

Toolkit Interactive Approach

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Introduction, toolkit interactive approach

The article about the special learning route on interactive management, also in this issue, describes how new ways of *communication* are developed to shape *mutual responsibility*. The argument in the article aims on the learning process 'interactive management' and its principles.

In this contribution we discuss *three techniques* of the interactive approach. In this way it is a *toolkit* for its application. Continuing in the line of the article, we use the term interactive approach – rather than just interactive management. With this we want to indicate that this Toolkit consists of tools which are applicable in different kinds of work relations – i.e. also in the relation between colleagues or between teachers and students.

Work principles, principles of communication

The thought that people in organizations take true responsibility when they are valued for their personal commitment and goals, lies at the root of the interactive approach. According to this approach, colleagues are focused on building such a relationship where supporting each other from personal motives and goals is central. *One helps the other to take responsibility*, in here lies the principle of mutual responsibility. This also means that one stimulates a colleague to step in this mutual work relation. This is about ways of communicating. In the communication it is important to appreciate the other. This should be mutual and is based on mutual exchange.

Three people are involved in interactive working: an *initiator* has an idea, an *actor* does something with this and a *supporter* supports this person. In this way a purposeful 'triangular relationship' between colleagues originates.

An example:

A team manager notices that Steven, since two years working as an employee in a rest home, doesn't find his job challenging anymore. The team manager would like to see more inspiration and new ways of working. Unfortunately, there is not enough money. The team manager decides to discuss this with Steven. He acknowledges Steven's qualities and asks him what he considers as new possibilities for the team to develop. What considers Steven to be really important? He says his work is getting a bit boring. While discussing this topic, Steven gets to the point that he would like to be more in charge and lead a team. The team manager appreciates this step and asks Steven what possibilities he sees. They come up with the possibility to support students on work placement. He asks Steven to assign for this function. Besides, the team manager shares again with Steven his need for more inspiration and new ways of working. Students might bring this inspiration and new ways of working?

While working with a student, Steven feels the passion again he experienced before and the student is stimulated to bring in new ideas.

The tools

This *Toolkit* contains three techniques considering the interactive approach:

1. The 2x2 set of questions

In order to work from personal goals, one first needs to formulate these goals. Therefore you need to focus. Considering the formulation of these goals, the 2x2 set of questions is very helpful. In what way do I formulate my personal goals clear and realistic? How can I do this together with others? How can I help others with focusing? If others know these goals, are they able to connect to it?

2. Analysis of the people involved

When you want to create something, the next questions are important to ask yourself: who can take part in this? Who also considers the issues I want to work on as important? Who is able to help me? Together with whom do I want to do this job? The bottom line is that you need to search for suitable partners – so what is the current status of your relational network?

3. Enter relations

When you formulate your personal goals and when you have analysed your network, the exciting part starts: can I build a true work relation with this person? How do I achieve such a relation? We will present some useful skills to do this.

Below we discuss each technique more in detail.

✂ Tool 1: The 2x2 set of questions

In the interactive approach it is about taking responsibility for a 'job' or an idea, based on personal goals. Personal goals often consist of a vague direction or an abstract idea. It is not always easy to connect rough ambitions and concrete activities. Nevertheless, both ambitions and activities are important results in your work. The 2x2 method helps to clarify results and activities in your work as a result of ambitions

What is the tool?

The 2x2 set of questions is a tool to determine the content in a project or within a cooperation in general. By asking the four questions, one pays attention to the essence. In four steps you get from ambition to result.

Where can you use the tool for?

It is important to know what you are going to do when you want to achieve a goal. The 2x2 questions are helpful by thinking in advance about when your initiative will be successful. The questions help to design an initiative.

How does the tool work?

You ask yourself or each other four questions. The first two questions are concerned with *what you want* and *how you want* it. The second two questions are concerned with *what you need* to be successful in it.

The 2x2 questions:

1. Why is what you want so important??
2. What do you consider as a result?
3. What do you need and what skills are necessary to achieve this result?
4. What will be your first step?

Explanation of the questions

1. Importance

Question 1 is important to *focus*. It is about the reason you want something. 'That's why it is so important. This is where it is about.' It is of importance to have in mind why you are doing something. It needs to be urgent.

2. Result

Question 2 is concerned with the *result* you want to achieve. It is about what you really want to get done. The result is not what you have to do, but what you want to achieve, and how your success will become visible. It is worth it to design the final situation, for example by one or more concrete examples. In this way you can determine where you want to go to.

3. Conditions and skills

You ask the third question when you want to know the following: *if I know what to do, how do I get to know what I need for this?* See this as an expedition which you are undertaking together with others. You ask yourself: when I want to succeed, what do I need? What skills do I need? When you have answered this question it is necessary to find out how you can develop these necessary competences.

4. Action

Question 4 is concerned with really doing something with the ideas you have developed. Making arrangements, that's where it is about!

You can ask these questions yourself when you want to create more focus on the content. The answers will provide your direction. But the questions have an additional relational function when you go through this process together with others. It will help you to create a shared vision and common goals.

✂ **Tool 2: Analysis of the stakeholders**

The success or failure of an initiative will be determined by the involvement of other stakeholders: employees, colleagues, customers, managers, or other people involved. By making an analysis of the people involved, you create insight in the most important actors for the achievement of your goal.

What is the tool?

The analysis is an exploration of the relevant people involved in the initiative and how these people are related to each other. The emphasis in the analysis is on the relational aspect. It is not the content that is central, but from the relation is viewed how the content will be formed or adjusted.

Where can you use the tool for?

The tool can be used to create insight in the relations which are relevant for the initiative. For this, people are connected to various roles. In the triangular model we distinguish three roles (figure 1):

- *Initiator*: sets an initiative in motion;
- *Actor*: acts actively in order to get the work done;
- *Supporter*: supports the actor in the realization of the initiative.

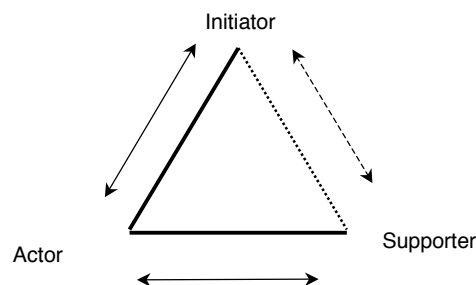


Figure 1: The triangular model

How does the tool work?

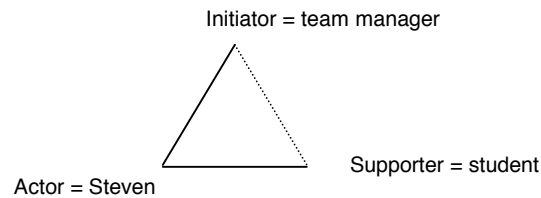
In the analysis of the stakeholders we use four steps:

1. Who are the relevant people involved?
Brainstorm on who is involved in the project. Explore this by positioning them on a flipchart. By doing this, a kind of relational web originates.
2. What kind of connection exists between these people?
Map again the people involved, but now with the help of the triangular model.
3. Which role do the people involved (initiator, actor and supporter) have?
Attribute the roles to the people involved within (multiple) triangles. In each triangle: Who is the initiator? Who is the actor? And who is the supporter?
4. How do we approach and involve the different people involved?
Brainstorm on how the people involved can be approached in their different roles. On what people we need to pay extra attention to? How can we support them in taking responsibility for their role?

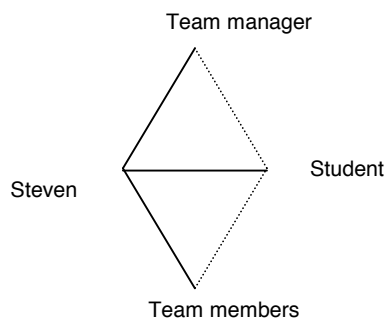
For a moment we return to the example above: *The team manager has a desire and an idea. He wants to see new inspiration in his department. He aims on Steven, because he has noticed that Steven wants to do new things and that he gets a bit bored in his current job. The team manager explores, together with Steven, the 2x2 questions in order to create a solution. Steven wants to use his qualities more and he wants to experience fun in his work*

again (question 1). His most important result: he would like to be more in charge and lead a team (question 2). Then they think about the possibility for students on work placement and they discuss a way of working with students in which they feel free to develop new ideas (question 3). Then Steven enters a 'responsible relationship' with a student. (question 4).

From the perspective of the interactive approach, the following figure is created:



The team manager then involves other team members to elaborate on the ideas created by Steven and the student. Thus, a second triangle is created. This second triangle supports the first.



✳ Tool 3: Entering the relation

The first two tools assist in creating an overview of the ambitions and the people involved. A next step is to enter the relation for cooperation. This third tool provides an extensive examination on this. We release the example here, because the tool itself is reasonably concrete.

What is the tool?

The tool consists of a guideline for conversations to start the interactive approach. In this conversation you enter a relationship which is build on shared responsibility and mutual attractiveness.

Where can you use the tool for?

This tool can be used by all the people in the triangle to enter a relation for cooperation. In this way, each of the three roles can invite the other for an effective relation: the initiator can

trigger for action, the actor can gain support and the supporter is able to facilitate the communication between the initiator and the actor.

How does the tool work?

The guideline for conversation consists of three phases:

1. Entering the relation
2. Share responsibility
3. Create a new interaction

These phases are described in a concrete way in the schema presented below.

Phase 1 Entering the relation	
Think about what you consider as really important	<i>Focus on what you want from the other</i>
Assess the situation, is it appropriate to approach the other and how can you do that	<i>Make eye contact Show with your facial expression and attitude that you are serious</i>
Announce what you want to do	<i>Say that you want to discuss something important and that you would like to discuss this with <u>him</u>. Complete this with a sincere compliment</i>
Phase 2 Share responsibility	
Explain what you want	<i>Use these three steps:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explain what you perceived (I saw/heard/I said/I read..);</i> • <i>What the effect was of this;</i> • <i>What you really want, what you need</i>
Create a moment of silence	<i>Give the other the opportunity to react.</i>
Phase 3 Create a new interaction: receive, continue asking questions and connect	
Be an active listener and receive what the other says	<i>Be interested in what the other is telling you. Reflect his feelings and summarize Suppress the tendency to discuss your own experiences and beliefs Realize that the other can feel surprised, make sure you take care of that</i>
Continue asking what it is that is attractive for the other	<i>Try, by asking questions, to find out what the core is of what the other means. Summarize the positive conclusions</i>

<p>Ask with who he would like to pick this up and what they are going to achieve</p>	<p><i>Compliment; explore together the possibilities. Be keen on how you can help the other.</i></p> <p><i>Ask who will be an interesting stakeholder; does he need this other party? Would it be helpful to do this together? What would be the concrete result?</i></p>
<p>Discuss how you could undertake action together</p>	<p><i>Ask the other what he is going to do: what are you going to do first? And then? Make arrangements, leave the term up to the other.</i></p>

To conclude

The essence of this Toolkit is looking for motivation, energy and opportunities to involve the other. Where is the connection for interaction and cooperation? And in what way can I tempt the other to join?

Involving another means that your point of view on the content is not the only perspective anymore. You need to be prepared to design new and better perspectives, plans or opinions together.

And to conclude, it is important to share true responsibility: provide the other with your support and give him the freedom to undertake action.

To hold a conversation in this way demands reflection on your own perspective, active listening skills and trust to let it go.

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