Others start to put more emphasis on travelling by train.

‘This is what we do as well, but we’re now exploring more radical ideas by scrapping the principle of travel altogether. We’re trying to achieve a huge cultural change that includes our own business model.

‘Now how are we going to do this? Well, we will help consumers discover their own home as a great holiday destination. This implies that we will organize holiday activities, like we’ve always done’, except that they take place in the vicinity of where our customers live.

‘This implies that we will have to provide services and products that seduce our customers to temporarily turn their home into, let us

call it, a make belief holiday destination. Now here is the assignment: Develop for us a Home Holiday Kit, a combination of products and services with which one can turn one's home into a different place to stay. Don't worry about holiday activities. TUI can take care of that. All students are at first a puzzled, but they begin to raise questions. Hyun Park inquires if the kit includes holiday outfits. 'Sure, why not?', Gijs replies. 'Tourists have this particular way of dressing'. The biologist of the group wants to know to what extent mobility is not allowed. Gijs: 'I happen to know that cats walk around their home within a range of a couple of miles. We're thinking in those terms. Tourists can walk, use bicycles, or short distance public transportation.' Bonaparte finds it difficult to grasp what the project is about, but Pedro loves the idea. He envisions new kinds of public presence, places where tourists that know each other can meet. The assignment is gladly accepted and after Gijs has left, they start discussing ideas and options.



YOU NEVER KNOW WHERE DESIGN WILL TAKE YOU

CLUES FOR TRUST

You are guiding a team that is learning. The students will experience what it means to work together, plan a project, dissect it into smaller bits, making not fully defined choices and get things done. Your focus is on facilitating the experience. Help them to get acquainted, share values and trust each other.

1. Do I have sufficient coaching experience?

Experience increases by trying. You will learn to recognize situations. Keep an open mind and don't worry. Read stuff. Ask colleagues, especially the older ones with loads of experience. Or ask the team of coaches for help, and don't fear asking 'stupid questions'. You're not the first one to dive in at the deep end. Be there. Show engagement.

2. The coaching position is ambiguous. Sometimes I come up with guiding suggestions. In other situations, I am the powerful judge that hand out marks. How can I ever be trustworthy?

Be aware of your role, be honest and help your team to find the next step. Know yourself and your own rituals.

3. So how do I create trust within my team?

Building a team happens in the time that you're not working together. It is a different process that needs ample attention, particularly at the start. Having lunch together is an obvious opportunity to get acquainted, take a walk, get to know each other, compare values.

(Workshop 3 Best Meal Ever)



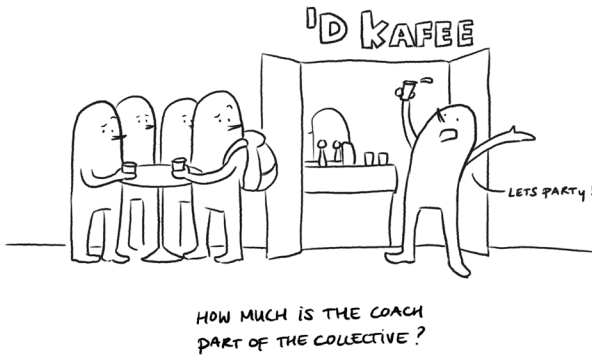
WS3



Building Trust in Teams-2 Role Play
Examples | Tech Tips @ NDC Sydney
<https://edu.nl/uaqud> (SSW TV, 2020)

4. *Then what is the most important principle?*

Humans spend most of their time fulfilling relational needs. They want to feel who they're dealing with and how to do that. To trust the others they must feel heard, seen and recognized. No binary math is involved. It is a matter of trial and error, for instance by not blaming the other person, but instead by asking questions to discover perspective.



5. *What is the best principle for working together?*

For the team to effectively work together in mutual trust students need to share goals.

Team results outperform personal results. To allow others to move away from your idea requires confidence. Participants need to be fully engaged. A project is not a bunch of tasks that you can simply distribute.

6. *Which exercises help start building trust?*

There are several tools.

- a. Allow informal conversations and activities.



WS2

- b. Let everybody tell stories about their family.
- c. Let all the team members draw and present a selfie with background information.

(Workshop 2 Sharing Your Many Sides)

- d. Let everybody talk about their culture, including a personal preference that makes them not fit in. Disarming cultural bias is always good for a laugh.
 - e. A brainstorm to choose a name for the team can work, maybe in conjunction with the assignment.
 - f. Some informal activities happen anyway, like finding a place for the team to work or having lunch.
 - g. Try your own ideas
 - h. These exchanges can function as the basis for 'buddying up': students can form duos or trios for working together, not hampered by ideas of specialty. In teams the buddy up system is far more effective than the disciplinary approach.
- (Workshop 4 Design in a Day)*



WS4

7. Do certain rules for a coaching style apply?

Nope. You can be strict or easy going and everything in between. There are only principles of handling situations. But you do need to be clear about your personal way of doing that. The team must know what to expect from you, or they'll be suspicious. Active listening is important: keeping your ears open and stop your own flow of thoughts (not easy!).

(Workshop 5 Who was your favourite teacher?)



WS5

8. How can I help the team keep track of what is going on?

You observe and document the process ('journaling') from the beginning. Regularly take time to reflect on the workflow with the team. The described later is convenient.

9. Does guiding mean that I tell the team what to do?

No, you inquire and talk. Guiding is communication. The coach listens to team members and responds to observa-

tions and things that are said. There is a spectrum of dialogue topics. The coach helps the team understand what is going on. Get rid of your own biases and prejudices. Leave the discovery of the next step to the students.

10. Do I have to understand what an assignment is about?

Chances are you know just as little about the content of the project as the students. It is your task to help the team find out the gist of the job. You're not the project manager. Participating can be so tempting, but it is not your main concern.

11. How can I use my own professional expertise in coaching?

You just be the coach as best as you can. Do the best thing at the right moment. Your background is not all that relevant. Don't let it get in the way.

12. What happens when I make an awful blunder, or misunderstand what is going on?

An outlier can happen to anyone. Just be open and honest about it. Discuss it. Talk about it with colleagues, but don't allow it to trigger a downward spiral of self-criticism.

13. What is the position of the assignment?

An assignment for designers is not as straightforward as it may seem. Often the client has already an idea of what he or she wants. The team must challenge the presented challenge and try to redefine it and make it intriguing. That often is where design starts.

14. What is the meaning of the assignment to the coach?

There is an interesting dilemma here. The coach is supposed to exclusively guide the learning process, but, although unintended, she or he may be inclined to identify with the assignment as well. Awareness is required.

15. So how do we define the role of the client?

The commissioner's main task is to be just that. An assignment is provided and of course there is an interest in the outcome for everyone. There is no harm in the client attending some meetings, but she or he does not participate in the team journey, because that concerns the main learning goal for the students.

WORKSHOPS FOR TRUST

1. The trick of connecting
2. Sharing your many sides
3. Best meal ever
4. Design in a day
5. Who was your favourite teacher?
6. Self reflection
7. The art of positive feedback

02

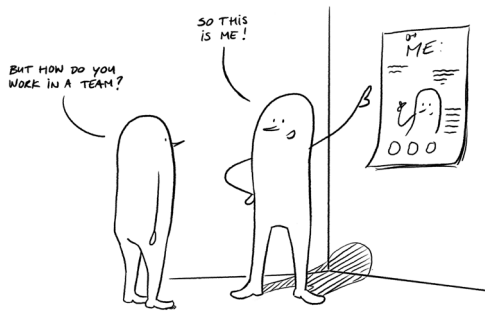
PROGRESS



A coach with a fresh team has to deal with various situations.

Some will be familiar, from earlier experience in work and life. Others will be new but recognizable. There may be seemingly easy problems in which you get totally tangled up. Other problems will solve themselves in due time. A project may run smoothly, but somewhat unsatisfactory with hindsight. There can also be total drama. The best thing that can happen is deeply felt success, because you worked with a team you will never forget. Things went so outstandingly smooth. This is exceptional. There is no guarantee that this will happen (but it might).

The chapter PROGRESS offers support in ‘announcing’ what kind of difficulties you may run into and provides suggestions for dealing with those. Answers are based on experience and not conclusive. The story leads from guiding individuals with their design and organisation issues to coaching the entire team. In the next chapter VISION, we will talk more about cooperation between coaches, and we will discuss supporting tools.



AN INTRODUCTORY POSTER DOESN'T SHOW MOTIVATION

The drawn selfies from the previous chapter are just snapshots.

They only reveal tiny snippets of lives as seen by those who live

them. Everybody has a different history of motivation, experience, habits, family background, and economic circumstances that has led up to an idea of identity and expectations. Student histories for a large part determine the way in which they interact with others and how they function in a team. Coaches must both be aware of the implications of their own background and be open to the meaningful stories behind their students.

Elfriede, for instance, is used to perform as flawlessly as possible and to get high marks for the quality of material results. She wants to design products that fulfill clear criteria, and she expects the coach to assist her. She feels somewhat uneasy with the given service design assignment.

Pedro on the other hand loves to think in abstract terms and he foresees that there will be long conversations about future developments. He is prepared to make objects to illustrate ideas as an option. Assessments to him are merely a part of this process.

Rules for the perfect way to make mentalities match don't exist.

Team participants are all different and so are coaches. As a team guide you will have to discover ways to deal with that. When you are a trained psychologist with a background in research and two adolescent kids and a husband who just ran off you with a hairdresser, you will handle coaching situations in a certain way. And this manner will be different from the way in which an experienced product designer who is close to retirement will act as a coach. Finding each other will be different with every team.

(Workshop 6 Self Reflection)



WS6

The point is that as a coach you explore your own 'coaching personality'. You develop your own skills in observing and understanding what is going on and in responding to that. You need to be open and critical towards yourself.

(Workshop 7 The Art of Positive Feedback)



WS7

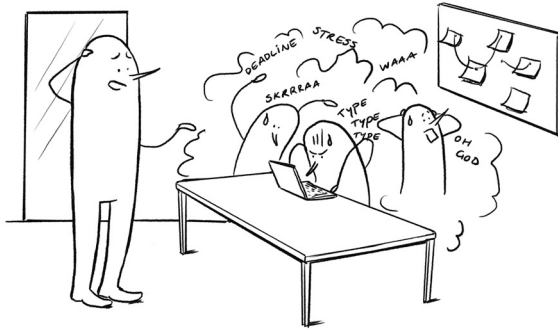
Tim Bronco, Joost Vermeer and their partners all have different skills and different affinities and habits in finding solutions.

Being creative is not necessarily one of those. Many design coaches struggle with the fact that design skills are not self-evident in design students. You may discover that Hyun Park, experienced though she may be in storytelling and selling ideas, in this project gets caught up in a maze of analysing collected data about the behaviour and needs of people travelling and spending holiday time. She gets blocked, because she has never discovered that organizing information according to described methods does not automatically provide an opening to a completely new solution. As a matter of fact, some coaches don't know this phenomenon of *analysis paralysis* either, even though it is a common obstacle. *Designing is **not** a straightforward process of logical reasoning.* Rather it involves generating clusters of ideas through concentrated association and evaluating and comparing those. It requires experienced intuition and investigating potential directions. Robust reasoning comes in the middle and afterwards, but not so much during creation. Logic is developed as a part of the solution and supports output and communication.

Coaches can teach creativity, to Hyun Park as well, provided they recognize that, although talent can vary among students, creative quality is not indelibly printed in human DNA. It requires training. Partly, this lack of awareness about design skill may be due to misunderstanding the way in which methodological design models and tools are often used. They are interpreted and taught as a kind of prescription, or a plan. In fact, however, they are frameworks or maps that clarify what is going on. They support coaches and students (and in practice professional designers and their clients) in discussing findings and results. Models are not recipes. They merely clarify.

When Hyun Park is stuck in problem solving, tell her to free her mind and do something physical, such as exercise. In case of a designer's block, coaching support is quite important. The process of association and iteration and recognizing potential requires

concentration and often a switch from fretting to doing. Appropriate advice could be to *take a walk, do some push-ups, enjoy a bath, prepare a good meal, or better still: make something.*



SOMETIMES IT IS GOOD TO GET OUT OF IT

Making is a supreme cure for being stuck, even if you don't know what it is that your hands are handling. When one is concentrated on design, anything relates to it. In this way doing something without reasoning can bring unexpected ideas to the forefront. As a matter of fact, the formerly fashionable notion of 'design thinking' could be replaced by 'design doing', although admittedly this kind of well-meant labelling does not always help. Labels often blur content because they distract from the essence.

It is not the aim of coaching to make sure the team runs smoothly. That is a bit unexpected, isn't it. But as a coach you're not the leader. Instead, you must guide what goes on. That includes when things get conflicting, or ugly, or fantastic. Showing what is going on is where your value is.

Students, for example, often think that making mistakes is not an option.

Which is not the case. Faults are instructive. The coach can point out in which ways.

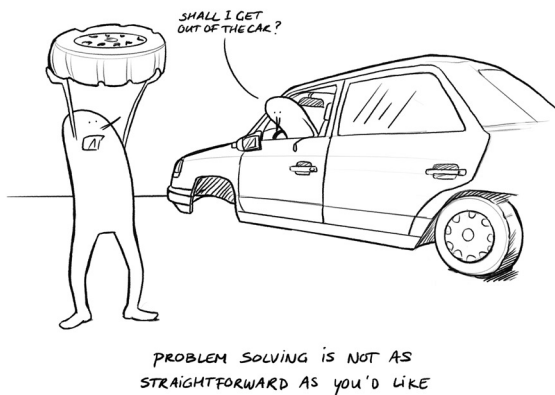
Even the most experienced coach cannot guarantee perfection but is able to help discover where things go right or wrong. One way of guiding student teams back on track is having a 'dialogue table' where students individually get the chance to tell their perspective on the problem, one by one. This is followed by a consensus round to arrive at the most acceptable solution (*Workshop 10 Creative Conversations*).



WS10

Some coaches superimpose their own way of thinking on others.

That is not what they're supposed to do. They guide the team in solving problems. A coach can introduce design ideas, but only to help students find different options of their own. Sometimes they need a different view, to discover the next step. When you steer the team into executing your ideas you distract from the learning experience. The coach mustn't design no matter how seductive that can be. You're not part of the design team. The students are!



Coaches all have different backgrounds. When he is a self-employed designer, for instance, he may not be accustomed to closely working in teams. A sociologist, on the other hand, may understand group dynamics but probably has had little experience in design. Coaches also have different styles. Variation in guidance by different people can contribute to robustness in the way students think by themselves, provided they are not traumatised by confused coaching during a project. Every situation requires a different approach. When things run smoothly, you guide the team towards excellence. When things get rough, you may nudge them in the right direction. You always provide them with different pathways to get out of the troublesome zone. Just one option is not enough. It would imply that you are directing the students and that is incompatible with your coaching role! You will get better in this by doing, and of course by getting help from more experienced colleagues.

Here you are, working with students and behaving in a certain way. Understanding yourself is not easy, in particular when your coaching experience is limited, or even absent. You have to learn from evaluating your own subconscious actions. Consciousness is not as quippy as behaviour. You may have said something that you regret immediately. This is OK. ‘Realtime’ behaviour in general is hardly subject to analysing and comparing different strategies beforehand and then rationally choosing an approach. It is a possibility when you run into complications and have time to discuss the situation with peers, but only with hindsight. You do need to develop a kind of coaching-mode-self-awareness.

‘I can’t believe I said that’, is a perfectly normal sentence. It illustrates that the process of working together is intuitive and not cognitive. This is what can make coaching so difficult. There really are no words to describe what is going on, other than vague expressions, like ‘he is in his element’, or ‘he’s on fire’, or the opposite ‘he is down and out’. What is happening cannot be measured, but one does feel and express it.

That is the reason why it is important to sometimes make contact on an emotional level. This not a matter of stereotypical cuddling and crying, but rather of inquiring after something that may be wrong in the life of a student. It is a first step into understanding the other person's experience.

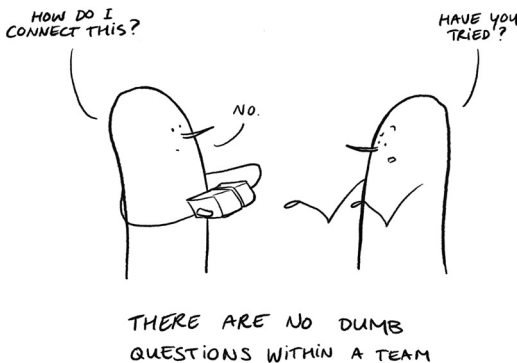
In coaching consciousness has some basic ingredients. Who are you talking with? That question seems simple enough, but it makes a lot of difference whether you talk to Bonaparte, who is at home with understanding social circumstances, or to strangely technical biologist Joost. And then talking to either of them is different in an individual setting from when you are discussing with two or three or in the presence of the whole team. Other people can be present as well, such as the client, or a colleague. Every situation requires its own discretion.

Maybe you need an 'out of coach experience'. This requires courage since you may have been wrong. Suppose Elfriede has come to you with the idea to design a short distance holiday car for a solution to the assignment. This is not a good direction for her to take, because the assignment concerns some new service business model. Moreover, such a vehicle may distract the entire team from what they need to work on. Now there are two extremes of behaviour that you may have shown. The first is a *reaction*. You said something like: 'I don't think you have understood the assignment. I don't like that idea at all. If this is all you can come up with, you're out, as far as I'm concerned.' Which is of no help whatsoever to poor Elfriede, who has put a lot of effort in her concept. The other is a *response*. You could have said: 'That is an interesting idea. What led you to it? What kind of context are you thinking of?' This may lead to a conversation about the assignment, the value that a new means of transportation may add, and above all a richer vision on scenarios.

You might for example ask Hyun Park the question how to estimate the weight of a wooden table. Then it isn't uncommon that

the student says: 'Hey, you are the teacher. You ought to know this!' Which is not an easy situation because you will have to make clear that you, as the coach, are not there to provide knowledge. You must clarify that your job is to help students find their way in figuring things out. Design is not a matter of turning available knowledge into a solution, but instead rests on discovering ways to create a way to get answers by trying, challenging, and developing ideas with the help of materials, books, spreadsheets, tools, pieces of cardboard, other team members, anything. This is far more rewarding than just use given facts. As always you must try to shed light on the way to the next step, by asking Hyun how she feels she can proceed.

Asking questions can go wrong too. Remember that students are not experienced in dealing with uncertainty. Because of this they may start to feel inadequate when you keep on asking questions. A student may withdraw into silence self-loathing. Provide reassurance when you feel you need to.



What is it that students want to find out anyway? This may seem a trivial question. They participate in a team project, so obviously

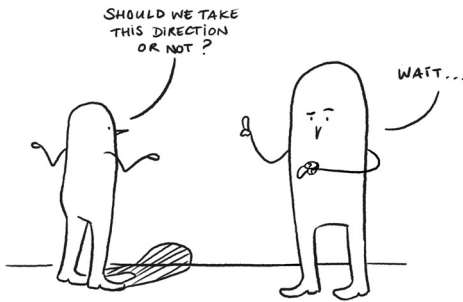
teamwork is what they want to learn. Often a coach is focused on guiding that process and assumes that she can do that with her own professional approach and style, with the excuse: ‘This happens to be my style of coaching.’

You should, however, respond to the individual learning objective of each student. This is not a matter of personal coaching style. It requires listening to students and help them define what they need to discover. There is a whole range of different response possibilities. Joost Vermeer may need feedback on his failure to make a working wooden model to try some idea. He requires skill enhancement. That is what the term ‘feedback’ implies. Feedback is precise and practical. It is what a design teacher is good at, which is not necessarily the same as being a good coach.



Tim Bronco has different priorities. He can proceed with a suggestion of ways to find out more about changes in holiday time spending sociology. He needs suggestions of sources of information. Pedro Bonacorsso, on the other hand, has ideas about tourism in

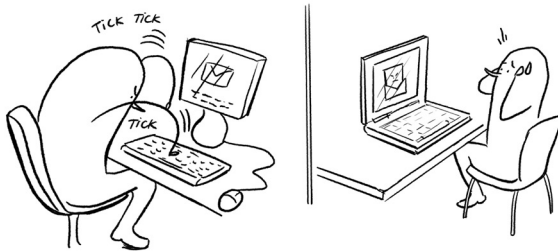
urban landscapes, but misses out on understanding architectural visions on leisure in their full width. They all need a different kind of response, which is defined by what they each need to learn at a certain point. *It can reach from a practical proposal to an abstract philosophical conversation* about the importance of holidays in an ecologically overstretched world. Again, it is about helping a participant to reach the next step.



TAKE YOUR TIME TO RESPOND

Answering a student requires care. Take your time to let the matter sink in. It used to be quite common for teachers to smoke. Rolling a shag cigarette or filling a pipe and lighting your smoking gear was a subconscious way to postpone replying. These days health concerns have changed that. An alternative could be to take time by peeling a little mandarin.

Communication can turn complicated because of media availability. In a fit of anger, a student can send an email or put something in social media. Don't allow this to make you lose your calm and make clear to students that this kind of noise doesn't help anyone.



DON'T SEND EMAILS WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY

Observation and self-consciousness.

Participants do not always express their involvement in words. The way they behave can be an issue. It is not uncommon for a student in a team, for instance Tim Bronco, to be introverted and unable or unwilling to work together with the rest of the team. After some time, this may start to disappoint or annoy team members. They wonder what they can do and Joost and Hyun contact the coach.



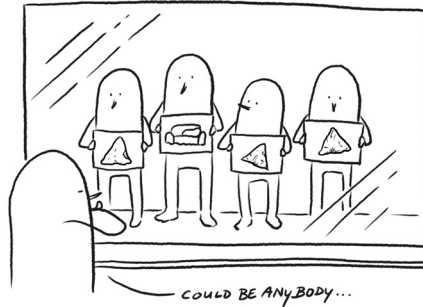
DIFFERENT WORKING METHODS

Coaches have been known to offer support in various ways. When confronted with the complaint that Tim is hardly participating one colleague just said: *'This is very interesting thing to happen in a team. You can learn from it. Do go on.'* That was it. Put yourself in the position of Joost and Hyun. Has this remark been of any help? What message will they bring to the team? There is no clear indication of what to try next.



Another guiding suggestion was: 'You can solve this by imagining that you are working together in a company.' This seems to offer a more robust procedure. Maybe it could even work, but chances are it will distract from the issue at hand. *The team would have to figure out different roles*, based on stereotypes of company jobs. Apart from this, a company task force or whatever, can also have a participant that never joins in.

Then there is the rather bureaucratic option of developing a working contract for team participants. However, a list of behavioural regulations does not guarantee that all team members will participate in the project. The process of developing formalities may help to discuss what is going on and how to continue.



HOW TO IDENTIFY A COUCH POTATO

That is the kind of thing the coach must keep in mind. The next step in teamwork can be reached by an open team conversation about each other's contributions and to what extent they are satisfactory. The coach could say to Joost and Yun: 'Would it be an idea for you to suggest to everybody in the group, including Tim of course, to come up with a question to each team member about the team? You could discuss the answers during a fine lunch with soup.' *The main idea would be to open a conversation about things otherwise left unsaid. A coach can teach a team to coach itself.*

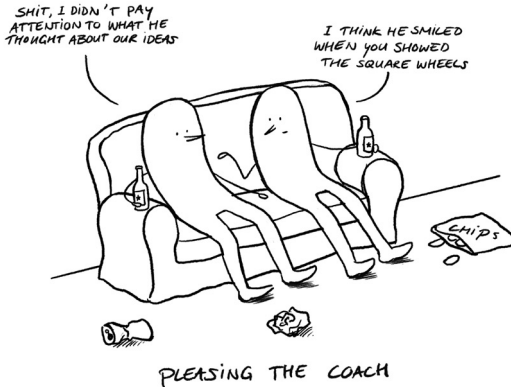
The way students behave, however, can also reveal to you a few things about your own coaching quality. If students feel that the coach is not contributing to the team process, they may just stay away after the first couple of weeks. Other students may behave differently and will try to please the coach, hoping this will give them higher marks. Beware of pleasers.

In this kind of situations observation of and concern for your own quality are paramount. *It is important to be open about your perception and ask for response from students.* If Bonaparte stays away, ask him why that is. Elfriede may compliment you on your knowledge about transportation technology and require a lot of attention with

questions about car interiors. Then ask her why she doesn't discuss those issues with the other team members.

By and large all teams have three types of participants. Any coach knows this. (if you didn't, now you do). This happens to be a more general management insight in team cooperation.

1. There is the kind of team member that is vigorous and takes the initiative, sometimes to set themselves up as leader. It can be the kind of guy that seems to be a pleasant talented surprise to start with.
2. The second type works steadily and quietly, yet always somewhat in doubt. In the beginning these students seem to aspire to mediocrity. They ponder and read and write.
3. Finally, there is the sort of team member that is always late and seems to be void of contributing.

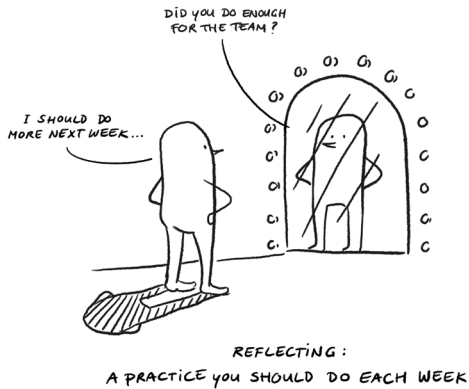


Counterintuitively, it is not the front runners that make a team tick. Rather it is the steady doubtful workers in the middle. They are serious and tend to reflect on procedures and outcomes, which is crucial for quality. Both the ambitious initiators and the slow guys are less critical.



They virtually take the assignment and the project for granted and need extra attention to start cooperating and listening to their co-workers. (Workshop 8 The Reflection Dice)

This insight owes its existence to public sharing of observations. It has had to mature and be recognised. That is why reading and talking to colleagues are important.



Obviousness can be the enemy of quality. It may happen that, as soon as the goal of the assignment is presented, the participants figure out their individual tasks, depending on the assumed stereotypes of their skills. So, a technical guy like Joost Vermeer may become responsible for calculations, Pedro Bonacorssso will develop 'the system', Hyun Park, who can handle a camera, will take care of presentation, and so on. This may seem to firmly root a team at first sight. Instead, what you get here is not a team, but a group of individuals that each fulfil a task that is familiar to them. Content will suffer and the group will never reach the best performance. All you get is a fragmented solution 'typically designed by a committee'. *But a team can be so much more than the sum of individual qualities.* The coach will have to recognise this and try to prevent it from happening.



Something can go terribly wrong. A team loses focus on the project because a serious disturbance sneaks in. Miscommunication takes over.

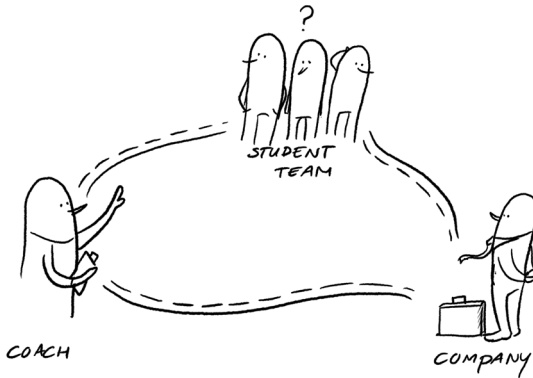
For a large part misunderstanding is related to language. It starts with the fact that every participant speaks and writes their own version of English in different grades of quality. Babylon is never far away.

Language develops. Even within a design project new words and notions are born. They appear haphazardly or members define them consciously. This does not always work out well.

In our team the common language somehow emerges from a mixture of different versions of English: German, Dutch, Korean, Italian, Rwandese French, and Canadian, as usual. Unfortunately, Bonaparte Mugisha is insufficiently fluent in English to participate in the project. For six weeks the team has tried to include him, with a bit of French and explanations of the design procedure and project parameters at hand. To ill effect. The team is confused. The atmosphere suffers.

Tim Bronco and Hyun Park have had it. They suggest asking the coach to remove Mugisha. They understand that this probably is an

exceptional measure, but otherwise the project is due to fail. Joost Vermeer agrees. Tim writes a letter to the coach.



COMMUNICATION IS NEVER SIMPLE

She in turn, had already witnessed that things in her team aren't going well. She saw the crisis coming. Tensions were rising. This is a hard one to deal with. She decides to confer with the colleagues in her coaching team, because this kind of situations certainly doesn't occur very often, and she feels ill equipped to solve it by herself.

Together the coaches decide that this is a team issue. It is not up to the coach to decide. That is what our coach is going to have to make clear to her team. She calls the team together in the team studio, in their own space. The atmosphere is tense.

The coach explains that she is here to guide the process. The team is going to have to do its own soul searching and make its own difficult decision about the participation of one of their members. One by one the coach asks every team member to clarify their relation towards the others and towards Bonaparte. They must try to com-

municate with a minimum number of words to keep the communication intimate and fair despite the language problem. Gestures, touching, miming: they work. After about an hour Bonaparte, who went through a range of emotions, smiles through his tears, and shows that he understands and agrees that he must leave for now. He will do the English course that Hyun recommended to him and make a new start with a new project next semester. The coach watches and writes. She will report the outcome to her colleagues.

In a conflict situation, suspicion of discrimination may occasionally turn up. Language issues, or the particularities of design skills, or differences in learning expectations evoke the danger of misunderstanding the reasons for a breakup like this. This implies that its motivation needs to be explicit and clear. *The reason to dismiss a member needs solid proof and comparative examples.*

In the end tension usually transcends into relief (*Workshop 10 Creative Conversations*).



REFRAME WICKED PROBLEMS

A coach can take advantage of a much larger pool of expertise. For instance, it might occur that a participant appears to have run into difficulties. There may be serious health issues, or mental problems, or anything else outside the project at hand. Shocking accidents, newly born babies, no dogs allowed in student rooms, you name it.

The biggest mistake a coach can make is feel personally responsible and try to solve the issue herself. The best she can do, however, is to find help.

The faculty, or the University employs support specialists in fields beyond the expertise of a design team coach. You do have to make sure that you know who to approach.

If design work in progress is a flowing river, the coach adjusts the banks. This is a delicate process. The coach follows the nature of what is going on between participants and suggests modifications when necessary and if possible. *No team can be moulded to perfection, but some teams come close.*

CLUES FOR PROGRESS

1. How can I make sure my team's project will run smoothly?

There will be a cascade of experiences and issues. Take them one by one and don't take them personal. Success depends on the entire team, the quality of the assignment, the mood, sickness, and health and even traffic and weather conditions.



PERSONAL QUESTIONS CAN OPEN UP
PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

2. What do I need to know about students and understand about myself?

Everyone has a personal history that explains their engagement. Some just want support to get a diploma and make a good living, others are eager learners and want to change the world for the better, and everything in between. Adapt to everyone's 'zone of proximal development', the individual space between needing and not needing support.



3. *How can I match different mentalities within a design team?*

Stay open to different perspectives. You can observe differences and similarities between artists, speculators and technicians and yourself and try to disclose them. This will show the reasons why everybody engages in a different way.

4. *How can I cultivate trust within the group?*

You can start every meeting with an assessment of the mood of the team members. They can each give a mark from one to ten for how they feel. Or at the beginning of every meeting play *Roses, Thorns & Buds* (*Workshop 9 Roses, Thorns & Buds*). It is a simple game in which everyone mentions a highlight, a difficulty, and something new and interesting. From these exercises you can get an impression of everyone's feelings.



WS9

5. *How does design work?*

There are numerous texts and books that vary in design purpose (sustainability, beauty, speed), method (storytelling, codesign), and model description. Be aware that design is the

elephant in all these rooms. It works by generating and consequently rejecting and recognizing opportunities supported by observation and reasoning, either solitary or in teams.

6. How can I stimulate designing activity?

It thrives on concentration and being relaxed. Distraction by physical activity helps. Making something, anything even, can cause breakthroughs, because somehow that provides unexpected similarities with what you are looking for.

7. How can I teach creativity?

Creativity can be a talent, but more importantly being creative is a procedural skill that one can train. You can explain what creative activity is like and exercise it in limited fifteen-minute assignments, like write a memo to the prime minister, or sketch the smartest device you can imagine.

8. Why is it that some students apparently work very hard and present interesting new insights and simultaneously can't seem to deliver?

Analysis paralysis is a well-known phenomenon. An inexperienced designer wants to make sure that no mistakes are made and keeps on looking for ultimate certainty, which serves as an escape hatch for trying ideas that sometimes fail.

9. What can I do to help students produce results?

Let the team set practical deadlines and warn about the dangers of patient paper.

Show the value of making mistakes. Design is learning. Perfection is unattainable.

(Workshop 10 Creative Conversations)



WS10

10. If I have a good idea for the project, should I bring it in?

Sure, there is no harm in that, provided you offer it as just a cue for finding the next step. It must not become the main

idea that is executed because of your dominant position as coach. Maybe you can camouflage it with other ideas. Let the team decide. No matter how seductive the project can be, they own it.

11. What is the role of logic and reasoning in design?

Obviously, it is quite important. On the other hand, behaviour and conversation can only partly be described as reasonable. As most things, design emerges from interaction between trial and understanding.

12. How can I find out what is going on in the mind of a student?

You can create a link through bringing up emotion with empathetic remarks and questions, like ‘you seem not interested’ or ‘has something gone wrong?’



13. Does this always work?

It depends. Be aware of the setting you're in, who you are talking to, where you are, who's present, and, in the case

of online communication, wonder about possible outsiders that may be eavesdropping? Try and be sensitive.

14. *Can I show anger to a student?*

You can, but your mood mustn't be the end of communication. There is a subtle difference between reacting and responding. Reacting with 'leave the team now' shuts down progress. Instead respond with enquiring about the reason for having not done anything for two weeks. This leaves potential for conversation and a next step.

15. *What if a student is a bully?*

Discuss what is going on in the team. Point out the dangers of misbehaviour. You can use a dialogue table (*Workshop 10 Creative Conversations*) to discuss issues that render a team dysfunctional.



16. *What if I ask a question and the student says, 'you should know; you're the teacher'?*

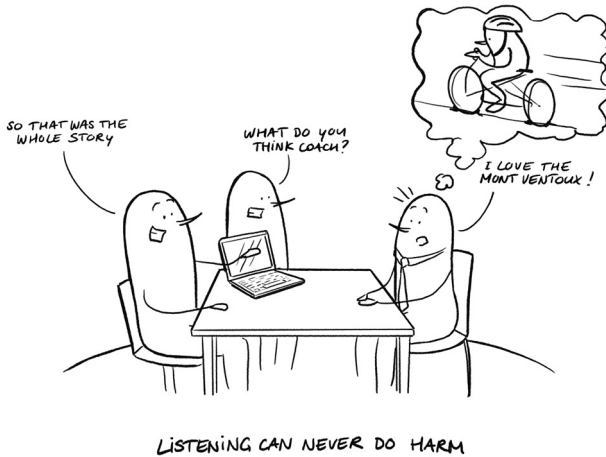
Don't take it personal. You're the catcher, not the pitcher. You're not a knowledge provider. Your task is to show the way to discovery.

17. *What if a student comes up with a question that I don't know the answer to?*

Not all questions are yours to answer. Someone in the coaching team may be able to help, or a student for that matter. Or you can invite an expert on the subject at hand. Dialogue can help to find the beginning of an answer. Important: Don't be ashamed. Don't make up answers.

18. *In my experience asking questions is indeed the best way to make students realise what they must find out, right?*

There is a limit. Asking too many questions can feel menacing or daunting.



19. I know I have a certain style of coaching. Is that OK?

Sure, you have your own way, but it is not as relevant as you may think. It is far more important to be aware that all students have a different learning objective. Some need practical answers, others love to learn from scholarly conversations. There is a whole spectrum of areas that you may need to cover, in your own style. You might even learn. Coaching styles are not carved in stone. You will grow by listening, reading, and discussing with peers.

20. What is the best way to answer questions?

Take your time. Peel a mandarin.

21. How can I discuss complaints about lack of progress in a team, for instance when one member is not contributing?

Make sure that your input and remarks contribute in a positive way by asking for response. Your suggestions must make sense, but on top of that you have to offer perspective on what the team can do next. The effect of the conversation

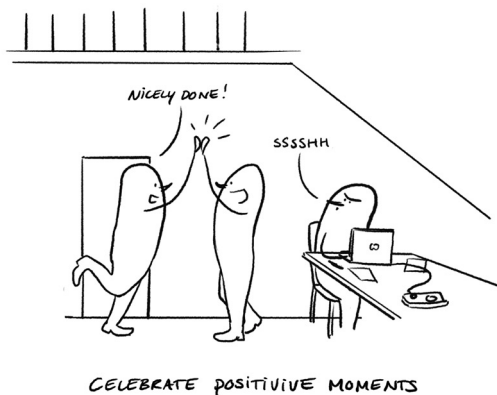
can be amplified by temporarily dragging attention away from the project. Go to a park, or an ice cream parlour, or whatever. It is like making a new start.

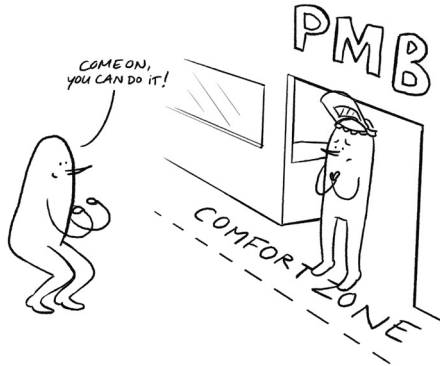
22. What is there to know about previous team experiences?

There is just too much. Have a peek into the world of management. Read, listen to podcasts. One example is particularly interesting, because it is counter-intuitive: in most teams the frontrunners and the lazy members contribute less to creative progress than the thoughtful critical ones in the middle. They dig in seriously and reflect.

23. Is there an optimum division of tasks in a team?

Make clear that tasks are not divided according to professional discipline, but rather according to the combination of things the team must do. The team tries to reach common goals. All participants contribute in the most adequate way they can, also if this implies leaving their professional comfort zone. The best way to subdivide a team is not by discipline, but by stimulating cooperation between buddies. Students work in together in pairs and learn from each other.





SOMETIMES A STUDENT NEEDS A CHALLENGE

24. What can I do when a client withdraws, or an assignment falls flat because it is dull?

Go on without the client ...You can try to find a new client.
Inquire with the team colleagues or students.
If searching takes too long, and all else fails, you can develop
a new assignment with your team.

25. At which point do I have to interfere with what the team is doing?

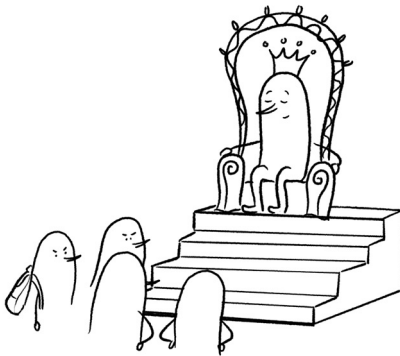
When you notice that the team is not functioning, taking control is called for. This does not mean that you become the boss, but rather that you point out the issue at hand initiate the process of finding the next step.

26. What do I do when my team is drifting apart?

Your responsibility is the team effort. Help them to set common goals and relax together. Clarify what is going on, possibly with the help of the tools Theory U or Cynefin described in the next chapter.

27. What do I do when something goes terribly wrong, or there is an accident?

You are part of a team of coaches that can provide information. The problem may run outside coaching expertise. Don't hesitate to seek appropriate help inside and even outside the university. Be prepared in advance to be able to ask for the right kind of support.



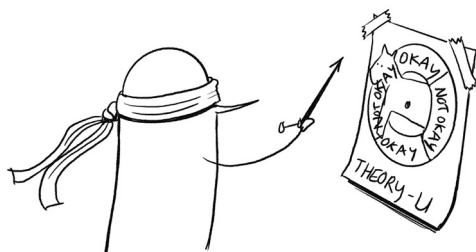
DO NOT ABUSE YOUR
POSITION OF POWER

WORKSHOPS FOR PROGRESS

6. Self reflection
7. The art of positive feedback
8. The reflection dice
9. Roses, thorns & buds
10. Creative conversations
11. International team mapping

03

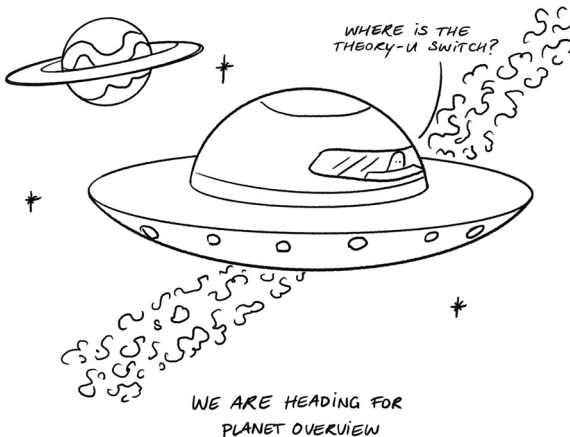
VISION



Shared coaching experience is part of the deal. Though members of student teams may have a different impression, a coach does not operate all alone. Coaches are also part of a team. They share what they discover during their projects, make comparisons, and *figure out coaching actions* among colleagues. For this purpose, they use their personal experiences and the Coach Journal. In it, progress is recorded for comparison in time and between groups, as a reminder of the struggles each student team went through (*Workshop 12 The Coach Journal*).



The chapter VISION brings explanations of cooperation between coaches and ways in which they know and understand what they're doing. Coaching vision is hardly an individual asset. They therefore meet on a regular basis. This is quite important because they learn from each other. Experienced coaches can even learn from rookies. Team guides inform each other, and they share experience. They also use the same tools. The most important tool is a shared journaling system.



For there is an area of common experience that is difficult to put into words. Tools to understand these team phenomena are known from different fields, such as management theory, and leadership training. They are graphic representations of the status, general mood, or mutual relationships that can be observed in a certain stage of an ongoing team project. These status maps can serve as crude but surprisingly relevant references.

Coach cooperation can be incidental. For instance, a team may run into a problem just when their coach is absent for some reason. Then help from other coaches becomes obvious. Tim Bronco and Pedro Bonacorsso look for a solution and they happen to know a different coach from an earlier project they were involved in. They decide to approach him.

He doesn't know anything about the team and the least he can do is listen. The students tell their story. One of their team members, Hyun Park, wants to leave. She even got in touch with the coach of a different team that she would like to join.

Since the problem is urgent the stand-in coach first decides to talk to the dissident. *For her the issue is quite practical.* She is already experienced and worked as a professional designer. She feels more at ease with a different project. Moreover, her current team likes to start early in the morning, which implies difficult peak hour transportation. She lives in a different city.

The coach understands but doesn't decide. Instead, he approaches the coaches of both involved teams by email. The 'receiving' one is OK with the change. *The other absent coach feels left out at first.* Yet, after a bit of mailing back and forth she agrees that it is the best solution. Nevertheless, Hyun's original team offers to begin an hour later because they value her experience. The coach has another conversation with Hyun and learns that there is more at stake underneath the surface. She is romantically involved with someone from the other team. That is how things can go.

There are always these incidents. They are complicated, like the previous one, or simple, when one coach has a straightforward question for a colleague that happens to walk by. It is important that coaches are open among themselves.

Coaches have weekly meetings as well. These serve to monitor progress in each team, make comparisons and facilitate exchange of knowledge, experience and allow coaches to get to understand different projects and each other's approaches to guiding a team. Regular dialogues increase quality, provided they are focused. There is always the danger of wasting time because coaches often feel urged to brag about their projects, like fishermen boast about the fish they caught. Or they can't help but drift away in whatever they have on their mind. Or experienced coaches may have tailor-made simplistic solutions that are not really helpful. Cynicism lures around the corner. This is common human behaviour. Instead posing questions and finding relevant answers renders meetings focused and effective, and limits the time needed.

The coach takes her seat at the 'Dialogue Table'. She is here for the fourth time this semester. She enjoys these meetings because they imply an opportunity to better get to know her colleagues, professionally. Different viewpoints are always refreshing. Some of the others are familiar. She knows them from previous years and from talking informally, a few cycling trips, lunch here and there, things like that.

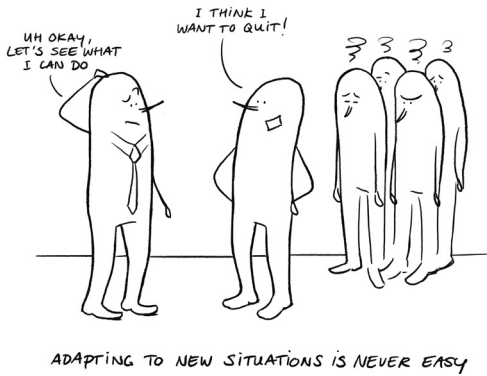
Discussing the progress of the various student teams at the Dialogue Table provides new insights and meaningful exchange of knowledge. She has experienced that in previous editions. On the other hand, there is always the danger of conversations taking way too long and turning pointless, as mentioned earlier. It is hard to predict if this will happen.



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The coaches together are like any other team. They can learn just from that (*Workshop 12 The Coach Journal*). It takes time and understanding to feel at home with the routine of talking about each other's student teams. You must learn to trust one another, despite personal habits.

Most of the coaches have taken their seats and are now chatting a bit, waiting for the coordinator, the person who will chair the meeting. His job is to guide the coaching team to turn their intuition about the performance of their student groups into a useful assessment of progress. This helps the team guides to assess their own coaching behaviour and adapt when necessary. They learn from each other and provide mutual support.

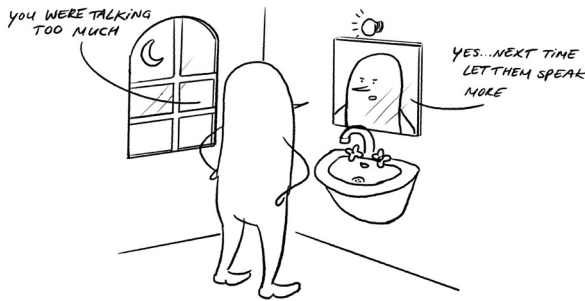


Two things are already certain. One woman is always late by a fashionable ten minutes or so. She is one of these just too tightly scheduled persons, the kind that is always never on time and draws attention by sneaking in and making apologies in a loud whisper. She does participate in discussions meaningfully. Coaches are just like people, or students.

The other phenomenon is this guy who simply doesn't attend meetings. He says: 'I have been a coach for eleven years in a row, with sufficient success. I don't need these meetings.'

There have been attempts to persuade him to contribute, but he reckons that when he started, he was thrown in at the deep end

of coaching himself: 'I learned it by just beginning and trying. So should everybody else'. He does have a bit of a point there. Just beginning is the best way to develop experience. On the other hand, rookie coaches do learn from the experiences of their peers. There is no harm in preparation. Wise old coaches can help the others.



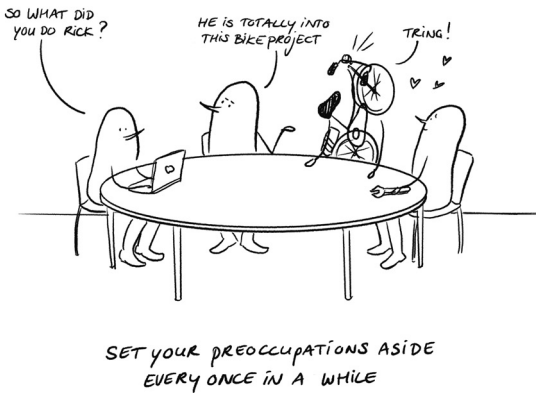
AFTER GROUPSESSIONS...

The opposite of the absent coach could be the 'mystery coach'. She or he is always present and attends every meeting from beginning to end, but never utters a word. The obvious way to break that silence is to ask a question. This sometimes helps, but some humans belong to the stratum of silent types. It may occur that the team of such a quiet coach is underperforming. The coordinator can read this from the (soon to be introduced) dashboard. When that is the case, the group must start a dialogue with this coach to help her or him improve.

The subject matter of discussions can be very distracting and considerably degrade the effect of coach meetings. One of the coaches could for instance be involved in a particularly interesting design project concerning a sleeper train interior. You can expect that he wants to talk about it, which is fine for a couple of minutes. But it

can be quite annoying when such a person keeps bragging about his smart ideas and dumb project leaders and how he is right about some reading lamp inside a cushion or whatever and everyone else is wrong. You can only hope that he doesn't behave in the same way when he is talking to his team. The coaching team can put it to his attention.

When a coach does address the right issue, it doesn't mean the contribution is meaningful. Groups often have one or two participants that like to hear themselves spawn wisdom without wondering if their insight is meaningful to the others. They say things that have been amply talked about already. Sometimes, they may in fact be explaining to themselves what they have barely understood. It is up to the coordinator to steer the conversation back into the pleasantly unfamiliar waters of the dashboard overview.



Read more about the dashboard in:

- Handle with care: coaching multi-diverse project groups to become healthy design teams (Flipsen & Persaud, 2020).

Jargon can be a real hazard in these meetings. Our coach has a background in psychology, and she has learned that the respective professional languages of her and her colleagues don't always match. A sociologist tends to speak in societal abstractions. Technical people tend to seemingly simplify issues and turn them into problems that can be solved by simple measures. Some art historians resolve to a strangely inflated tongue characterised by words like spatial, curating, and word elongations, such as 'visuality' and 'experienceability'. Designers have their peculiar way of using metaphors. Often objects become people or animals and a chair can be described as 'fishbonish'. Petrolheads love lingo. A very large Rolls Royce may turn it into 'a very fast cathedral', just like that.

The coach who is always late now has taken her seat. She puts her papers and table on the Dialogue Table. After she has offered her excuses, she looks at her watch. Here comes another apology: 'I have to attend another meeting right after this, so I'm sorry but I have to leave an hour from now'. This does not come entirely unexpected. She has the habit of leaving fashionably early.

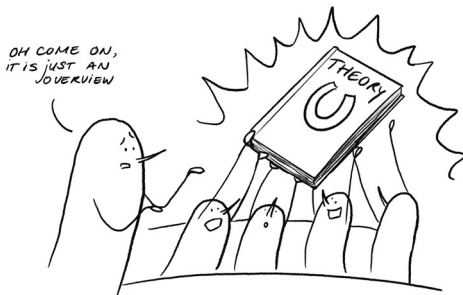
Our fashionably late coach is well prepared. She has carefully filled out her digital Coach Journal. Every coach is supposed to do that. It seems complicated, but it is quite convenient once you get the hang of it. The list consists of six predefined Key Performance Indicators, or KPI's. These are not assessments. 'Indicators' is the more modest word. Our coach understands. She also knows that the choice of KPI's is not universal. It depends on context and preferences. Each of those indicators represents an aspect of the team's performance: brief definition, management, planning, constructive alignment, team dynamics, and perceived stress levels. They cover the performance. The coach can estimate the quality of each of them by giving a mark in dots, like what one does with internet surveys about some company's service when you just bought some electric cable or new socks. In addition, the journal works like a log. It evolves as a history performance that is far more precise than

human memory. When you are filling out the form, it can also work as a wrap-up for students. You don't fill it in secretly on your own. If the coach observes that the team is stressed-out, students may disagree. The coach view can be open to discussion, simultaneously demonstrating that the journal is not some kind of assessment.

KPI's require some considering.

She thinks them through once more.

The outline definition, the question if the team is doing the right things, is the simplest one. In fact, it covers three qualities and the extent to which they are defined: key challenges, research questions and methods of approach. The latter concerns the formal methods by which progress can be discussed.



*THERE IS NO SUCH
THING AS ONE METHOD*

The KPI 'Management Approach' is clear. It asks for a judgement about the extent to which the team is managed.

The KPI 'Planning' is straightforward too. Does the team plan its efforts and to what extent do the participants keep track of it.

The KPI 'Constructive Alignment' addresses progress in communication between students. The highest level of progress happens when conversations are 'generative', which means that students together produce new options and ideas for continuation.

The KPI 'Team Dynamics' is about the extent to which the students work as members of a team. Contributing to the collective without selfishness is the highest level.

The KPI 'Perceived Stress Levels' concerns the feel of the workflow, which is difficult to express.

The coach has already experienced that estimating these KPI's is not a simple matter of counting mistakes. It requires trust in your personal observations and judgement. This may take guts, especially in the beginning. But you must be aware that you are not alone and that this is the whole point. You are coaching teams as a team. It is also doable, because when you're in doubt tools are available to provide judgement support. They originate from the world of management, and serve as benchmarks, or maps on which a coach can pinpoint the 'location' in the process where his team is at a given time. We highlight four of them.

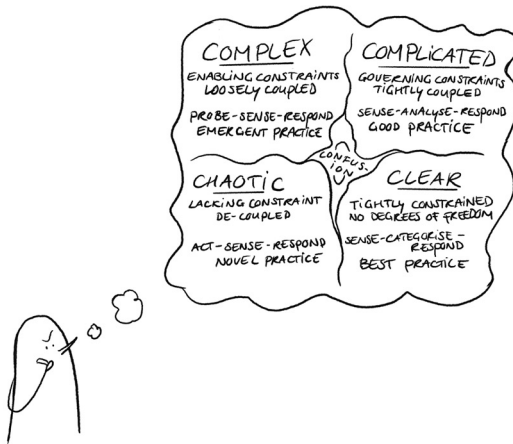
The first is a popular model designed by Patrick Lencioni. It has the shape of a pyramid that defines five layers of team functionality. The wide bottom layer is of course Trust. To tell your own story creates an opening towards trust. This is very important to remember: groups grow trust outside the project. It implies that work becomes more efficient, because member help each other and are prepared to learn from peers. Without trust, forget it.



The slightly smaller layer on top of it counterintuitively is Conflict, which is needed to achieve full team potential. Clearly productive Conflict is impossible without Trust. Next, we have Commitment of each member, which a team cannot do without. Then we have Accountability, or a team could get away with anything. On top you get what the project was meant for in the first place: Results. It is not all that complicated to determine why a team is dysfunctional by establishing where function goes wrong.

Read more about the Lencioni's Pyramid in:

- The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni, 2005).

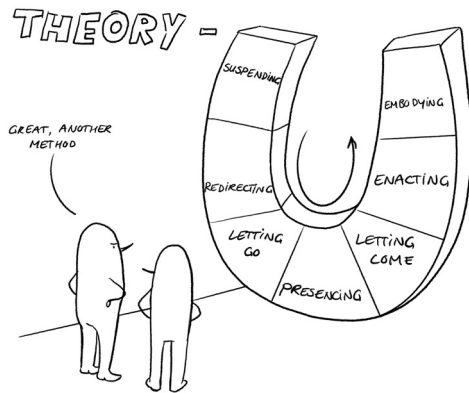


The second is called Cynefin. It helps to define a feeling of complexity of what is going on in your team and what you do on each level as a next step. There are five levels. On the simplest everything is easy. A straightforward road map is laid out, or a recipe, and all the team has to do is to execute the steps that lie ahead. On every next level the step to be taken is more complicated to define and requires more courage to take the less certain next step.

It is a matter of estimating confidence in the way things are going and trying to figure out the background. When the situation becomes for instance really chaotic, the right thing to do is shrouded in fog. Don't let panic strike! Relax. Work must continue. The best thing to do in case of maximum uncertainty is try something, anything, and see what happens. Haphazard trial and error, or even just talking about something irrelevant may lead to the miraculous discovery of the way to go. Going back must of course always remain an option. Dealing with total uncertainty is mainly difficult because it is hard to accept. Yet it often marks a breakthrough moment from being stranded to recognizing an idea with potential.

Read more about Cynefin in:

- Cynefin - Weaving Sense-Making into the Fabric of Our World (Snowden, 2020).

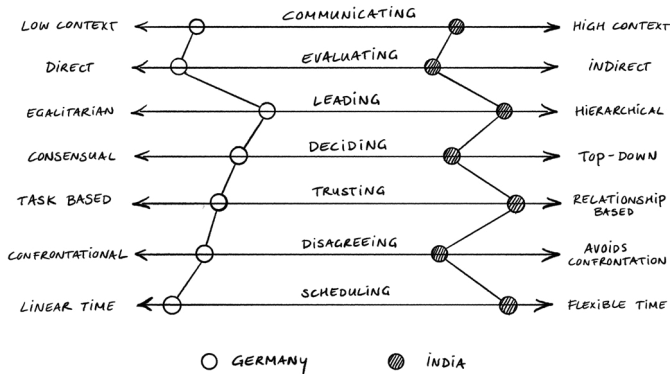


The third is called ‘Theory U’. It is more sophisticated than the previous model. There are in fact two U-shaped curves. The top curve is upside down. From left to right they represent the team activity, from absorbing information via muddling through, to performing. The lower curve represents increasing involvement: open

mind, heart and will. This is the ‘presencing’ quality of involvement. The top curve represents negative involvement. Mind, heart, and, at the top, will, are closed. ‘Absencing’ is the word here. Obviously, team activity thrives with the lower ‘presencing’ curve. Suddenly it is quite easy to find the spot where your team is operating. It could be muddling through because the participant’s heart is in the absencing region of the diagram. This can translate into a KPI as lacking constructive alignment.

Read more about Theory U in:

- Theory U, Leading from the Future as it Emerges: The Social Technology of Presencing (Scharmer, 2016).



There is a fourth tool named ‘Team Culture Mapping’. It can help establish which cultural differences hamper or enhance team functioning. Its principle is simple. The map from top to bottom lists a number of team behaviour parameters, for instance communication, evaluating, leading, deciding, trusting, disagreeing, scheduling, and persuading. For every team member the characteristic view is placed between two extremes. The two extremes of leading, for example, are egalitarian and hierarchical. If one student takes an egalitarian position and two of her peers are used to a strong



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hierarchical approach, tensions are bound to occur. Consequently, this will show in the stress level KPI. And so on and so forth.

(Workshop 11 International Team Mapping)

Read more about Team Mapping in:

- The Culture Map (Meyer, 2014).

You complete your Coaching Journal with your concrete observations, such as: ‘The team doesn’t really know how to begin. Students want me to tell them exactly what they must do.’ This happens to be an almost standard remark. Probably the most common task of a coach is to convince students that they must learn to find their way as a team together. The coach does not provide a manual.

When all the coaches have sent in their Journal, software generates a bar chart overview, the core part of the Dashboard. It shows the most significant differences in every Key Performance Indicator. For each team separately it allows a comparison of its performance in the previous week with the average performance of the earlier weeks. It also provides a general overview of all the groups, even though different coaches will not have the exact same judgement.

The main advantage of this dashboard instrument is that The Coordinator, and all the others for that matter, can quickly recognise which KPI in which team requires extra attention. Added remarks clarify what it is that led to the improvement, or the weakening of certain teams. The dashboard is an important tool to keep the focus in the discussion on what really matters. As a consequence, the dialogue can be brief and to the point.

Issues do turn up. One of the coaches has signalled insufficient progress. The planning KPI apparently is not in good order. He says: ‘I don’t really know how to deal with this. The list of things for my team to do gets ever longer and more refined, but then nobody seems to be executing any of the points.’ ‘Ha’, says the Coach of Coaches, ‘that

sounds quite familiar. Inexperienced designers and teams often get caught up in a cycle of building up more certainty by diving into the internet and books and everything they can lay their hands on just to postpone the adventure of experimenting and making. It depends on you asking the right questions to tempt students out of their comfort zone and into the creative adventure.’ Your team needs pressure to start actual designing. Let them organise something like a ‘no-excuse-lunch’. During such a meeting, ideas are welcome, and the expression ‘yes, but’ is not allowed.

A second coach raises her hand and says: ‘I’m not sure I’m good at this’, which is quite unique. People don’t like to admit they feel insecure. The Coach of Coaches expresses his admiration: ‘Very brave! Now you have provided the whole team with a cue to start talking about an issue that I think is quite challenging’. Some of the other coaches start to grin. They have experienced that it often is a phase you must go through. Coaching a team is very complicated when you try to understand what is going on. Yet it can be quite straightforward when you allow things to go on and be honest and ask when you want to know more.

‘Well,’ the brave coach proceeds, ‘one of the students on my team is difficult to follow. He speaks of landscapes and programs and urban sprawl. The other students seem to understand what he is talking about, but I fail to see what these visions have to do with the solar panels we’re working on. But you’re right. I can just ask.’

‘In your group the stress level was already a bit high, and it is still increasing. You write about a language problem. What is going on?’ The Coach of Coaches now addresses our coach.

She explains the language situation: ‘Two of my students came by. One student, he’s from Rwanda doesn’t speak or understand English. This caused a lot of trouble. They wanted him to quit, with the rest of the group and asked me to take care of it. I don’t consider this my task. So, we met with the whole team and yesterday the team succeeded — I’m so glad they did — in convincing him they have nothing against

him as a person, but that he hampers team communication. They made clear that they wanted to stay friends and now he will take English lessons and make a new start in the next course.’ The other coaches said that they were satisfied with the rather smooth ending.

In this way the meeting proceeds. Many concrete team problems are addressed. Of course, there are also examples of groups performing better than before. Suddenly all goes well, either because they’ve discovered their mission, or because they had a wonderful weekend trip to Brussels.

Celebrate your success. Naturally, the finished project is not the end of the story. Students receiving their marks, and coaches continuing to work with a mind full of new coaching memories, mark the start of new transformations.

Before students go their own way, let’s celebrate their successes and learnings together. The importance of reflecting in a fun way is often forgotten but nurtures the learning of the team’s design experience. Students will apply what they have learned supporting the continuing development of design insight. Coaches will use their recent experience in new projects they guide. Both in students and in coaches something has changed forever.

Moreover, as a discipline design in teams is by no means hermetically sealed. We’re only just beginning.



CLUES FOR VISION



COACHES HAVE DIFFERENT MENTALITIES

1. Why am I required to share my experience with other coaches?

Because coaching is extremely difficult and complicated. You need the experience of the others, and they need yours.

2. I have substantial experience in coaching. I'm entering my fourteenth semester now. Why would I attend the coaching meetings?

You'd better be there. The meetings serve to exchange information and experience. You can share yours and, since projects are always different, you may still learn a thing or two, for instance about more effective or more efficient alternatives for the way you usually work. Moreover, you might miss out on things when you're 'of radar'.

3. What do I do when a team that is not mine consults me for some reason?

Listen and ask questions. Next talk to the people concerned. Discuss options.



MEETINGS ARE FOR SHARING EXPERIENCE

4. Can I skip meetings?

Try to be present every time. Exchanging experiences is crucial, also for the sake of the development of coaching itself and to exercise teamwork with the coach team. Mind that meetings must be well led and not feel like a waste of time. Otherwise, don't hesitate to say so and don't stay away.

5. Can I meet other coaches informally?

Yes, you can. It can enhance the atmosphere in the coaching team, provided you and your friends don't spoil it by ganging up on the others. A group of coaches is a team too.

6. Should I try to translate all my experiences to the coaching team?

Limit yourself to what you think is essential for progress. Let it be a fruitful dialogue. Limit yourself to what you think the others benefit from.

7. Suppose one of the other coaches misbehaves, how do I respond?

You used the right word there. Always try to find the reason for obtrusive behaviour. Look for a positive outcome by using

careful expressions, 'like I notice,' or 'I perceive', or 'It concerns me that', or 'Could you tell me why you are ...?'.

8. Sometimes another coach says things or uses expressions that I don't understand.

Inquire. Also be aware that your language may not be clear to the others because of your background. Explain the approach from your professional angle.

9. How do I determine Key Performance Indicators?

Observe students working and discussions, estimate, make notes, take pictures if necessary (and explain why of course).
(Workshop 12 The Coach Journal)

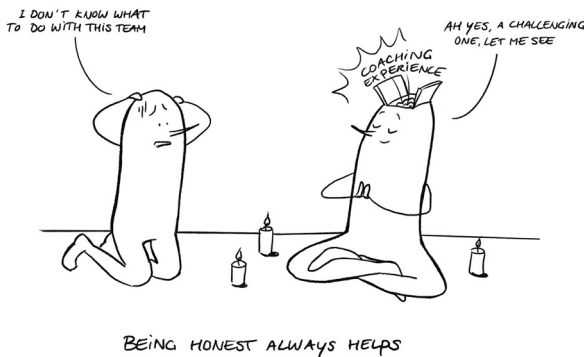


10. Can I fill out the Journal with students attending?

You certainly can. It will help support trust and understanding. It also is an opportunity to raise your observations and to clarify the reason why you are making them. Dialogue may influence what you put in the Journal.

11. What do I do if Key Challenges are ill defined?

Inquire what it is precisely that the team is trying to achieve. Keep on asking until they know or realize they should know.



12. What do I do if Research Questions are ill defined?

See 9. Keep on asking questions and try to understand.

13. What do I do if methods of approach are ill defined?

Explain what it means and then inquire how they think they're going to continue.

14. What do I do if the team does not sufficiently manage its project?

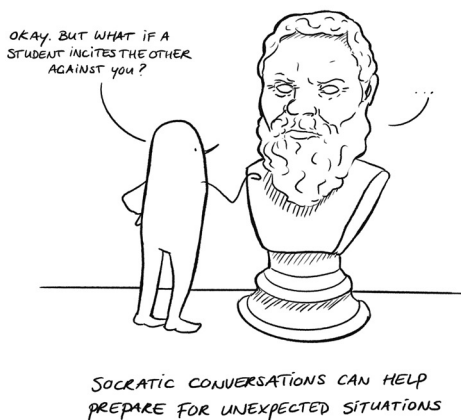
Ask what they're doing and why and who is doing what.

15. What do I do if the team forgot about planning?

Quote General Eisenhower: 'Plans are worthless, but planning is everything'.

16. What do I do if students don't communicate effectively?

Ask them what they are doing together and continue until they all understand.



17. What do I do if students do not sufficiently work as a team?

Tell them to cook a lovely Thai dinner together and play boardgames afterwards. Or something equally lovely and irrelevant.

(Workshop 3 Best Meal Ever)



18. What do I do if students feel all stressed out?

Enquire what causes all this tension and discuss solutions.

19. How do I use Cynefin to help a team?

Estimate if the students can find a way how to go on with the project. In the worst case discuss the difficulty and demonstrate it. Next solve an alternative simple problem, or convince them to try anything, go on a train trip, or a dance event, whatever and to find a clue, through sheer concentration and association.

20. How do I use Cynefin to determine the Key Performance Indicators that I put in my Coach Journal?

Observing the student team and trying to establish the reason for a certain position on the Cynefin map does the trick. The team either knows precisely what has to be done, or the next step is an enigma. And there is anything in between. The performance underlying the observation provides a KPI estimation. Total chaos can for instance be caused by insufficient project management. Cynefin is just a qualitative benchmark.

21. How do I use Theory U to determine Key Performance Indicators?

Same ways as with Cynefin, different example. If a team is presencing on open will level, 'Constructive Alignment' will score high.

22. How do I use Culture Mapping to determine Key Performance Indicators?

Don't try this, for it works the other way around. Behavioural parameters can explain the reason behind the KPI's.

23. What kind of things do I have to watch for in my team to write them down as observations?

Simply write down what you find interesting or striking, or disturbing. Your findings can be discussed. Mutual learning is the point.

24. What is the point of bar chart overview of all these different groups?

The main reason to use it is allowing a quick scan of what kind of developments stand out and discuss those together. It saves a quite lot of time compared to, for instance, allow every coach to present the progress of her or his team. The dashboard is a monitor that shows to what extent teams are dysfunctional.

(Workshop 12 The Coach Journal)

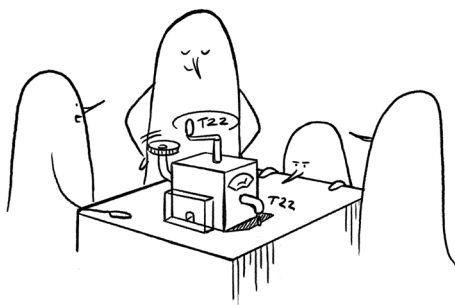


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WORKSHOPS FOR VISION

- 3. Best Meal Ever
- 11. International Team Mapping
- 12. The Coach Journal

04 WORKSHOPS



This part of the book lists twelve exercises that you can do as a coach to build trust in a team, to maintain it and to deal with pitfalls that may occur during the process from forming a student team to finishing a design assignment in the best achievable way.

These are not exclusive options. You may discover alternatives elsewhere or develop your own.

Share your experience with other coaches.

The exercises are crudely arranged in line with the three parts of the book, TRUST, PROGRESS and VISION. This is by no means a regulation. Get acquainted with their principles and apply them according to your own ideas.

1. THE TRICK OF CONNECTING

Who is your mother and who is your father?

People talk leisurely about their own family and literally make themselves **known**.

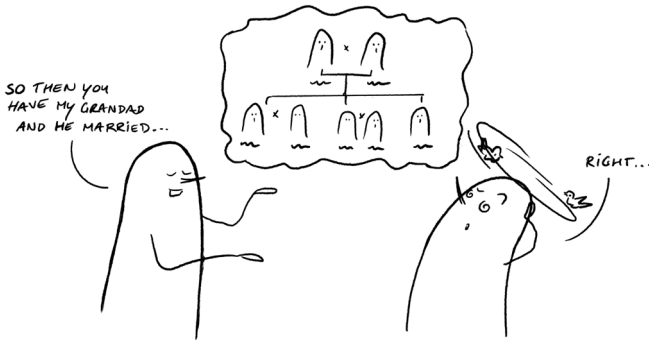
A famous Dutch comedian used to have a tv show entitled Tante Es (Auntie Es).

In the show he interviewed Dutch celebs (politicians, tv personalities, performers, etc).

Each interview he started with the questions:

- Who is your mother?
- Who is your father?

In team coaching the same questions help start conversations between people. They appear to be a wonderful format to connect participants from heart to heart.



This is the simple assignment:

Choose a team member you only know by face. Find a place to sit down and next ask:

- Who is your mother?
- Who is your father?

One student speaks, the other listens.

Feel free to ask more questions about age, birthplace, relatives, profession, etc.

Each person gets 5 minutes to talk about their mother and father.

Then we switch and the other person asks the questions and listens.

If it feels uncomfortable stick to one person.

After about 10 minutes Auntie Es stops and the team gets back together.

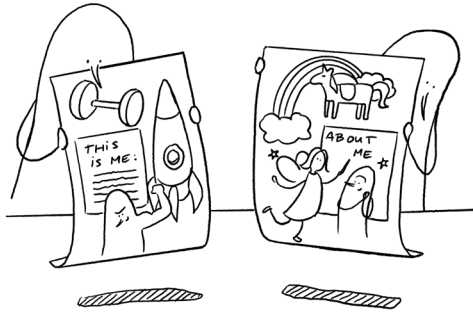
Read more in:

- Narrative inquiry: more than just telling stories (Bell, 2002).
- Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education: the extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving (Huber et al., 2013).

2. SHARING YOUR MANY SIDES

Showing yourself in Poster Format

When we come together with a group of people, we are a little hesitant about showing who we are. We approach each other using our previous experiences. Our reference is our bias. This has both good and not so good aspects. Nevertheless, most of us are more curious than we expect. We are eager to discover what kind of person the other is.



If we want to nourish your basic human need of being seen, heard, and valued, it is very helpful to inform others on who we are.

The team assignment:

Make a small poster on which you present a rich portrait of yourself.

Themes that are helpful to get started:

- Where you are from and what is special about that
- Achievements big or small that are important to you
- What you made: these could be designs but also other things
- My skills: things you are good at related to design

- Your aversions: thing you do not enjoy, not necessarily about design

We learn from experiences in the past. But is responding with what we have learned enough to solve complex problems in the future?

We see the world the way we are. We create the world we live in.

Action emerges from what is going on inside of us.

We see what we do (results) and we see how we do it (process). But we usually are not aware of the inner place or source from which we operate. According to Theory U this is our blind spot. It is the place from which our attention and our intentions originate. It is our source. Seeing is when we suspend our habitual judgment and look at the world with fresh eyes. The poster is a kind of wake-up call.

Read more in:

- The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni, 2002).
- Overcoming The Five Dysfunctions of a Team (Lencioni, 2005).
- Teamworks, by students, for students (Smulders et al., 2012).
- Stages of small-group development revisited (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

3. BEST MEAL EVER

Teams that eat together perform better

What is your favourite meal?

Sharing dinner – sharing values

Meet around the table with your group.

Think about the following question:

What was your favourite meal when you were younger? Or what is your favourite meal today?

- Describe the meal, what makes it so enjoyable
- Tell the story behind it, a moment you remember that you enjoyed while eating it

Each person takes 5-10 minutes to share their story about their favourite meal. Feel free to ask questions.

Potluck dinner party

The family that eats together stays together

Organise a potluck dinner party, where everybody shares their favourite meal.

You can choose to cook it at home or together, or whatever you feel is most suitable. Enjoy the conversations you have over dinner, get to know each other better, sharing warmth.

— EAT — SLEEP — DESIGN — REPEAT —

Read more in:

- Warm Data (Bateson, 2018).
- Breaking Bread: the Functions of Social Eating (Dunbar, 2017).
- Eating together at the firehouse (Kniffin, et al., 2015).
- Assessing causality and persistence in associations between family dinners and adolescent well-being (Musick & Meier, 2012).

4. DESIGN IN A DAY

Preparing Design Teams for Wicked Problems

The workshop is simple and effective:

Start at 9:00 hrs and make a “smart” planning of the day:

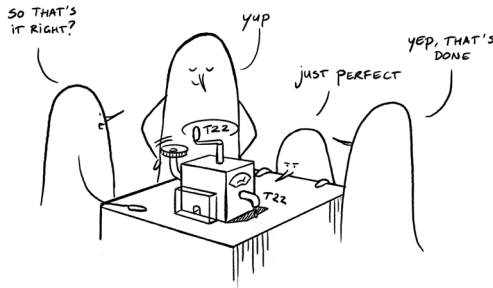
- Discuss and divide tasks for each team member based on their knowledge and skills
- Discuss and define the problems to be solved
- Make milestones
- Set deliverables and provide materials for prototyping

Use the ‘Basic Design Cycle’ method:

- Incorporate the steps into the planning
- Execute the design cycle
- Present the final results to the team

Finish at 17:00 hrs evaluate the day:

Sit together and do a retrospective conversation with the team



The goals of Design in a Day Workshop

1. Exploration of everybody's skills and knowledge
2. Find out the ins and outs of communication (under stress)
3. Which are the relevant design questions in this project

The **Design in a Day** exercise is developing and making a design together based on the practical and ready knowledge each team member has at his or her disposal. This approach is grounded in Theory U.

While working together, students get to know how they react and respond to each other. Difficulties can be addressed early before stress and chaos strike. This is described in The Culture Map and Theory U. Organising and executing design in a day also has the benefit of going through the whole design process. The sheer speed enhances confidence. This provides a reality check on assumptions the team might have on the project at hand. It accelerates critical thinking, raises questions, and ignites curiosity. It supports identifying the main questions in a project:

- What is clear to everybody and is a matter of categorizing?
- What is complicated and therefore needs analysis and expertise?
- What is complex and can only be discovered by probing?

Read more in:

- Theory U: Leading from the future as it emerges (Scharmer, 2016).
- Theory U and team performance: Presence, participation, and productivity (Hays, 2014).

5. WHO WAS YOUR FAVOURITE TEACHER?

Meet with your group around the table, where everybody feels comfortable and safe.

Think about the following question:

Who was your favourite teacher in elementary school?

- Describe the person
- Describe a moment you remember that best describes the reason why

Take 10 minutes to write it down. When finished, each person shares their story with the group. Everybody listens without questions and thanks each other for their contribution.

What was your favourite course?

When everybody is finished, then answer the following question:

What was your favourite course?

- Describe the subject
- What was it about the course you enjoyed so much?
- Describe a moment you remember that best describes how it shined through

Take 10 minutes to write it down. When finished, each person shares their story with the group, and everybody listens without questions and thanks each other for the contribution.

Tomorrow you will continue working, studying, designing, ...

What will you do different tomorrow to be a favourite team member and to make the course your favourite?

Write down a concrete action on a piece of paper, crumble it and throw it on the table, into group. When everybody is done, we unpack and share everybody's actions.

Read more in:

- Pedagogical Sensitivity and Tact (Manen, 2014).
- Pedagogische tact, op het goede moment het juiste doen, ook in de ogen van de leerling (Stevens, 2013).

6. SELF REFLECTION

What is your story?

Reflective learning involves stepping back from an event or experience to analyse it from different perspectives. In doing so you relate it to earlier experiences and discover meaning. It requires taking time to think, feel and digest, and it concerns identifying lessons learned. These are discussed and prioritised to be integrated into a strategy for action to improve future performance.

You reflect about your own performance:

Developed knowledge and skills in the project and their relevance to your future career, using clearly described and concrete examples that demonstrate insight into your own actions, and clearly identify lessons learned.

You reflect about your contribution to team:

Your role and performance in the team, using clearly described and concrete examples that demonstrate insight into your own actions, and clearly identify lessons learned.

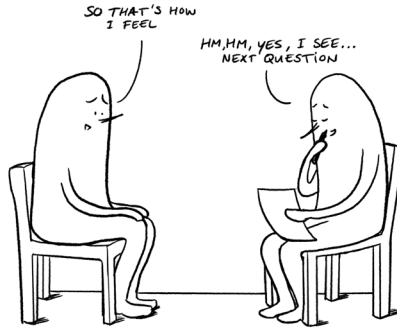
Interviewing assignment:

This part of the exercise will take (2x45) 90 min.

Choose a **buddy** from your group that you feel safe with. Find a quiet space that is suitable for a **conversation**, and where you will not be interrupted.

One person will start as interviewer and the other as interviewee. The interviewer will:

- Ask questions
- Take notes
- Make a summary of the most relevant things that were said.



The interviewee provides honest answers, thinks deeply, and elaborates.

Next the participants switch role and repeat the process.

Interviewing technique

Active listening is expressed verbally and non-verbally. Verbally active listening means using small interjections like: Hmm, really, I see... Non-verbal listening implies keeping eye-contact, nodding, and using facial expressions and body posture.

It shows that you are really following the other and stimulate the other to go on.

In a conversation without any of these tiny signs you might feel uncomfortable and wondering if the other person is still with you.

Summarizing illustrates that you are listening well. And you can check if you rightly understood the other. A summary shows what is already discussed and what has yet to be covered.

Follow up questions are asked to elaborate an answer that is given by the interviewee. The Interviewer likes to know more or doesn't fully understand. It is an opportunity for better understanding.

Proverbial support

Read the provided cards with proverbs and select a proverb that symbolizes the most important learning point of the project. Take five minutes to think about what you have learned and then select a proverb, for instance the Egyptian saying, 'For the benefit of flowers we water the thorns too'.

Write 80-100 words where you explain your learning point of the whole project and its relation to the proverb.

You can also do this exercise with your group. The cards can be stuck on the wall or laid out on a table. Each participant can choose theirs present their learning point in the circle.

Proverbs often generate beautiful and meaningful stories and comments.

Learning cycle support

Reflect on your own performance and your contribution to the team. Reflection becomes more explicit with the help of four basic questioning pronouns: What? Why? So what? Now what?

1. **What** were the most important things you and the team did during the project? What happened, what did you observe, hear, etc.? (**Recapping**)
2. **Why** were you surprised about what impressed you most about your own performance during the project, your contribution to the team, and the team itself? What questions or challenges did you see? What did you agree/disagree with and why? (**Zooming in/analysing**)
3. **So what** did you learn about embodiment design, your own performance, and your contribution to the team? What con-

clusion can you draw or what generalisations can you make?

(Zooming out, conceptualising)

4. **Now what** does this mean if you were to apply this in practice for your education and your future career? Which ideas can you apply instantly, and which questions do you still have? What actions will you take to explore them? **(Planning, experimenting)**

Learning levels support

If you want to discover more for yourself for the future, you can use handed out cards with questions to about concrete situations in which you had to perform and apply your (newly acquired) competences. They are meant to reflect on your performance and emotional experience. You consider both your own performance and your contribution to the team.

The cards can be used in different ways. For instance, the interviewer reminds the interviewee of a few key situations that they will reflect on. You place the cards on the table, in such way that you cannot see the question, and randomly draw one from which you read the question.

The reflection questions are categorised from the level of surrounding influences to the level of internal motivation (Bateson). This framework can be used for multiple possibilities of learning from experience. For this assignment you do not have to use all four questions for each level.

1. **Surroundings/Context:** How did I react to others in the project as a whole and to the members in my team? When? Why?
2. **Behaviour:** What did I see myself doing in the project and within my team?

3. **Skills:** What skills do I have? How am I performing? As an engineer and as a team member?
4. **Beliefs:** Why do I do what I do? What values and beliefs are important to me?
5. **Identity:** Who am I as a person or in the team, and what is typically me?
6. **Motivation:** What drives me inside and outside the team?

Read more in:

- Visionary Leadership Skills (Dilts, 1996).
- Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development (Kolb, 1984).
- The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action (Schon, 1991).

7. THE ART OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK

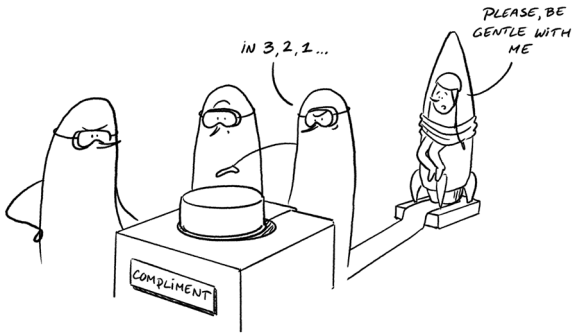
Building Trust in International Design Teams by valuing and appreciating others

Every human needs to be **seen**, **heard**, and **connected**.

During a team meeting, preferably in the first few weeks of the project, choose a 'round table' setting in a confined space. You could use your office or a studio. Design proposals can be on the table, but this is not necessary.

You start informally by asking how everybody is doing. Next ask each person in the group the following question:

Could you briefly share something you appreciate about what so and so [name team member] did for the project?



You point at the intended student and all other team members share their personal appreciation of that person. You don't need to explain the format. It is more important that you support each answering student by keeping an eye on the following aspects:

- Does the answer need to be more specific in stating **what** was experienced or observed?
- Did the student also express appreciation of the **time, sacrifice, creativity, or care** that went into the work the other person did?
- Did the student mention **how** the other person's contribution **impacted** the student or the team?

Your task as a coach is to facilitate and appreciate the sharing verbally and non-verbally. The feedback session should take about 20 minutes for the whole team.

Accepting compliments

Most people don't realize compliments often say more about the one who gives them than about the receiver. Those who compliment you, actually share how your actions impacted them.

It does not matter if you agree or disagree with what they are saying. Just relate to it as a gift and accept it. The best way to respond to kind words is to simply say '**Thank you**', and if the compliment

made a difference, let the person know. If you find yourself diverting the person's compliment by passing the credit, making a joke, or awkwardly explaining why you don't deserve it, recover the situation by saying: 'I am working on getting better at accepting a compliment. Thank you.'

Here are a few ways to respond to a compliment:

'Thank you, it makes my day to hear that.'

'I really put a lot of thought into this, thank you for noticing.'

'Thank you, I really appreciate you taking the time to express that.'

'Thank you, I am happy to hear you feel that way!'

If the person compliments you for another person's work, redirect the compliment to the correct person:

'It is great to hear you feel that way! Actually, Elfriede is the one behind this project.'

'I would love to take credit, but Pedro is the one responsible for this.'

It is important to keep in mind that our habitual responses to compliments have developed throughout our lives and, as with any habit, it will take effort and practice to change them.

How to Give a Compliment

Few of us know how to compliment and appreciate someone effectively. The most memorable and impactful messages are sincere and specific, focusing on the process she or he went through to deserve the accolade. Here are a few tips on how to give a strong compliment.

Be sincere: The most important part of any compliment is that your intention is real. You feel compelled to express how they impact you or others.

Be specific: It is important to give details and examples to help the person comprehend the context of your remarks. When you are clear with your compliments, the person understands exactly what you are expressing and why.

Vague compliment: *‘Thanks for taking notes in the meeting, you’re amazing!’*

Specific compliment: *‘John, I know it is your job to take notes in the meeting, but because you do it so well, I know I can relax and focus on doing my job. Thank you.’*

Focus on the process: People rarely want to be recognized for the result, but rather for the process and effort that went into producing it. Compliments that only focus on the result often trigger a concern in the receiver of not being able to produce the same result in the future. When recognizing someone, show them that you appreciate the time, sacrifice, creativity, and care that went into their work.

‘Bonaparte, I am blown away by the event you put together for the client. I can’t even imagine all the hours, work, and creativity that went into making that event happen. Thank you for everything you did behind the scenes.’

Share the impact: When we compliment someone, we are actually sharing how what they did impacted the team.

‘Tim, I want to let you know I really appreciate how you lead our team. In my previous team, I never wanted to share ideas for fear of people shooting them down. Since day one, I watched how you encouraged all of us to speak up and share idea. I felt comfortable to take risks. I really enjoy working with you and feel like I am growing every day. Thank you.’

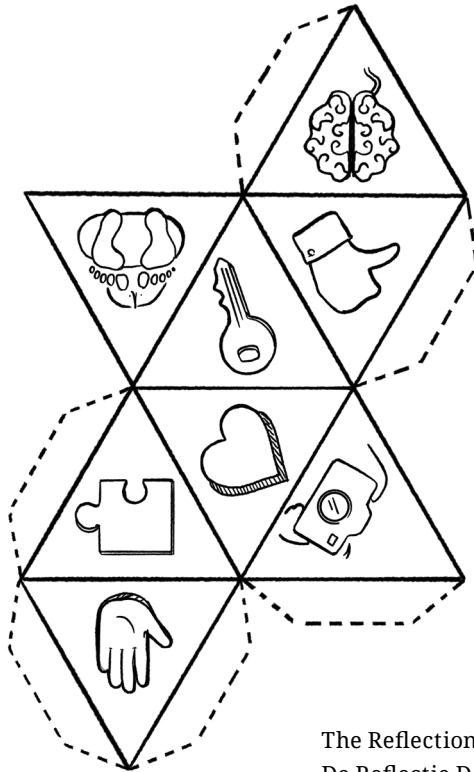
Read more in:

- Appreciative inquiry: A positive revolution in change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).
- How to give and receive compliments at work (Littlefield, 2019).

8. THE REFLECTION DICE









Random questions in the middle

Here we have a simple, safe, and fun toy to play with halfway during a project. It is meant for team reflection, but it can also be used for individuals. A group member prints the layout of the 8-sided dice, cuts out the shape, folds it in shape and glues it together.

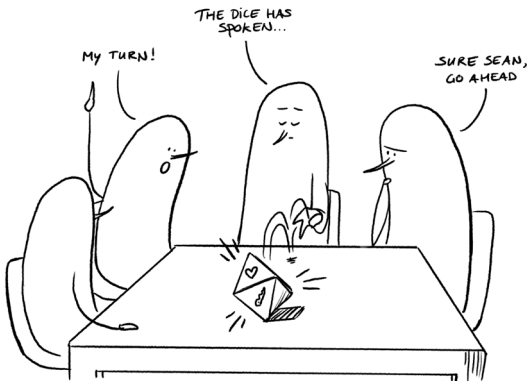


The Reflection Dice
De Reflectie Dobbelsteen
(Persaud, 2024)

WORKSHOPS

			
Brain: 'I learned/ understood that...'	Thumbs up: 'I would like to give positive feedback about/to...'	Key: 'A key moment for me was...'	Heart: 'I experienced/ felt...'
			
Puzzle: 'What I am still puzzled about and want to look into more...'	Hand: 'I was supported by.../What helped me was...'	Foot: 'My next concrete step will be...'	Camera: 'The picture that is in my mind...'

The group sits or stands around a table and decides to discuss how the team performed so far. One participant rolls the dice and the symbol that faces upwards symbolises the one to share with the group. The team member shall answer the question on the spot in a few minutes. It helps to make one participant the 'facilitator' to ask the question or support finding an answer. All team members roll the dice in turn. If needed, you can do a second or third round.



Read more in:

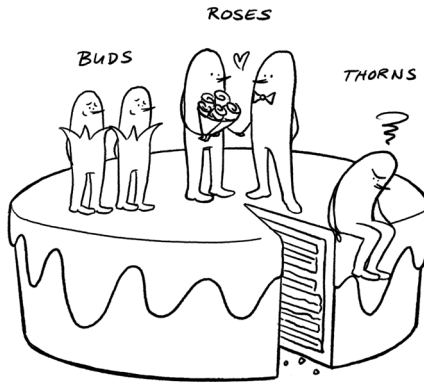
- Reflection Methods (Gordijn et al., 2018).

9. ROSES, THORNS & BUDS

If you want to go fast, first you slow down.

A productive habit for team meetings: **take time to check in.**

When you enter a meeting, you are often still busy with something else. For instance, you rushed through traffic, or you left another meeting without a break, or you just met a deadline, or you got a message on your phone, etc. Your mind is processing previous experiences that prevent you from being fully present in the meeting. You're distracted and cannot listen to other people.



Some people may be presenting something of value, and it takes a lot of energy to connect to the group again. So, you slightly panic and flip through a memo. You're afraid to ask a stupid question. Others may think it's rude that you are not paying attention.

An easy way to make everybody in the team feel heard, seen, valued, and present, and to create deeper team bonding, is to start each meeting with this 5-minute exercise.

All participants share their personal 'Rose', 'Thorn' and 'Bud':

Rose: A highlight, a success or something positive that happened.

- What was a highlight today?
- How have you been successful?
- What are you most proud of?

Thorn: A challenge you experienced or something you need more support for

- What was most stressful?
- What were causes of difficulty?
- What made it hard to be successful?

Bud: New ideas or something you're looking forward to finding out

- What are you looking forward to?
- Describe exciting opportunities for learning
- What needs growth and nurturing?

First wait till everybody is there, seated or standing. Preferably they're standing in a circle or sitting around a table.

One person starts, sharing her or his Rose, followed by the Thorn and ending with the Bud. They can be project related or personal. For instance: I received the shoes I ordered, and they are wonderful, but I almost missed the train this morning and now forgot to take my lunch. On the other hand, I am looking forward to doing the brainstorm session.

Each team member talks for about 5 minutes. Others can ask short questions, like 'what happened, what did you do, how did it make you feel?'

Don't jump in with advice to fix things. That is not the point. Although this seems to be a simple 'check in' exercise, we practice valuable skills, like listening, empathizing, verbalizing, and noticing non-verbal cues.

Remember it is a voluntary process, as a group it should be OK to opt out. The more trust among participants, the more open the conversation will be, the better the design result gets.

Read more in:

- Innovating for people: Handbook of Human-centered Design Methods (LUMA institute, 2012).
- A mindful way to reflect: Rose, Thorn, and Bud (Gonzalez, 2023).

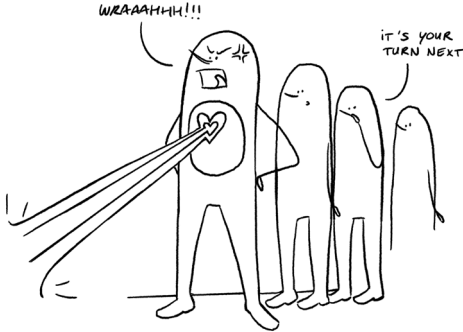
10. CREATIVE CONVERSATIONS

*Generative dialogue encourages people to share ideas, views and understanding by **listening** to the voices of others.*

Theory U's originator Otto Scharmer identifies four types of conversation:

1. **Talking nice:** Listening to confirm positive aspects
2. **Talking tough:** Listen to respond, to counter the others argument. My truth = THE truth. We agree to disagree and get stuck.
3. **Reflective dialogue:** Listen to understand, accepting the others perspective without feeling the need to disagree. Explore my perspective, the meaning I give to my experience, sharing the questions that puzzle me, allow diversity of perspectives.

4. **Generative dialogue:** Listen to the human experience of the other and what resonates with my own humanity. Unity in diversity. Sensing the wholeness of which we are part.



The dialogue process in five steps

Step 1: Connecting

(fast = 10 min // full = 20 min)

Welcome all participants and explain the dialogue rules of conversation (phones put away, everything said remains inside the safe, everyone only shares what they are comfortable with, participants don't talk about each other, but instead listen and respond thoughtfully). Propose the topic. Ask everyone to speak their name and what the topic means to them.

Step 2: Sharing experiences

(fast = 20 min // full = 50 min)

Ask participants to share personal experiences on the topic. Keep asking follow-up questions 2 or 3 times to deepen the conversation. Based on the deepening of experiences, you can talk about the sim-

ilarities and differences between these. What exactly is the issue, what is the core of each story, what touches you in their examples, what is inspiring?

Step 3. Dreaming

(fast = 15 min // full = 30 min)

First take a moment of silence. You can ask the participants to close their eyes and ask the questions about being touched and inspired to themselves. Maybe they can put some things in writing. What does an ideal future look like in relation to the subject matter? Describe their future image, what do they see, what do they hear? What would it be like if you could decide, and obstacles are not there? What would happen if you just had a little more courage, and if you could make maximum use of your talents and possibilities?

Step 4: Doing, as a group or as an individual

(fast = 10 min // full = 20 min)

Based on the acquired insights, ask the participants what they could do themselves to make the dreams happen. What could they add, what support would they need from others, who are they? See, feel, and hear their ideal future. What could they do to make this dream a reality, how can they get closer to it? What is needed, what needs attention? What is their first concrete step today, tomorrow, next week? Ask them to put it all in writing.

Step 5: Evaluation and Results

(fast = 5 // full = 10 min)

Collectively discuss the results and wrap up the dialogue. Key Questions: How was the dialogue? What are your takeaways? Thank the student team for their attentiveness and their contributions.

Quick tips for dialogue facilitators:

Prepare beforehand: think about events illustrating the dialogue's theme, select some examples from your own life, and draft a few

questions that can be used to establish the topic and jump-start the conversation. These guidelines can help:

- Focus on the **process**, leave the content to the participants. Keep steady, give space to think, use momentary pauses, and watch the time. In Phases 2 through 4, put yourself last, and only share your views if there's sufficient time.
- Make sure all participants feel they're being seen and heard, and that everyone gets their turn to speak. **Set a good example:** follow the dialogue rules, show genuine interest, and give concrete examples drawn from daily life.
- See that everyone gets involved and pays attention. **Invite participants** to speak and to listen to each other. Encourage deeper investigation of discussion topics.

Always keep the **theme** of the dialogue in sight. If necessary, use **open-ended questions** to direct participants back to that theme.

Read more in:

- Dialogue and the art of thinking together: A pioneering approach to communicating in business and in life (Isaacs, 1999).

11. INTERNATIONAL TEAM MAPPING

Dealing with diversity

Many teams have international members and stakeholders. Consequently, differences between team members in skills, knowledge, design methods and personal experiences are manifold. As designers we understand that a variety of perspectives and the ability to think and act laterally, can have a positive influence on design quality. Nevertheless, teams often struggle with using diversity to their advantage.

Design Team Communication

Effective communication differs dramatically between cultures. The West (e.g. US and Anglo-Saxon countries) communicates quite literally and explicitly. By contrast, Asian cultures (e.g. China, India, Japan, Indonesia) generally convey messages implicitly, with a lot of meaning left between the lines, like many African cultures (Kenya, Zimbabwe), and to a smaller extent Latin American (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina) and Latin European cultures (Spain, Italy, Portugal, France).

The former kind of culture features low-context communication:

Precise, simple, and clear. Messages are expressed and understood at face value. Repetition is appreciated if it clarifies meaning.

The latter is characterised by high-context communication:

Sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. Messages are both spoken and read between the lines. They're often implied rather than plainly expressed.

To navigate cultural differences one can adapt to different communication styles. Become an '*agile communicator*'.

*With designers from **low-context cultures**:*

- Be as transparent, clear, and specific as possible
- Don't read between the lines, but state clear what you don't understand and ask for clarification if needed
- At the end of a conversation, recap what was agreed upon, to make sure you have the same understanding
- Don't be extremely polite, ask as many questions as you need to understand context

*With designers from **high-context cultures**:*

- Practice listening more carefully (you need to find out what is said between the lines). Listen to what is meant, not only said: listen to the 'air'

- Pay attention to body language
- Ask open ended questions to give the other person space (not yes or no-questions)
- Clarify when you are not sure you understood the message
- Assume good intentions

Assignment:

The Team Culture Map is a cooperation tool to support international teams.

1. Communicating	Explicit	Implicit
2. Evaluating feedback	Direct negative	Indirect negative
3. Persuading	Deductive	Inductive
4. Leading	Hierarchical	Egalitarian
5. Deciding	Consensual	Top down
6. Trusting	Task	Relationship
7. Disagreeing	Confrontational	Harmonious
8. Scheduling	Structured	Flexible

It discerns between eight cultural characteristics on a scale between two extremes. As described earlier the first one, Communicating, varies between explicit and implicit. The other scales are defined similarly. Each dimension represents a key area, showing how cultures vary along a spectrum from one extreme to the other.

Mapping the design team on all dimensions is a very insightful way to better understand each other. It will facilitate a more empathic team, connecting not only rationally, but also emotionally. The model (Meyer) does not concern good nor bad. It only describes opposing ways to go about. Decoding the team will drastically improve team functioning. It is recommended to incorporate all stakeholders (i.e. team coach, researchers, and client). **Note: Even with a full Dutch team, it will still deliver valuable insight in team cooperation.**

Design your own Team Culture Map scoring each team member. Discuss the differences and similarities, consider the suggestions you can use for improvement. Print the final team map poster and put in on the wall together with the most relevant suggestions for your team.

Read more in:

- The Culture Map (Meyer, 2014).

12. THE COACH JOURNAL

Logging team progress

In the team of coaches, you will discuss your team's progress, their hurdles, and their successes. If you would discuss all teams, every week, this would take up a lot of time. Moreover, the topics discussed are not likely to be of much interest to all participants. Specific issues with dysfunctional teams are easily overlooked. The shared Coach Journal helps you logging all activities your team did that week, but also works as a thermometer for overall team performance, both for your team and all teams together. You get strategic data both on the progress of the student team in relation to the end goal, and operational data on team dynamics. Strategic data grow during the process, but operational data vary over time. They relate to the emotional state of the team, mutual trust, communication quality and reaching their goal in time. The performance dashboard is very helpful as a 'reflection-in-action' tool for coaches.

Practice assignment:

Making progress estimations may be slightly out of your comfort

zone. The coach team exercises by first together designing a fantasy concept in 30 minutes. The quick ‘n dirty design of a concept, for instance for a submarine public transportation system, or an outdoor kitchen, or forestry boots, a fertilizer spreader, or whatever, is doable. The point, however, is logging the process afterwards by each coach filling in their own Coach journal with their observations.

Filling in the log

The coaches get 20 minutes for this.

The Journal lists three strategical performance indicators that concern the definition of (1) key challenges, (2) research questions, and (3) methods of approach. Four operational indicators are provided underneath: (4) project management, (5) planning and on-time completion, (6) group dynamics, and (7) perceived stress levels. They can apply Theory U and Cynefin.

Discussing the logs

Comparing results takes 30 minutes. One by one the resulting Key Performance Indicators are discussed. Some may have similar outcomes. These are clear and shouldn't take much time. Other ones may show very different outcomes. You learn by comparing interpretations.

Context

The Coach Journal supports the team and is a time saver. In preparation for a real coach team meeting, the coordinator analyzes all the data, and notes down the troublesome project teams that are to be discussed.

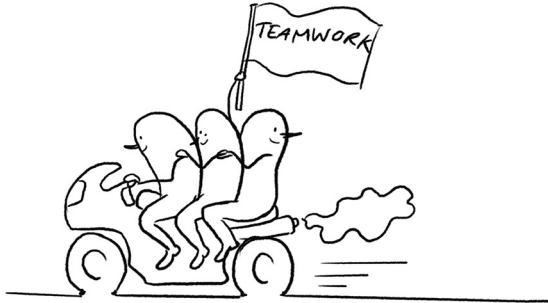
The dashboard shows a general benchmark score for all teams (top left). Troublesome student teams are spotted very easily. Specific student-team data on every team (top right) shows every datapoint entered by the coach. To see whether things have changed over time, the coordinator can go even deeper by selecting indicator

and show its history (bottom left).

With these data the coordinator can focus the discussion and start a dialogue to address issues and find solutions. All coaches are involved and use their experience, and knowledge to discuss solutions for the issues that the students come across. If a problem cannot be solved within the team, the coordinator can decide to bring in external experts.

Read more in:

- Handle with care: coaching multi-diverse project groups to become healthy design teams (Flipsen & Persaud, 2020).



TEAMWORK WILL GET YOU THERE

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“In an increasingly complex world, it is essential to equip our students not only with in-depth knowledge but also with versatile skills for working on projects and collaborating in diverse teams. This shift demands a different approach from educators, placing greater emphasis on coaching and mentoring students. This book is a must-read for anyone involved in guiding students beyond traditional disciplinary knowledge.”

Rob Mudde, vice-president education in the executive board of Delft University of Technology

“A highly instructive book for readers who want to improve their coaching skills, but it is much more than that. Bas, Stefan, and Ed have woven a rich tapestry of coaching knowledge, science, humor and, above all, love for this great educational art.”

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Is coaching student design teams a secret? Not really. But it is complicated and the best way to learn it is to dive in and be open. Experienced coaches put this cheerfully illustrated book together to help you recognise many coaching situations and the way to respond to them. The book provides tools as well as more than ten practical examples of team workshops. Moreover, it provides a system to efficiently manage extended coaching projects with more teams. Feel supported and get coaching.

