

Developing Naturally: from Management to Organization to Society to Selves

by Henry Mintzberg

For the past 15 years, and especially since I published *Managers not MBAs* in 2004, we have been on a journey: to renew organizations by transforming how their managers are developed. We have come a long way, through our own development of a family of programs that suggest some novel ways by which organizations can be renewed. This has been based on three assumptions.

First, organizations are communities of human beings, not collections of human resources. As human beings, we engage with our communities. Indeed, we cherish the very sense of community, since it is the social glue that bonds us together for the social good, and so allows us to function energetically. Organizations thus work best when they too are communities, of committed people who work in cooperative relationships, under conditions of trust and respect. Destroy this, and the whole institution of business and other organizations collapses.

Consider the organizations you most admire: is that because of their measures, their rhetoric, their downsizing, their outsourcing? Or do they rate highly in your mind because of their devotion to mission, their culture, the enthusiasm of their people—ultimately their sense of community?

Second, communityship is built through an engaged management that cares, not a heroic leadership that cures. It may be fashionable to distinguish leaders from managers, but would you like to work for a manager who does not lead? That can be pretty discouraging. How about a leader who doesn't manage? That can be awfully disengaging: how is he or she suppose to know what is going on? We have had more than enough of detached, heroic leadership: it is time for more engaged management, embedded in "communityship."

Third, instead of programs to create tomorrow's leaders, we need initiatives that commit today's managers. No manager, let alone leader, has ever been created in a classroom. In other words, it is my belief that we don't *teach* leadership, the title of this handbook notwithstanding. Management/leadership is a practice, rooted in experience, not a science or profession, rooted in analysis. What a classroom can do is take people with that experience and the demonstrated skills of leadership, and leverage that alongside their natural inclination to drive necessary change. It has been said about bacon and eggs that while the chicken is involved, the pig is committed. Development is about commitment: to the job, for sure, but also to the organization, and beyond that, to society in a responsible way.

Our Own Development

This brings me to the efforts that we, as a community of colleagues—academics, consultants, developers, and managers—have been engaged in and committed to since the mid 1990s.

We began in our own place, with “management” education in the business school. But our journey has taken us well beyond that, into the workplace where management is practiced and out to society where it has impact.

Unhappy with the business schools’ flagship program, the MBA, years ago I began to question it. This led to an embarrassing question that should never be asked of an academic: “What are you doing about it?” I thought academics were not supposed to *do* anything about anything.

As the question kept coming up, a group of us decided to act: to rethink business education as management education combined with management development, in a master’s degree program for practicing managers committed to their companies. The intention was not for them to *get* a better job, but to *do* a better job.

As our journey progressed, one program led to another. Next, we were drawn into organization development: how much more powerful it would be to have the managers developing their organizations while they were developing themselves. The consequence was a shorter program, for teams of managers sent by the companies, to work on key issues in a process we came to call “friendly consulting.”

The subsequent step took us to social development. We created a program like the first, but for practicing managers in health care. Here we found them inclined to reach out to the broader issues of their external communities, and to bring these into the classroom from some of that friendly consulting.

And the final, unexpected step, has taken us to the most natural place of all: self-development, as managers take collective responsibility for their own development and that of their organizations.

All of these activities can be called *natural development*. Together they constitute a family of endeavors that changes how management is practiced—as engaging—and how organizations are renewed—as communities. Each program is discussed in turn, for the insights it offers, before considering the four of them together in conclusion.

Carrying Management Education into Management Development: grounded reflection for insight

The conventional MBA is just that: it is about *business* administration. It does a fine job of teaching the business functions—finance, accounting, marketing; etc.—but little to teach management and leadership. In fact, giving young people without management experience the impression that they have been trained to manage as well as lead all too often promotes hubris instead.

Much of this education relies on learning from other people’s experience, either indirectly, in the form of theory—the distillation of experience—or directly, through cases. For years the Wharton School has boasted on its website that its EMBA students, typically people with considerable work experience, receive the same content as its regular MBA students, “You get the full Wharton MBA—the same innovative curriculum” as in the “full-time MBA program” [downloaded August 2009]. How extraordinary: being proud of not doing any more for experienced managers than for people who have never managed!

There is nothing wrong with learning from other people's experience. We all do it. But there is something far more powerful about learning from our own experience. T.S. Elliott wrote in one of his poems that "We had the experience but missed the meaning." Management education should be about getting the meaning. In fact, in his book *Rules for Radicals*, Saul Alinsky claimed that "happenings become experience...when they are reflected on, related to general patterns and synthesized" (1971: 68-69).

MBA, or MPM? Reflecting on one's own experience, and sharing that with other managers, is thus key to management learning. This has been *our* learning, which began in 1996 when we set out to rethink the education of managers, bringing management development into management education under the label of our International Masters in Practicing Management (www.IMP.org).

The IMPM, which has been running since then, takes managers around the world in five ten day modules over sixteen months, each based on a different managerial mindset: the reflective mindset (managing self), the analytic mindset (managing organizations), the worldly mindset (managing context), the collaborative mindset (managing relationships), and the action mindset (managing change). *

Most of the participating managers in the IMPM, who average about forty years of age, are sent by their companies, which strengthens the bond between the two—that is, enhances commitment, both ways. In fact, a number of companies—Panasonic, Fujitsu, Lufthansa, LG, Alcan (now Rio Tinto)—have been sending groups of managers to most or all of our IMPM classes since 1996.

Using Work, not Making Work Managers these days are busy people. The last thing they need, when taking time off for development, is more work back at work. The logical solution is to *use* work more than *make* work, in other words, build as much of the learning as possible into the classroom itself, drawing on the natural experiences of the participating managers.

One key way to facilitate this, we have learned, is by having the managers sit at round tables in a flat room so that they needn't "break out" to share their experience. (See the box on "The Architecture of Engagement.") Ideas that come up—from the managers or the faculty—can be turned into instant workshops for the managers to consider in light of their experience, and to pursue their implications. In fact, a 50:50 rule in our IMPM classrooms calls for half of the classroom time to be turned over to the managers—*on their agendas*.

Beyond the classroom, we try to blend the other components of the program with the managers' natural needs and schedules as much as possible. For example, *reflection papers* are written after each module, to link what the managers learned at it to themselves, their jobs, and their organizations. And between the second and third modules, the manager's pair up and do a *managerial exchange*, spending the better part of a week visiting and hosting at each others' workplace. This is a hugely popular part of the program—getting into the shoes of a colleague and offering comments on his or her activities and concerns.

* See my article with Jonathan Gosling "The Five Minds of a Manager" in the *Harvard Business Review* (November 2003)

“The Best Management Book I ever Read” The learning philosophy of the IMPM manifests itself most clearly in what we call “Morning Reflections.” (See Exhibit 1.)

All the managers in the IMPM get an “Insight Book.” It has their name on the cover, but is otherwise blank. First thing each morning, everyone writes quietly in this book: reflections about themselves and their work, issues that came up the day before and overnight, etc. After 5-10 minutes, the managers engage each other around their table to share these reflections. And after about fifteen minutes of this, a plenary discussion, sometimes in one big circle without any faculty, draws out the most interesting of the insights. These morning reflections have become the integrative glue that bonds together the learning across the entire program—in fact, in all our programs.

Lufthansa holds a meeting each year to welcome its new participants to the IMPM. One year a graduate held up her insight book and declared: “This is the best management book I ever read!” If we are serious about engagement, about managers taking responsibility for their own development and that of their organizations, shouldn’t every manager’s best management book be the one they have written for themselves?

Impact Teams Most managers come home from developmental programs alone, even if they have been with colleagues from their company in the class. There has been no easy way to anchor and extend their learning into the organization, for impact.

Since the outset, we have been concerned about such “impact.” To what degree have the managers in the IMPM been carrying their learning back to the workplace, for *coaching impact* (the learner in the classroom becoming the teacher on the job) and *action impact* (carrying the learning into activities to change the organization). We have encouraged these in all sorts of ways, and much has happened: for example, some managers have replicated parts of the modules with their staff, while others have made changes in their organizations based on what they learned. But this had to go farther.

In 2009, after an IMPM module, a group of faculty met with HR representatives from two of the companies that had long been involved in the program, Lufthansa and Rio Tinto, to brainstorm about impact. There the suggestion arose to establish a team back at work behind each of the managers participating in the program, a kind of virtual team to do the program too, by proxy. This could leverage the learning from the classroom into the workplace, and spread the costs: send one manager, develop six more.

While a team in the classroom is rarely a team back in the organization, a team around the manager at work is a natural team—and a potential community of learning and development, since it is made up of people who work together all the time.

As I described in “Rebuilding Companies as Communities” (*Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2009), small teams at middle management levels may be more effective at changing an organization than concentrated efforts from the “top”. Such managers are often remarkably committed to the enterprise, and sometimes ideally connected as well: close enough to the operations, where ideas often begin (and get lost), yet able to appreciate the big picture.

Thus was born *IMPact*, a pact between the manager in a learning program and the team he or she designates back at work—of reports, peers, associates, whoever makes the most sense—for management development carried into organization development. It is now being applied in the IMPM.

Connecting Management Development to Organization Development: friendly consulting for significant change

Of course, not all managers can take a full degree program. So to change how management is practiced, we next gave consideration to a shorter program for management and organization development.

AMP, or ALP? Most popular have been the Advanced Management Programs (AMPs), generally offered by business schools. But how advanced are they?

Many are, in fact, shorter replicas of the conventional MBA: they use many of the same cases and much of the same theory; are built around the same business functions; seat the managers in the same linear rows; and so on. Do managers who are just coming into general management need to be pushed back into the functional silos? Do people with a great deal of personal experience need the second handedness of the MBA? If a management development program is to develop insight and innovation, shouldn't its own design be insightful and innovative?

Some of these programs promise boot camp, to keep the managers busy. Most managers these days live boot camp all the time. What they desperately need is to pause, step back, and reflect thoughtfully on their own experience.

Accordingly, we took a hard look at these AMPs and developed what we call an ALP, an *Advanced Leadership Program* (www.alp-imp.com). It comprises three modules of five days each spread over six months, making use of our learning from the IMPM: the engaged seating, the morning reflections, the managerial mindsets, etc. But the ALP has taken an additional step, by combining organization development with management development.

Addressing Company Issues through Friendly Consulting Most programs offer chairs. We decided to offer tables, asking companies to send teams of six managers who could work at the round tables to share their insights and use these to tackle key concerns of their company. Each team is asked to bring to the ALP a significant issue from the company, and together the different teams work on each other's issues in a process we call *friendly consulting*. It has proved to be a powerful addition: the managers love it—better than a busman's holiday.

Friendly consulting means that, as practicing managers, all these people bring expertise and experience to issues they all understand because they have all lived them in one way or another—theirs and those of the other companies. Just consider a couple of them: “How do we enhance and sustain a culture of customer service?” or “How do we motivate our first-line employees?” As a result, every manager can contribute to each other's problem solving as well as learning, with no axe to grind. This creates an environment rich in inquiry, dialogue, and sense of community. Accordingly, the managers learn as much being friendly consultants as they do receiving the advice of their consulting colleagues—sometimes much more, as we shall see.

Organizations have two common ways to deal with a difficult issue: strike an internal task force, or bring in outside consultants. Either can be helpful, although one can suffer from insularity, the other from detachment. So imagine the two together. That is what friendly

consulting is all about. More than half of the class time is devoted to the company teams working on their own and each others' issues: framing the issue; receiving feedback from the others and then reframing it; doing field visits to each other's companies to probe into their issue; and getting deeper into what needs changing and how to go about doing it.

Motivate Whom? Let's go back to that issue of motivating the first line employees, because it illustrates what can be done with this approach. The company was VIA Rail, Canada's passenger railway (which cleared for publication what is described below). The friendly consultants spent a day in the company, to probe into this issue with managers at all levels as well as within the operations, to experience the basic services and to speak with those first-line employees. They returned to announce to the company team: "You don't need to motivate your first-line employees; they are plenty motivated. You should use them to further motivate your managers." This was obviously an insight for the VIA team, but it proved equally so for the friendly consultants. "Do you think the same thing is happening in your company?" I asked one of them. "Exactly!" she answered. They just never did a comparable field study in their own company.

This example makes clear something else: a specific issue may be assigned, but ultimately the company is the issue. What really brings the ALP to organization development is that the team members begin to see more deeply into their own organization, and especially its culture. As one manager of another VIA team commented after a field visit (as reported in Beverley Patwell and Edith Seashore's 2006 book *Triple Impact Coaching*): "Our discussions, exercises, and reflections made us realize that we were a product of our organization's culture..." From this they "learned how to work as a cross-functional team and how to leverage their individual contributions".

Back home, the team organized a two-day retreat that "re-energized the organization, created a shift in mindset, and aligned people from across [the company] around a common goal and action plan... Three years later...the ALP team continues to meet regularly and has become the think tank of [the company's] customer focus initiatives. The customer is talked about every day at every level of the company." Another of the team members commented that "I am amazed at the impact that a group of individuals [in middle management] can have on an organization". After years of engaging in this kind of development, we were not amazed!

Enough Analysis: time for coffee and donuts The first thing that many of these ALP teams want to do is analyze: hire marketing researchers, do a business plan, and so on. "Enough analysis," we say, "You have decades of experience among yourselves about the company. Use it right here, now!"

We hadn't planned on field visits in one running of the program: the company sites were too widely dispersed around the world. But when we told the story about the first-line employees, the class decided, spontaneously, to self-organize for field trips between the first and second ALP modules.

A manager of one of the teams, from Motorola, who was based in Singapore, visited Hanson, the building materials company, in Australia. Its issue concerned customer service. Back in class, he told the Hanson team that while he was riding in a truck delivering aggregate to a building site, the driver stopped for coffee and donuts. "Why don't you give them coffee

and donuts while the truck is being loaded?” the friendly consultant suggested. This wasn’t exactly a momentous recommendation—he had others of greater consequence—but it provided an opening for the faculty: “Here you have it. Customer service is not about marketing research reports in some distant office; it’s about coffee and donuts on the ground!” That’s how to change the practice of management.

Extending Management and Organization Development to Social Development: outreach to surrounding communities

Our programs, as noted, are about community building: the classroom itself becomes a community, as does each of the teams within it, plus all of this is designed to enhance the sense of communityship back in the organization. But the world of organizations also extends into the social communities that surround the organization.

Four years ago we created a third initiative, a masters program modeled after the IMPM, also using the innovations of the ALP, for managers from all aspects of health care, worldwide.* We call it the International Masters for Health Leadership (www.mcgill.ca/imhl). The managers sit at the same tables and engage in similar reflections, in five modules based on similar mindsets. Plus they bring in their issues, and act as friendly consultants to each other on them. The content is different—health care is not a business, even if it is significantly supplied by businesses—but the architecture of the classroom and the processes within it have proved applicable.

But we wanted to take another step, bump up this organization development to social development, by having teams in the class address the big issues in health care. For example, one physician, head of a large family practice clinic, defined his issue as engaging the clients in the practice. So why not see this as an issue that cuts across so much of health care?

That was easy enough to encourage. For many of its people, in the operations and administration alike, health care is a calling. They are there to contribute to the greater good.

Outreach But something else happened that took us by surprise. Groups in the first class began to reach out in various ways, using the class to address specific health care issues in their communities. For example, two physician managers from Uganda, one with the World Health Organization, the other in the Ugandan health ministry, organized a conference in Kampala to carry this philosophy of natural learning into African health care. It was attended by sixty health care managers from seven African countries. Despite some initial reservations about whether the approach would work in this setting, the conference turned out to be a great success. The morning reflections, for example, were every bit as animated as what we have come to expect in our own classrooms. Combine this with the *IMPact* teams—having health care managers in the IMHL or a similar program, from Africa, each with a team back home—and you can begin to make real progress in scaling up the management infrastructure in Africa.

* Two other initiatives are the EMBA Roundtables, where students from different EMBA programs around the world get together for one week of an IMPM experience [www.business-school.exeter.ac.uk/executive/roundtables], and the McGill-HEC EMBA (www.emba/mcgillhec.ca), run by these two schools in Montreal, which is much like the IMPM, except that the modules are shorter and more frequent, the students work on business as well as management issues, and there is more functional content.

When the government of Quebec announced the formation of a major commission to address concerns about health care financing and administration, the Quebec members of the class felt they had to convey to it some of their learning about the management of health care, especially the engagement of clinicians in the administration. So these people approached the commission, and were granted two hours to present their message. That went so well that the commissioners asked how they could get into these recommendations more deeply. They were thus invited to join the class for some friendly consulting.

The three commissioners accepted immediately, and a few weeks later, each joined one of three round tables to discuss: How do we enhance local autonomy (namely loosen up central controls)? How do we promote collaboration (on the ground and between clinical operations and administration)? And how do we change the culture to take on more responsibility at the local level? The head of the commission called after their report was issued to say that this experience had a major impact on their recommendations.

Such an experience was certainly unusual for a commission of this kind, and perhaps for the field of management development as well. Yet in a classroom of engagement, commitment, and community, it was perfectly natural. Think of what can be accomplished by bringing key social issues into thoughtful forums of informed and engaged managers, for example to bring deep engagement into corporate social responsibility.

Combining all the above in Self Development: CoachingOurselves

Imagine taking all of this beyond the classroom, into the managers' workplaces. That is what has happened in the fourth initiative, except that it came from neither faculty nor facilitator. A manager with a need came up with this.

Phil Called Phil LeNir, my stepson and director of engineering in the Montreal branch of a high technology company at the time, called one day. His engineers had become managers, he said, because their programming was outsourced to Eastern Europe, and they were struggling. "What should I do?" he asked. "And, by the way, I have no budget!"

You can guess my response. Get them around a table periodically, I suggested, in a quiet atmosphere where that they can at least pause, share their concerns, and reflect on their experiences in dealing with them.

Phil took this up with a vengeance. He and his managers met every second week or so for about 75 minutes at lunch. It had to be fun, he said, or they wouldn't keep coming. They did, for two years. Soon Phil had another group, of peer managers on site, then a third, spread across the company in three countries, that met on conference calls. Members of these groups also started their own groups, one eventually commenting that "I've been doing it for three years—first as a member of the pilot group, then leading my own group. It's never old because it's always about what you are doing day-to-day."

When I showed Phil the material we were using in our programs, available in loose-leaf binders by module, he went through that. Phil has no MBA, had hardly attended management course at all, but he learned quickly. (Later he did the IMPM.) Eventually he developed all kinds of topics to stimulate the group discussions, ranging from negotiating skills to figuring out the balance sheet. Phil introduced the equivalent of morning reflections too—he called it "happenings," to be shared at the start of every session. He even used field studies: in one

session on culture, they all went into the hall to interview whoever they found there about the company's culture, and report back. The key for him was to take their discussion into organization development, by having the groups consider the implication of their learning for changing their jobs and the company.

The balance sheet topic was particularly telling. "Financial Management for Non-Financial Executives" is likely the most widely offered short course for managers. Phil reversed it. He brought in copies of the company's annual report as well as a list of definitions of the terms in the balance sheet. "We have 75 minutes to figure this out," he told his group of engineering managers without finance experience. They did, and had a great time, especially when they began to understand the footnotes!

CoachingOurselves.com All of this went so well that we incorporated the whole exercise under the label of CoachingOurselves.com, to enable managers to take responsibility for their own development

Groups of 5-7 managers form, or are formed, inside their own organizations—sometimes comprising peers, sometimes a manager with his or her reports, sometimes across two parts of the organization that need bonding (such as managers from the two sides of a merger). They download various topics (for example, "Dealing with the Pressures of Managing," "Dialoguing", "Developing Our Organization as a Community," "High Performance Teams," most authored by prominent management writers), and discuss them in an informal setting, say over lunch, for about 90 minutes, once every two weeks or so. There is no faculty, no facilitator, no formal coach—just the managers learning from each other and coming up with ways to improve their practice and their organization.

Organizations around the world are now using CoachingOurselves with multiple groups. The topics number over sixty and are available in eight languages. Most interesting is how the companies are using CoachingOurselves for organization development—"consulting-for-ourselves," if you like. One major Japanese firm has applied CoachingOurselves to affect turnaround in some of its divisions. One Canadian bank, was concerned about communication across its silos. When a senior executive heard that we have a topic called "Silos and Slabs in Organizations" (slabs being horizontal barriers between different levels of management), she decided to use it in a meeting of her own managers. They split into two groups, each of which used the topic to consider how to facilitate better communication, and then they met together to compare their conclusions and decide what actions to take.

Combining the Initiatives

As these initiatives progress, we begin to see how all of them end up in the same place: managers at all levels becoming increasingly engaged in developing themselves while developing their communities, internal and external.

As we have seen, each new program has built on the exiting ones. Now they are feeding back to each other, in interesting combinations that suggests their full potential. For example, CoachingOurselves topics are being worked into classroom programs, to cover certain subjects and provide a change of pace. They are also being given to the participating managers to take back home for use with their IMpact teams—to expose them to material discussed in the classroom. Discussions are underway in the health care program to have the participating

managers run ALP-type programs to train many more managers back home. This is especially applicable in Africa, where capacity building for health care management is of particular concern. Meanwhile, the IMPM has begun to use friendly consulting on issues of concern to its class members.

A most interesting initiative is for companies to use the ALP together with CoachingOurselves to rebuild community. In the ALP, a group of senior managers can define the main concerns in the company and establish CoachingOurselves groups of middle managers to address them. Later the ALP group can bring these groups together in a major forum to consolidate the learning and the drive toward communityship.

As this goes on, all of these initiatives can be seen to bond into a single family that offers all sorts of opportunities for the development of managers, their organizations, and their broader communities.

Managing Naturally for Communityship

As noted, our intention from the outset has been to change how management is practiced. But not until recently did it become clear that we were also developing organizations as communities. And not until the CoachingOurselves initiative did we realize that all of this happens most naturally when managers take significant responsibility for developing themselves. We can show the way in the classroom, and provide materials, but this becomes that much more powerful when teams at work run with it on their own terms. Indeed, what could be more compatible with the philosophy of truly engaged management embedded in communityship? For years, all kinds of organizations have been sending their managers to development programs, as selves in silos, sitting there to get “developed”. Imagine development where the managers are there, or better still, home at work, on behalf of their organization, connected to it to make it a better place.

To repeat, management is not going to be *taught* to anyone—not by any professor or human resource expert, not even by the manager’s own manager. Managers have to learn primarily through their own efforts. We have seen that this can be helped in a classroom. But we have also learned how potent it can be when it happens spontaneously, as managers reflect of their experience, learn from each other, and together drive improvements in their organization and society. The message of our own experience is that there is nothing so powerful, or so natural, as engaged managers committed to developing themselves and their communities.

The Architecture of Engagement When we were designing our first program, Nancy Badore, who created a distinguished program of executive development at Ford, was giving us advice. “Henry, how do you plan to seat them?” she asked me at one point. “I don’t know; I guess we’ll use one of those U-shaped classrooms,” I replied. “Not those obstetric stirrups!” Nancy shot back.

That did get us thinking! It brought us to the seating at round tables in a flat classroom, to facilitate discussion, particularly in applying the learning without having to “break out.” The key for us has been to use this seating to leverage the experience of the managers. Even just asking for “table questions”—that is, “Take five minutes to come up with a question together”—can enhance the thoughtfulness of a discussion.

These tables become little communities unto themselves, which ensures that the whole classroom is owned by the participating managers, not just the formal “instructors.” This seating has worked so well that it has become an intrinsic part of all our initiatives. And sometimes beyond: a manager who attended one of our programs emailed back with a picture of the round table he installed on the floor of his factory in Mexico City, which “we use...very often.” [See Exhibit 2.]

Of course, some other programs use this seating too. But thanks especially to our colleague Jonathan Gosling at Exeter University in England; we have developed all kinds of related seating configurations for special purposes, as follows. [to incorporate Exhibit 3 diagrams in the following]

Big Circle Sometimes everyone sits in a big circle, to share insights—for example, in the plenary stage of morning reflections. We have even done so on the floor, for example when Bonner Richie, storyteller per excellence from Brigham Young University, has worked with the class. Sitting this way reinforces the sense of community in the classroom.

Eavesdropping Particularly interesting is what we call eavesdropping, where some managers sit with their backs to discussions taking place around the tables. In the *ALP*, for example, after a company team has introduced its issue to the class, its members spread out to the tables around the room, and sit backward while the managers from the other companies discuss what they heard, as friendly consultants. Once finished, the company team members reconvene at the front to review what they picked up at the tables, and consider how they might use this to reframe their issue.

Clamshell Sometimes we get one set of managers facing another in a kind of clamshell arrangement, while the rest of the class looks on. For example, the managers who have been on a field study to a company in the *ALP* face the managers of that company, to tell them what they found (such as “You don’t need to motivate your first-line employees...”), and elicit their reactions. In another adoption of this by a colleague, after eavesdropping discussions at all of the tables of a meeting of 400 municipality managers, a clamshell was formed at the front, with some of the eavesdroppers facing discussants of some of the tables, to tell them what they heard and then respond to their questions. The result: “It was a great way to turn a large meeting into a series of meaningful conversations.”

Fishbowl Here a small group of managers discuss some issue or topic, sitting in a circle in the middle, while everyone else sits around listening in. One time we had visiting executives from a company, who were present for their teams' final ALP presentation, sit in such a fishbowl and respond to what they heard.

Roll In, Roll Out A particularly intriguing variation of this last arrangement is when, after awhile, anyone can roll forward his or her chair, tap someone in the fishbowl on the shoulder, and replace that person in the discussion. This can make for much deeper probing. On one occasion, the managers from one team were discussing their company when several other managers in the room, bothered by what they were hearing, rolled forward and replaced them all. They then proceeded to tell them, in a determined yet friendly way, just what they thought about their conclusions!

The Neutral Zone Recently, at the end of morning reflections in one of our masters programs, someone asked why we could not use eavesdropping during the morning reflections: have one member of each table eavesdrop and these would be the participants reporting out in the plenary.

We noted the idea and went on to the topic of the day: managing retrenchment. Abhirup Chakrabarti, who was running the session, had polled the class on their experience about this: positive, negative, none. He had decided to create a big clamshell, of the positives facing the negatives, with those of no experience on retrenchment in the middle. But a clamshell of 36 people proved unwieldy, so we asked them just to sit at the round tables in those groups and discuss their experience. But what were the ones with no experience to discuss? So we sent to them to the other tables, to eavesdrop.

Each of them did this very seriously, taking profuse notes. And then, instead of putting them at the front, to report out, we sat them in a circle in the middle, in fishbowl fashion, to discuss what they heard. In effect, we reversed the process, but without everyone else having to turn around.

The class was elated with the experience. One member of what came to be called "The Neutral Zone" reported that, despite their lack of experience on the subject, she and her colleagues probably learned more about retrenchment than anyone else. A manager in the other group said that this was one of the best reporting out plenaries ever because those doing the talking had no axe to grind, no brilliant experience of their own to boast about.

These are all simple seating ideas that make for interesting learning. They also help to enhance the sense of community, certainly in the classroom, but beyond it too, into their organizations.

Exhibit 1

Morning Reflections: Stage 1



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Stage 2



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Stage 3

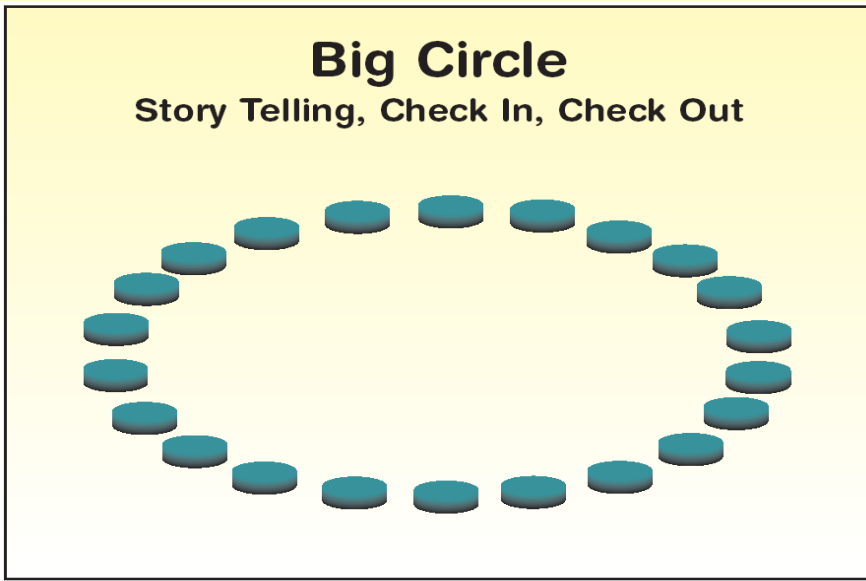


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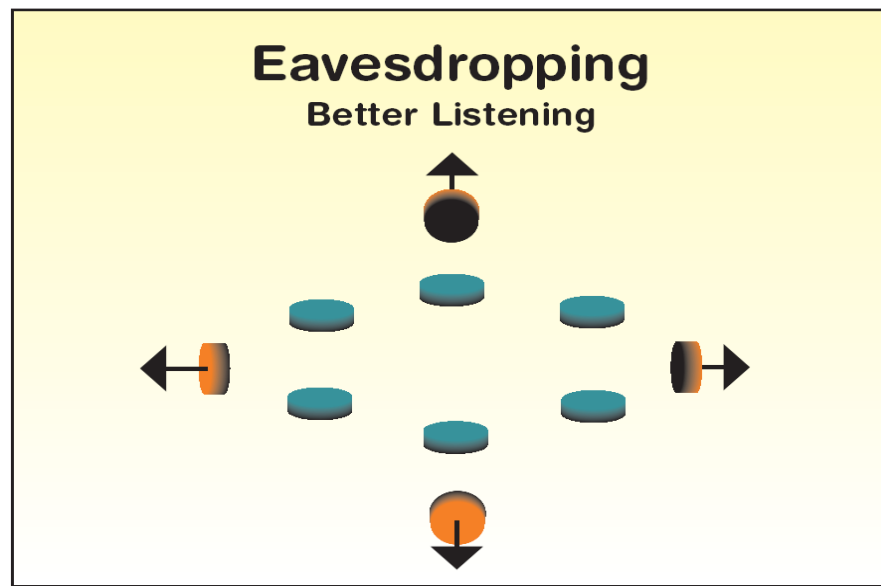
Exhibit 2



Exhibit 3



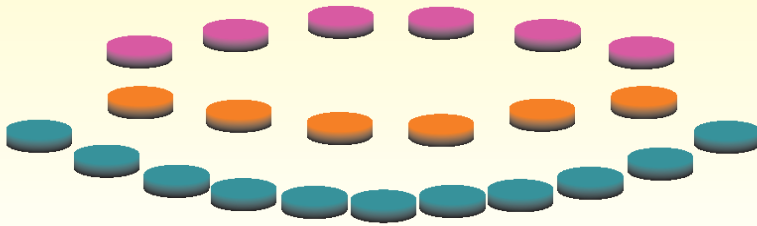
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Clam Shell

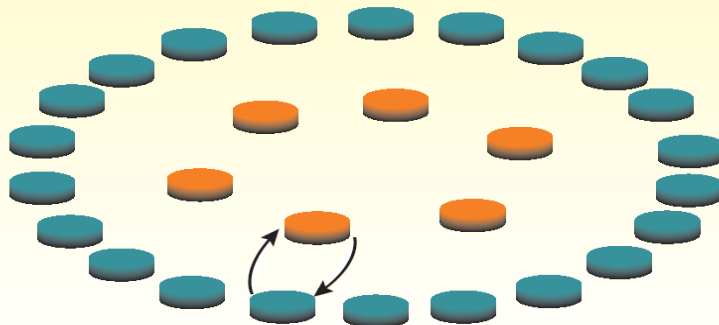
Presentations and
Friendly Consulting Response



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Inner Circle

Rolling In - Rolling Out
(Probe More Deeply)



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