

This piece by Jessica Löwenhielm & Niklas Lindhardt illustrates a ROG consulting approach in organisational settings in Sweden. The key theory maps are the Wave model and the Gestalt OD cycle of engagement.

Jessica Löwenhielm and Niklas Lindhardt: Applying Relational Organizational Gestalt using a 5D Appreciative Inquiry process for team and organizational development

This article addresses the need for finding new ways of working with an emergent and relational facilitation approach within a short time frame and in an online setting. The pandemic has disrupted our old ways of working, and the need for dialogue, collaboration and addressing change within organisations has escalated as a cause of it. We found it important to respond to these shifts and find new frameworks and processes.

Hypothesis: Combining a validated, preformulated, directive OD-process with an emergent, relational facilitation framework would enhance the energetic field and engage the participants on a deeper level, thereby enabling emergence and securing attending to “the most pressing need”. We anticipated this resulting in a co-created plan for change, toward a collectively defined direction.

We, as facilitators, wanted to explore our own facilitation development after going through the ROG certification. “Who are we becoming as facilitators now? How can we bring about freedom and authenticity when holding space, allowing ourselves to be more ourselves yet holding a strong facilitation between us?” These inquiries were alive in us as we decided to create this case study.

This article is based on two cases where the Appreciative Inquiry 5D Process is applied in a relatively short time frame in an on-line setting. We explore how we implicitly and explicitly relate to the unified field, (Parlett, 1997), the “wave model” of ego, id and personality, and the Gestalt OD cycle of engagement throughout the process, (Chidiac, M.A, (2017), Gestalt as a relational approach to OD; British Gestalt Journal 2017, Vol. 26, No.1, 48–56). The article also reflects on the need for a relational, co-emergent approach to team and organizational development and the importance of mutuality in the relationship between the client and the consultant.

Cases and general approach

Case A: a large industry OEM and their supplier, running a 5D process to enhance collaboration across the two organizations to strengthen the mutual development efforts of the OEM-product, following a time of increasing conflict and detachment from a collaborative view.

Case B: a market data provider company and 6 of its most important clients running a 5D process to enhance collaboration and develop new strategies of how to work in a mutually strengthening way.

In both cases, we emphasised the importance of creating an open and safe container to meet the human need to feel seen and heard and to engage on a personal level as a prerequisite for an emergent, collaborative process to unfold. Facilitation of the entire process was done using ROG-methodology, something that is not usually done in a 5D-process.

We also made it a point to intervene relationally with participants of the process in the pre-stage (before the workshop), within the actual workshop, and in the closure and end of it. This

was done through individual emailing, answering of preparation forms and securing that all voices were continually heard through the process.

The application of the 5D process in brief

Define – co-define the challenges at hand and co-define the boundaries to work within. Needs and challenges are collected individually, to let the most pressing need emerge, revealing waves - (ego), challenging a collaborative stance in the business partnership.

The explicit documentation of the “ego” also initiated questioning into sea depth currents and flows - (id).

Discover - deepen the co-diagnosis, inquiring into what currently works well, identifying strengths and capabilities that may be used to address the identified challenge(s).

This step identifies strengthening waves - ego, and also sea depth currents and flows – id. It also starts to open the perspective of the seabed - personality

Focusing the dialogue on the “we/partnership” presenting in the field, we direct the participants to take a less dualistic stance.

Dream - collaboratively depict a “future perfect state” a dream for the challenge(s).

Visiting the perspective of “what is made possible when the dream comes true: for self and organization,” tangible sensations of the dream coming true were created. This in turn creates an experience of the future dream as liberating, anchoring the dream in each individual.

By also visiting the “worst possible case, if nothing is done” a larger field of sensing and awareness is shaped, sparking energy to mobilize action in the further stages of the process.

Design – Co-identify and co-initiate possible paths toward the dream.

By utilizing the collective field of sensing and intelligence, areas for action emerge. These areas shape a co-created map of possible paths forward.

In this stage, the groups widen the awareness from the initially articulated “waves” to also cover the levels beneath.

Deploy - Co-define and formulate first steps toward the dream and co-create a plan how to navigate and re-calibrate the chosen interventions along the way.

This step concretizes how the group wants the waves, sea depth and seabed to evolve from the current moment into the future. In so doing we are opening up for sensing the field as it emerges in the deployment of the activities.

A joint review and celebration of the results form a first evaluation of the process and serve as an early Entry/Contracting for the start of implementation of the actions.

Process Results

We were intrigued and positively surprised by the outcome of the workshop. A strong felt sense of deep connection both between the facilitators and with the whole group had been accomplished.

Both processes resulted in greater mutual trust and collaborative strategies to reach a closer partnership. The process also created vital insights into each other’s needs and challenges.

Not only did the concrete output exceed expectations; in the check-out dialogue and evaluation survey to all participants after the workshops the process was described as “surprisingly uplifting”, “creative & efficient”, “fun and playful”.

Client quotes:

“The output of this process widely exceeded my expectations, both in activity output and building trust and connection.”

“I now see how limited I’ve been in viewing the other suppliers in the market as competitors, now I see we have common challenges and opportunities and by working together we can achieve more!”.

Discussion and Conclusion

We find this a new way to facilitate a group for greater emergence and a stronger felt sense of openness and authenticity. By learning to trust emergence and facilitate from the ROG-certification we can contribute more and deeper to bringing about change.

Applying relational, emergent facilitation within a validated, directive 5D-process opens the co-creational field to enable deeper connection between participants. This in turn shapes a sense of trust, to stay in collective sensing long enough to co-shape a deeper understanding of ego, id and personality of, and between, groups and organizations. As facilitators we felt more at ease, open and less directive than usual when bringing a strong ROG-methodology. After learning how to trust emergence and staying with it, deeper needs were revealed. This opens up for solutions that not only tend to the most obvious visible needs and behaviours, but also to the deeper underlying reasons for detachment from a collaborative view. It also opens a more fluid, greater container that gives freedom to manoeuvre and to use self as an instrument in the process.

Strengthening of relations in the process also set a foundation for continuance of the co-created plan, making the ROG-framed 5D process a starting point of a new way of collaborating. With this case study the authors have become even more confident in trusting emergence and daring to hold a deeper space in the service and benefit of self, other and the system.

Jessica Löwenhielm



Jessica is Co-Active Coach (CPCC), Relational Organisational Gestalt Practitioner and Vertical development strategist, coach and trainer as well as organisational consultant. She is the co-founder of IntoTheNew who develop individuals, leaders and their organisations vertically using a combination of vertical and relational coaching, facilitating and OD methodologies. Jessica is an experienced leader with over 15 years working with leadership, business operations and transformations within international and Nordic organisations. She has a background in and holds a master’s degree in business administration. You can contact Jessica at jessica@wholly.se

Niklas Lindhardt



After a traditional management career in the software industry Niklas founded a self-organizing, employee-driven, agile organisation IntoTheNew, which focuses on concepts such as self-leadership, dynamic structures, complex systems, leading self and each other. He immersed himself in the subject of self organisation, and has certifications in developmental psychology, coaching, network organization, sustainable social change, and value-driven organization. He offers vertical development of human consciousness at individual, leader and organisational level. He believes a greater consciousness serves us better, as individuals, as organisations and as world. You can contact Niklas at niklas.lindhardt@gmail.com

