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Output 8 of the ALTEF-Project

## Competence development in the workplace

### The „Agile Learning“ - Approach

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Learning units for self directed learning:

### Intercultural Project Management

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#### Content

National Cultures.....	3
Communication Media.....	7
Project Debriefing – Introduction .....	12
Project Debriefing – Workshop.....	15
Core Qualities.....	20
Digital Collaboration.....	25



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

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This paper is an output of the ALTEF project:

“Workplace Integrated Learning for Technical Experts with a Vocational Background”

Berlin, Aalborg, Leiderdorp 2019

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## National Cultures

The work of Geert Hofstede

By Jörg Longmuß

### Occasions

Cooperation with individuals and organisations from other countries

### Outcomes

Has a basic understanding of the nature of national cultures

Can identify and classify fundamental differences between cultures

### Application

Develop a cultural profile of your own culture and the culture of a partner (person or organisation):

- List some key points that you know about your partner's culture
- relate this to what characterises your own culture
- Work out where you are most likely to encounter differences and misunderstandings
- Note some promising strategies to deal with these potential sources of irritation.

### Impulses

Preliminary remark: The encounters that are to be facilitated with this input are above all professional communication and cooperation in international - i.e. not only binational - contexts.

### Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence can be seen as a form of readiness and openness towards other cultures that includes cognitive as well as affective aspects.

It is not a matter of simply copying or imitating the behaviour of other cultures. Another culture cannot be learned by heart. It is certainly helpful to know and be able to "read" behaviour patterns and rituals of other cultures and to be able to adhere to basic conventions. Anyone who simply acquires a repertoire of rules and customs always runs the risk of not taking into account the deeper background and thus irritating rather than inspiring confidence in his counterpart from the other culture, as well as surprisingly encountering situations for which there is no behavioural option "in stock".

In a holistic approach to intercultural competence, one should therefore include the affective level as well as the cognitive level and seek comprehensive personal development. It is above all about getting to know ways of approaching other cultures. It is important that the learner never disregards the effect of his/her own culture on his/her perception. The first step towards understanding and empathy in contact with another culture must be an awareness of one's own cultural background, because this is the starting point for the more or less conscious comparison that inevitably results from encountering another culture [1]. The work of Hofstede [2] has made an important contribution to this recognition and understanding of one's own culture and that of others.

## Cultural dimensions: the work of Hofstede

In the 1970s, over 100,000 IBM employees in 50 countries were asked about their personal values. The answers to these questions varied considerably from country to country. Since the respondents were very comparable in other respects (social status, level of training, etc.), Hofstede attributed these differences to the respective national cultures. Extensive statistical analysis showed that there were very different national responses to common questions in the areas of

1. Social inequality, including the relationship to authority;
2. The relationship between the individual and the group;
3. Perceptions of performance-oriented /masculin and cooperation-oriented /feminine;
4. The way to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity.

The results were published in 1980 under the title "Culture's Consequences". These results are not uncontroversial, but in any case they are the starting point of a comprehensive discussion that continues to this day.

The concept of a common culture applies strictly speaking to societies and not to states. And it doesn't necessarily say anything about the individual members of those societies. For example, a US American may personally have a more collectivist value system than a Chinese individual. However, this does not change the average differences in their societies and these differences will be reflected in the attitudes and organisation of their institutions.

### Four cultural dimensions

#### Power distance

Power distance can be defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of a country's institutions or organizations expect and accept that power is unequally distributed", i.e. the value system of the *less* powerful members is underlying.

The powerful enjoy privileges and are expected to show them. If the system becomes untenable, it will be radically changed by a revolution and the exchange of leading persons - who usually resemble their predecessors structurally.

High values for power distance: e.g. Russia, Arab countries, France

Low values for power distance: e.g. Scandinavia, Great Britain, Germany

#### Collective vs. individualistic

Societies in which the interest of the individual is subordinate to the interest of the group are referred to as collectivist. The majority of people in the world live in them. Those societies in which the interest of the individual takes precedence over the group are described as individualistic.

In a collectivist society, the personal relationship takes precedence over the task and should be built first. It is considered normal and desirable to give preference to members of one's own group, e.g. as customers, subordinates, etc.

In the individualistic society, on the other hand, the task is considered to take precedence over any personal relationship. It is expected that all customers, employees, etc. are treated equally. This is reflected, among other things, in the fact that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was inspired by the spirit of the values prevailing among the powerful at the time of its creation, and these were individualistic. In many countries, therefore, this declaration is now viewed critically.

High values "individualistic": e.g. USA, Australia, Great Britain  
 High values "collectivistic": e.g. Central America, South Korea, China

### Performance-oriented ("masculine") vs. cooperation-oriented ("feminine")

Performance-oriented cultures are characterised by the fact that the ego is in the foreground and income, challenge and professional advancement are very important. In cooperation-oriented cultures there is a stronger group reference and at work the relationships with others and the working environment have more weight. Only in this dimension did men and women differ significantly. Women are more cooperative, which is why this dimension at Hofstede is also called "feminine", while men are more performance-oriented, hence the term "masculine". However, the differences between different cultures are much greater than those between men and women within a culture.

High values "performance-oriented / masculin": e.g. Italy, Germany, Great Britain  
 High values "cooperation-oriented/feminine": e.g. Scandinavia, Netherlands

### Uncertainty avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance can be defined as "the degree to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous and unknown situations". This feeling is expressed among other things in nervous stress and a need for predictability: a desire for written and unwritten rules.

High uncertainty avoidance leads less to a reduction in risk than to an avoidance of ambiguity. People in such cultures seek a structure in their organizations and institutions in which events can be clearly interpreted and predicted. In practice, however, the clear rules are often undermined, while in cultures with little uncertainty avoidance even informal rules are often strictly adhered to (e.g. queuing at the bus stop in Great Britain).

High values of uncertainty avoidance: e.g. Russia, Japan, France  
 Low values of uncertainty avoidance: Sweden, Great Britain, USA

### Quiz

Relate each of the questions to one of Hofstede's dimensions.

		No.
A	In which cultures does the law tend to be continuously developed through case-related individual examples?	
B	In which cultures will the legal system be based more on a closed code such as the BGB (Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch) in Germany?	
C	In which cultures is an open "no" rather regarded as improper and avoided?	
D	In which cultures is it regarded as sincere and (rather) appreciated?	
E	In which cultures do employees expect clear instructions?	
F	In which cultures do employees expect to be more involved in decisions?	
G	In which cultures do applicants present themselves actively and self-confidently in an interview?	
H	In which cultures are applicants rather reserved in an interview and wait for questions?	

1	Low values Power distance
2	High values Power distance
3	High values "collectivist"
4	High values "individualistic"
5	High values "cooperation-oriented/feminine"
6	High values "performance-oriented / masculin".
7	Low values of uncertainty avoidance
8	High values of uncertainty avoidance

## Resolution

A7, B8, C3, D4, E2, F1, G6, H5

## Sources

[1] Summary from Jensen, A. A. (1995). Defining Intercultural Competence for the Adult Learner. In: Jensen, A. A.; Jaeger, K. & Lorentsen, A.: *Intercultural Competence. A New Challenge for Language Teachers and Trainers in Europe*. Aalborg University Press

2) Summary from Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M. (2017). *Local thinking, global action*. C. H. Beck, Nördlingen

## Communication Media

By Benjamin Höhne

### Occasions

- Management of a distributed team
- Preparation of a group meeting
- Preparation of a difficult/conflict conversation

### Outcomes

- Can name differences in communication media.
- Can choose appropriate communication media depending on the situation.
- Can use the advantages and disadvantages of certain communication media strategically.

### Application

#### Occasion

- For which occasion do you want to choose a suitable communication medium?
- What kind of conversation is it (one-on-one, small group, lecture, interview)?

*Note: Trust is easier to establish in synchronous, rich settings. The organization of communication (who speaks when with whom) is easier when you can see the other person. The influence of group dynamics increases in rich settings and diminishes through low richness and synchronicity. ]*

#### Discussion framework

- Do you know your conversation partner rather badly?
- Is it a sensitive topic of conversation?
- Can all participants understand the content of the discussion without special preparation?

*Note: If you answer the questions predominantly with "Yes", you should choose a synchronous, preferably personal medium (direct conversation or video conference). If you have answered the questions predominantly with "No", you can also choose a rather less rich medium (e.g. telephone call). If the content is particularly complex it is advisable to use an asynchronous medium (e.g. email).]*

#### Faith

- Do you assume that the person you're talking to is honest with you?
- Is it important that you establish a trusting basis with your counterpart?
- Can you dispense with detailed and verifiable documentation of the discussion / negotiation?

*Note: If you answer the questions predominantly with "Yes", you should choose a synchronous, preferably personal medium (direct conversation or video conference). If you have answered the questions predominantly with "No", you should use a medium that can be easily checked and which allows transparency of information during and after the interview (e.g. e-mail or letter). ]*

## Impulses

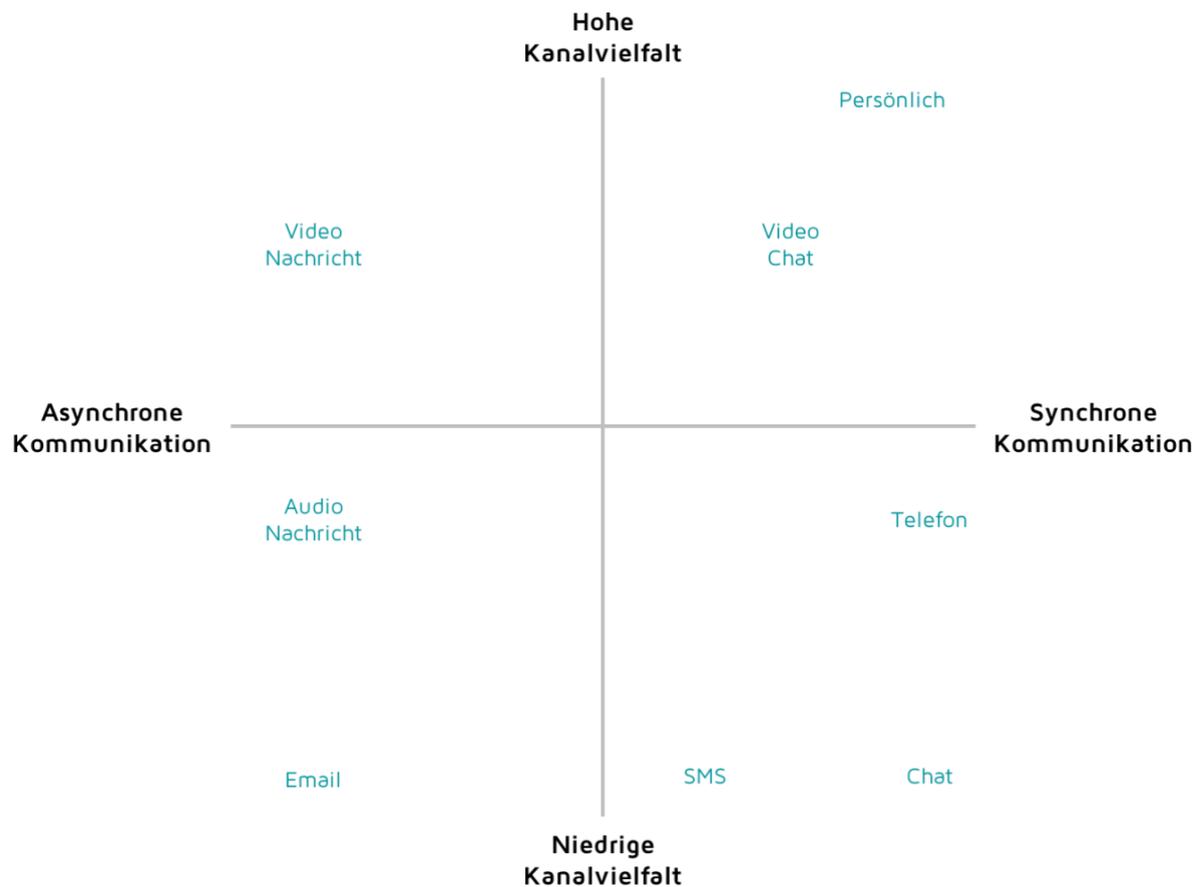
### Communication and channel diversity

It is often assumed that communication improves when people can see, hear or react directly to each other in the real world. This assumption is based on the assumption that we understand each other better (and less misunderstand each other) if we have as much information as possible in which our communication can be expressed. Accordingly, the presence of visual, verbal and non-verbal cues and an impression of the conversation context (space, environment, etc.) strengthens our understanding of what is being said and makes it easier for us to classify it. To put it simply: the more data we have, the more likely we are to know what the other means.

The channel or medium through which a message is transmitted affects how accurately the message is received. Different communication channels have different strengths and weaknesses. For example, the presence of visual channels enriches social interactions because the ability to see others personalizes the message conveyed and facilitates collaboration, while the inability to see others can make it more difficult to build and maintain a relationship. Eye contact, for example, can play an important role in building relationships and communicating respect for others.

Another important influencing factor in our communication is the aspect of **synchronicity of** the communication channel. If communication takes place via email, for example, there are much longer pauses between the individual messages of the interlocutors (asynchronous communication). In a face-to-face conversation, communication usually takes place very directly and without significant interruptions (synchronous communication).

For the work context, this also means that the presence of visual and auditory cues in a synchronous communication framework makes social interactions more personal, and that the ability of each communication channel to convey multiple communication cues determines whether people can work effectively together. However, written, asynchronous communication also has its advantage: it is precisely via such media that complex relationships can be understood and repeatedly consumed by the recipient. If it is therefore of great importance to make the communication contents verifiable at a later point in time, it is worthwhile to use a written communication medium.



## Deception in conversation

The choice of the medium with which one conducts a conversation usually does not take place consciously. Often we are influenced in these decisions by what is currently on offer or what seems most accessible to us. So I would probably address the colleague next to me directly instead of writing him an email. At the same time, I tend to pick up the phone if I have already received a call before.

Nevertheless, strategic aspects can of course also be taken into account when choosing the communication medium. When people are asked which medium they would most likely choose if they were planning to deceive someone in a conversation, most would opt for a face-to-face conversation because it is the best way to assess each other's reactions. If, however, the study situation is taken into account, the **telephone is most often** used when the interviewee is to be deceived. The least deception takes place via email.

Overall, the following decision criteria are decisive in the choice of medium if information is to be concealed in a conversation:

- Highly synchronous forms of communication
- Traceability as poor as possible

## Discover deceptions in conversation

Hopefully, we do not find ourselves too often in a situation where we deliberately want to deceive our interlocutors. On the other hand, it is also worth knowing what we can do if we suspect that an interlocutor is planning to deceive us. So which medium is the most suitable for discovering deceptions in conversation?

In principle, it is not surprising that your chances of detecting a deception are greater if you already have previous experience with your interlocutor and already know him a little better. So if you know your conversation partner relatively well, it is worth choosing a medium where the channel variety is as high as possible, so that you can look for signs in facial expressions and gestures that are conspicuous or on which you can notice a greater nervousness.

In case of doubt, however, text-based communication is always the best choice if you suspect you might be deceived, as traceability is best here. Most studies on this subject also confirm this finding: the highest detection rate of deception is found in **e-mails**.

## Referral

The following episode of the Freakonomics Podcast is also worthwhile on the subject of trust in our society:

<https://art19.com/shows/freakonomics-radio/episodes/46281c59-1646-4f15-ab9e-5c3bbd46fa41>

## Emotions and the medium

Emotions are an important influencing factor for the "success" of joint communication. In order to consider emotional influences systematically, the distinction between intra-personal (within persons) and inter-personal (between communication partners) effects has been established. Intra-personal effects refer to the influence of individual mood on one's own thoughts, perceptions and behaviour. Interpersonal effects, on the other hand, denote the influence of emotional expressions (verbal, mimic or gestural) on the other person. Especially in the latter area, the expression of emotions to the outside, to the interlocutor, there are manifold dangers for misunderstandings. Thus a short frown can be understood as a devaluation of what has been said or even of the other person, although the frowning person has only a headache and a particularly sharp pain on his forehead has broken its path. Not surprisingly, one can generally say that positive emotions tend to make us more cooperative with our interlocutor, make it easier to build trust and work together to solve problems.

All emotions are increasingly perceived in highly synchronized and rich communication settings. On the one hand, this offers us the opportunity to create a conducive discussion atmosphere through the expression of positive emotions and to be able to perceive negative emotions of our counterparts more easily and to address them as clarifyingly as possible. A synchronous and rich setting is therefore to be preferred in principle if emotions are expected to play an important role.

**Attention Exception: If it is about** the expression of aggression or if the conversation partners have already before the conversation the expectation that the opposite has a negative attitude, it can be worthwhile to reduce the richness of the communication channel in order to reduce the emotionality of the conversation. This technique is used, for example, in mediation sessions to put a deadlocked conflict back on a new footing.

### Further information

Swaab, R. I., Galinsky, A. D., Medvec, V., & Diermeier, D. A. (2011). The communication orientation model: Explaining the diverse effects of sight, sound, and synchronicity on negotiation and group decision-making outcomes. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 20(10), 1-29. doi:10.1177/1088868311417186

Channel Richness: <http://open.lib.umn.edu/principlesmanagement/chapter/12-6-communication-channels/>

The importance of emotions in social conflicts: [http://psyche-und-arbeit.de/?page\\_id=7798](http://psyche-und-arbeit.de/?page_id=7798)

## Project Debriefing – Introduction

By Benjamin Höhne

### Occasions

- To advance the continuous improvement process in the company.
- Completing and evaluating a project in a structured manner
- Summarise and record learning experiences from an activity.

### Outcomes

- Understand the goals and steps of a project debriefing
- Can plan a project debriefing independently

### Impulses

Who/ what is debriefing for?

A debriefing serves knowledge management, it helps to learn from positive experiences and mistakes. All relevant experiences from projects, with the extracted reflections of the project staff (here: knowledge carriers) are systematically recorded, processed into findings and made available for future projects.

The valuable results of the debriefings are made available in a targeted manner to employees who are to prepare and design a new project (project teams forming themselves anew).

### Tools and preparation

Materials:

- Facilitation walls
- Post-Its
- Query routine (see further information)
- Project reports
- Scheduling (see Further Information)

The debriefing itself is not a finished instrument, but should be continuously improved by feedback from the actors involved (here: the so-called "debriefers" and the "debriefings").

### Recommendation/ Procedure

- A systematic procedure must be agreed and specified for the procedure for debriefing in the organization.
- The evaluation is by no means about a form of evaluation of the project's success or the search for the culprit or the reason for a failure ("blaming game").

- It is about an objective reflection of the learning experiences and a shared productive learning process.
- Debriefings should be documented together with the project completion reports. They serve as a quick orientation and are made available to other projects.

### Facilitation of the debriefing

- A short reflection in the form of a short query routine (see appendix for example) should be carried out beforehand.
- No one from the immediate project or its immediate environment takes over the facilitation of a debriefing.
- The facilitator must ensure that neither an exaggeratedly positive nor an exaggeratedly negative reflection of the course of the project takes place.
- The facilitation must be well prepared, because there is a risk that the reflection will be understood in the sense of a subsequent evaluation (i.e. wrong). Such a perception, although subjective, would be counterproductive and demotivating. In order to avoid this perception, the rules and purpose of the debriefing must be presented clearly and transparently.

### Rules

No project should be finished without evaluation and reflection.

All persons involved in the project should participate in Debriefing in order to capture as many perspectives as possible.

The invitation emphasizes the positive approach of debriefing: Use valuable experience to continuously improve yourself.

Debriefings are an integral part of projects and are planned into the time budget. It is not possible that project staff are "already engaged elsewhere for the debriefing and do not have time" - you don't have to have time for this, but you have to take your time, which also means that this time has to be firmly included in the planning and the managers have to "give time" for it.

In essence, it is about participatory and collective learning from mistakes and successes in the sense: "We want to learn together from positive and negative experiences, to share our experiences openly, to discuss mistakes in order not to make the same mistakes again".

If the project team sees itself as a unit, then everyone is responsible for the course of the project, so there is no blaming!

It is not an issue of a detailed overall evaluation, but of a reflective consideration of some key moments or factors.

### **Methodologically one can orientate oneself on the basis of key questions:**

What is good and why did it go well and which intended project results (milestones) were achieved with which approach?

- What measures has the team agreed?
- Which one did it execute?
- Which decisions were made when?
- Which intended project results (stage goals or milestones) were achieved with which approach?

What went badly and why?

- Which unintended results did the team produce and why? (disputed departments at the client, service angry, activities started too late et cetera)

What have we learned (lessons learned)?

- How do we translate what we have learned into insights for project work in the future?
- What valuable insights can we derive or crystallize from our experiences?
- Who should consider this insight in his work in the future and how?

[For further information, please see:](#)

Debriefing query routine: [Interactive Resource - Download]

Debriefing schedule: [Interactive Resource - Download]

## Project Debriefing – Workshop

By Benjamin Höhne

### Occasions

- To advance the continuous improvement process in the company.
- Completing and evaluating a project in a structured manner
- Summarise and record learning experiences from an activity.

### Outcomes

- Can plan a project debriefing independently
- Can conduct a project debriefing workshop independently

### Impulses

Step 1: Visualization of the project progress

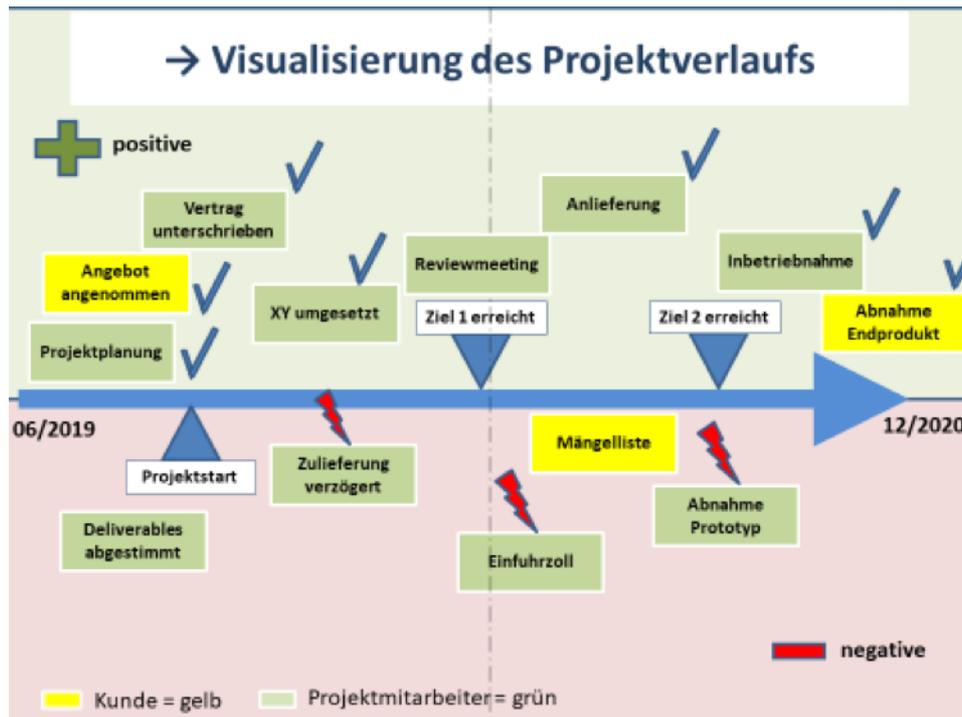
The facilitator announces the procedure.

A timeline (or other graphical method) is designed that extends over two moderation walls (boards of 1.20 x 1.50 m), for example, with the core or key data specified, i.e. prepare the template before the workshop. A timeline is created for the project to represent the course of the project (chronology).

Center the timeline (distance from top 75 cm). All participants supplement the timeline in the first part of a debriefing with their positive (above the timeline) and negative experiences (below the timeline) in the form of post-its.

Each participant notes successes and errors in the course of the project on the post-its (for different groups of actors you should introduce a color code, e.g. project member = green, customer = yellow).

Important milestones are to be anchored as triangles directly on the timeline, the rectangular post-its are pinned in the space below or above the timeline. If you want to delimit certain project phases, this can be done with a horizontal dividing line (here the middle of the moderation boards).



The project events are visualized with the timeline. The visualization creates an interesting graphic with the intended and unintended results (successes and failures).

For this, the facilitator prepares two moderation boards on which the phases or months or weeks of the project duration are listed. The participants write the results on post-its and pin them to the appropriate height on the timeline - so the results and problems in their development can be grasped at a glance. Successes and critical phases or events become clearly visible (if necessary, highlight them with lightning or checkmarks) and an image of the viewpoint of the various actors emerges (see colour code green/yellow for actors).

The project team members explain the course of the project to the plenum on the basis of the resulting visualisation (timeline with many events).

You can use this timeline or another graphical representation (ascending stairs, waterfall model) to visualize the progress of the project and its chronology.

## Step 2: Evaluation of the course of the project

The facilitation separates the participants into two randomly formed groups (of the same size. Form one group on the "intended" results and one on the "unintended" results.

Each group summarises its part of the results (if necessary by clustering the post-its) and discusses them. From the summaries (clusters) of positive and negative results/experiences, each group tries to derive its first general findings.

The grouping of cards (clusters) can be facilitated by the following questions:

- What do the positive results (group 1) or the negative results (group 2) have in common?
- Where are the results similar? (join matching results like a cloud/bunch of flowers)

- What can we generally deduce from these results as knowledge?

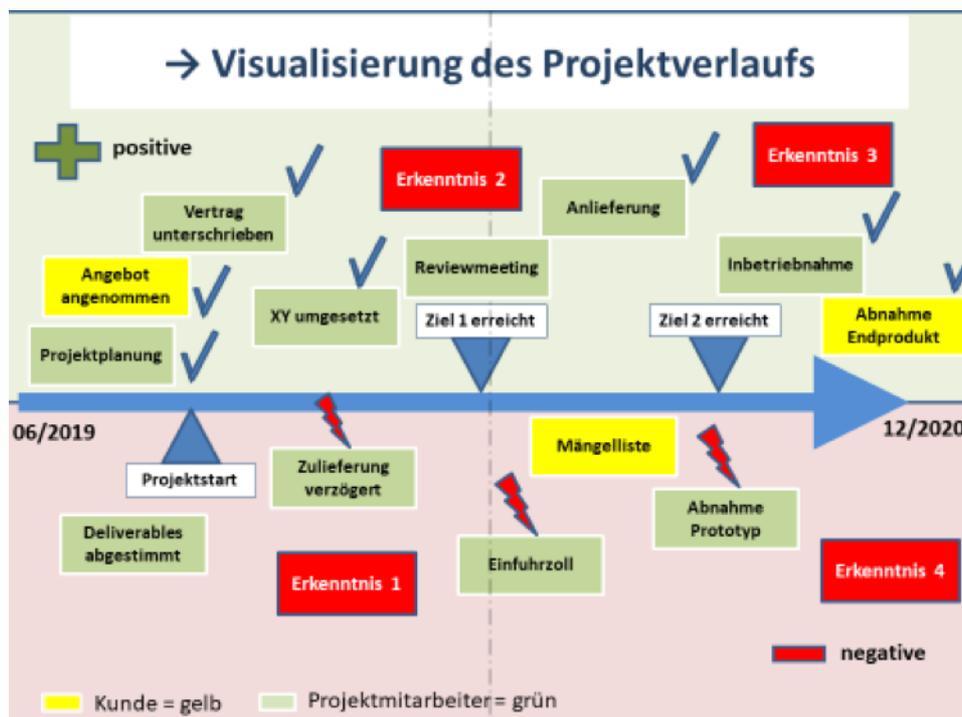
Step 3: Joint visualization and discussion of project findings.

Each group develops, discusses and presents its own findings from the course of the project.

Group 1 the positive results with the findings derived from them

Group 2 the negative results with the findings derived from them

The findings are discussed and then recorded by the facilitator (new, red post-its).



Based on the findings gathered on the moderation board, suggestions for future actions/corrections for quality assurance or improvement of the projects are then derived.

**Helpful guiding questions here are:**

- What insights are important for what kind of future projects?
- How can we ensure that the findings are taken into account in future project work, i.e. transfer/diffusion into new projects? - (transfer via heads, via training via guidelines)
- Who is the target group for the mediation, the transfer of our findings?

#### Step 4 Reflection of negative results or unintended effects

This step requires a high level of intercultural sensitivity. Not all cultures have developed a generally accepted culture of error.

It already begins with the naming and nomenclature. Instead of "errors" or "blame", one speaks of "non-optimal" or "rather unclear or negative results" or "unintended effects" or "disturbed" or "delayed project progress".

If during the visualization or already in the run-up from the query routine indications of disturbed processes, negative results or effects emerge, the attention should be drawn to these points in particular. **Generally, a lot can be learned and improved from serious incidents.**

These incidents are to be investigated in more detail in a sensitive manner within the team. It is helpful to emphasise the learning aspect once again (see introduction: an agile, productive, collaborative learning culture is a prerequisite for learning processes which, in the sense of a positive error culture, brings with it many opportunities for optimisation).

An in-depth study of these project processes is essential for the continuous improvement of the projects and their teams. The process should therefore be reconstructed and analysed jointly and openly.

It is important to recapitulate the course of the decision without assigning blame. Usually there are some key experiences that are consciously or unconsciously triggered by project actors (e.g. project team, partners, etc.).

Here it should be made clear that decisions are always made out of a given context. If these decisions are subsequently analysed as not optimal ("sub-optimal or wrong"), the analysis helps to understand the origin of a decision. This analysis may help to avoid the causes of "sub-optimal" decisions in the future.

A disturbed project and/or decision process commented and reconstructed in this way should be documented and/or visualized (the faster method). This should help other project groups to prepare themselves optimally for a new project.

For this purpose, a (pre-)briefing should always be carried out for projects. As the name suggests, the briefing should be brief and can be designed as a short story in a "stand-up meeting" or "story telling". Micro-learning with agile learning cards would also be conceivable.

#### Learning for the future

The described experiences (clusters) and the knowledge gained from them, the analysis of disturbed project processes as well as possible corrective measures are documented by the facilitator in the form of a summary. This might be written in a short break of the debriefing workshop.

## Summarizing the learned "Lessons Learned"

- The planning quality is increased by empirical values.
- Individual experiences are bundled (clustering)
- The experience will turn into findings through the discussion
- Resource bottlenecks and hazard areas are better anticipated.
- Project processes are critically reflected and thus optimized
- Learning from mistakes will help avoiding them in the future

The summary is incorporated into the organisation's knowledge management as a learning experience ("lessons learned").

### Step 5: Conclude in friendship

At the end of the debriefing, all participants should have the opportunity to say with what feeling they are leaving the workshop (appreciation). Some participants need this space to describe insights that have surprised them, or to express joy at a good decision. If there was an appreciative, open climate during the whole meeting, everyone takes a good feeling and real results home with him/her.

### Time frame:

At least 1-2 hours (depending on the size of the group and the complexity of the project)

[For further information, please contact](#)

Debriefing query routine: [Interactive Resource - Download]

Debriefing schedule: [Interactive Resource - Download]

## Core Qualities

A concept by Daniel Ofman

By Jörg Longmuß

### Occasions

Collaboration with other people, in the team and outside the team

Clarification of reasons for particularly constructive and rather difficult cooperation

### Outcomes

- Has a deeper understanding of strengths and weaknesses - in others and in oneself
- Can recognise the positive qualities of people with whom collaboration is difficult
- Can understand basic patterns of the connection between strengths and weaknesses of one self and of partners and use them for cooperation

### Application

Work out :

- Where do your personal strengths lie and what are your challenges in this regard?
- Where do your personal strengths and challenges complement those of the people you work with privately and professionally, and where do they create unproductive patterns?

### Impulses

#### The concept of core qualities

Our attention is very often focused on deficits, inadequacies and the need for improvement. The concept of core qualities focuses attention on what is right and works well. It makes one's own strengths conscious just like the strengths of others and shows how these strengths can be used positively. It also shows how the challenges faced by everyone can be used constructively - for themselves and in a team. The concept presented here is a summary of the work of Daniel D. Ofman [1].

#### Core qualities

Core qualities are qualities that belong to the essence or core of a person. We all came into the world with personal qualities. Someone can be sincere, energetic, empathetic, precise, considerate, persevering, self-confident, etc. If these qualities are an integral part of a person, they can be called core qualities.

A core quality is always present, it cannot be switched on and off at will, but at most hidden or suppressed. Unlike a skill that can be learned, it comes out from within. It can be a starting point to explore the world and play a positive role. For example, if someone has empathy as a core quality, he can use this strength to constructively shape his private and professional environment and "take" others with him.

Questions that can lead to my core qualities are e.g.

- What others praise about me
- What I rather downplay about myself
- What amazes me is if others apparently don't have these properties

## The trap

A core quality can always be exaggerated or distorted. This shadow side is more a deformation than the opposite of the core quality. For example, those who have self-confidence as their core quality may be prone to arrogance under external pressure or in other difficult situations. This is his "trap" into which someone runs when he loses the right measure in his core quality.

Trap and core quality are two sides of the same coin. Those who have accuracy as their core quality may be narrow-minded, those who are honest may be uncouth and those who are dynamic may become hectic. And just as recognizing a core quality can explain the trap, so conversely the trap one has can be used to recognize one's core quality.

Imagining that there is something valuable behind a seemingly obvious flaw can be challenging. What, for example, could compulsivity be an excess of? This could be goal orientation, but there are many other possibilities, e.g. zeal, enthusiasm or ambition.

Questions that can help to recognize my trap are e.g.

- What I tend to do when I'm under stress
- What others hold against me occasionally
- What I can understand and would gladly forgive others

## The challenge

A challenge is the positive counterpart to the trap. For example, if a person's trap is hectic, then his/her challenge could be calmness or patience. Thus, the challenge is at the same time to complement the core quality, which in this case could be dynamic. Similarly, modesty - the positive counterpart to the trap of arrogance - could be the appropriate challenge for someone with the core quality of self-confidence.

The difficulty often lies in the fact that the person concerned cannot see how these two characteristics can go hand in hand. Finding a balance here means thinking not in "either-or" but in "as well as". It is then a matter of finding a way to live the (positive) core quality and at the same time achieve a balance with the challenge, i.e. to be able to be both dynamic and patient.

Questions that can lead to the challenge are e.g.

- What I admire in others
- What others advise me to reinforce
- What sometimes seems unattainable to me

## Allergy

Most people react allergically when confronted with an excess of their own challenge. An energetic person will tend to fizz when confronted with a passive person: Passivity is too much of this person's challenge, namely patience. And the more someone struggles with his challenge, the stronger his allergy often is.

Our allergies are an important indicator and can lead us to three important findings:

1. Not our trap, but our allergy is our biggest problem. It drives us into our trap because we definitely want to avoid it.

2. The key to our allergy is our defenses, often even the contempt and anger with which we react. It gets us off the ground and quickly makes us unable to react productively. Thus the aversion to anxiety or cowardice can become the Achilles heel of a person with the core quality "courage".
3. We can learn the most from the people to whom we react most allergically. Because they have too much of exactly what we need most - in the above case caution and weariness.

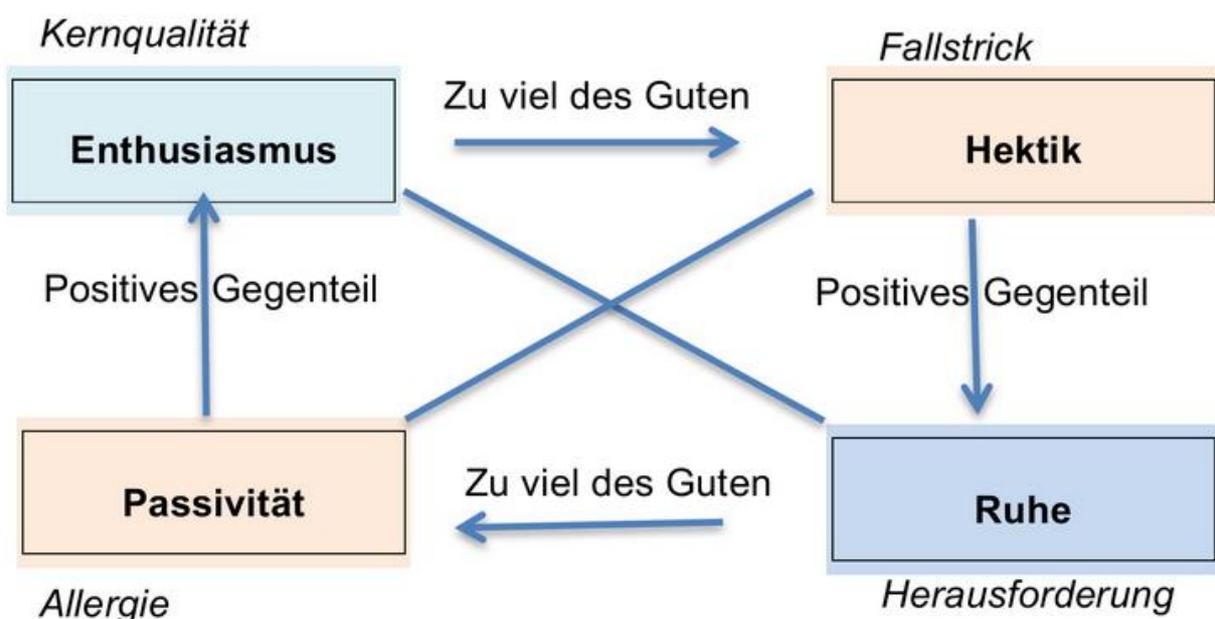
The Allergy also has one more positive side: it makes us sensitive to discrepancies in our environment: if you are allergic to a lack of plan, you are the first to notice it. A productive approach would then be to bring in one's own core quality, such as focus or structure. A negative way of dealing with this would be to react with one's own trap, e.g. to become very rigid.

The following questions can help to diagnose an allergy:

- What can drive me crazy
- What I'd never forgive myself for
- What others advise me to relativize

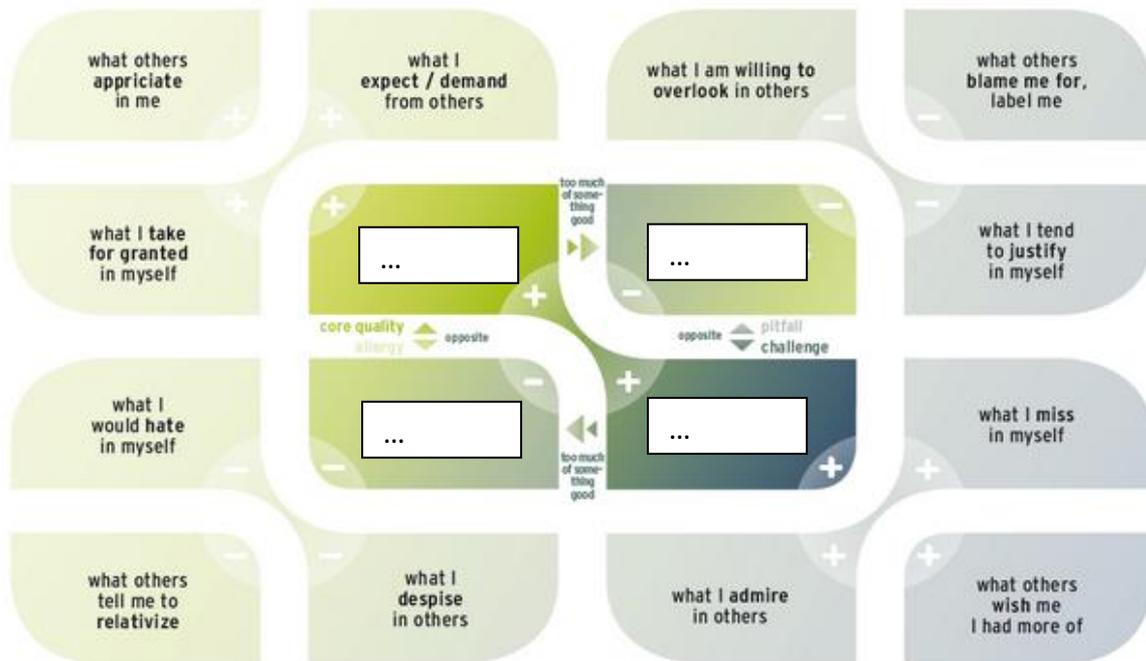
### The Quadrant

Core quality, trap, challenge and allergy can be well represented as a quadrant. On one diagonal there are two positive characteristics that can complement each other: the core quality and the challenge. On the other diagonal lie the unproductive exaggerations of these characteristics: the trap and the allergy. This results in the "core quadrant". It shows how positive traits complement each other and how negative traits can be made to swing up.



## Exercise 1

Set up one or more "core quadrants", first for yourself and then for some other person you know well. Use the questions from the graphic.



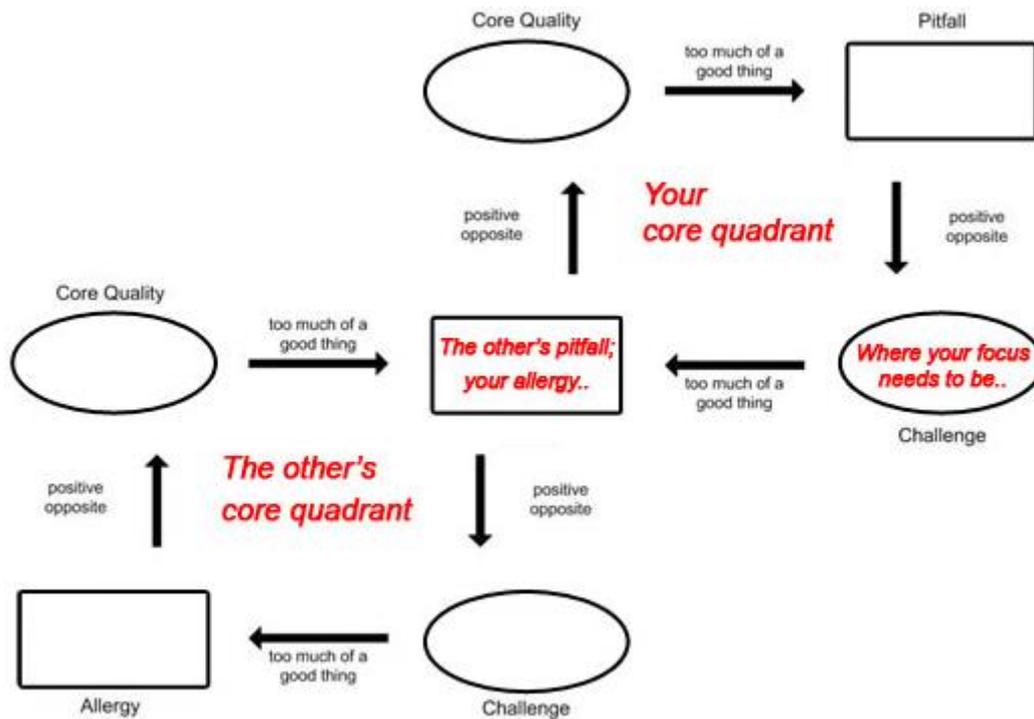
### The quadrant in contact with other persons

The quadrants gain special importance when it comes to forms of contact and cooperation, as a couple or in a team, professionally or privately. A collaboration can be very fruitful if core qualities and challenges complement each other, i.e. one person brings along being relaxed and natural (e.g. inner peace), which is difficult for another person (who may be very dynamic). But it also happens again and again that the obstructive qualities work against each other, for example one person becomes slower and more passive in the cooperation, while the other person spreads more and more hectic. And the more someone runs into his trap, the more the behaviour of the other excites him - and vice versa. In such cases, the core quadrant is a good opportunity to reflect on the potentials of cooperation and one's own qualities.

## Exercise 2

- Take one of your quadrants.
- Create the corresponding quadrant of a person you frequently work with professionally or privately.
- Combine these two quadrants and look where core qualities and challenges as well as traps and allergies complement each other, where they could reinforce each other or work against each other.

Can your core quality and challenge support each other in a positive way or does the result look more like the graphic below, where allergy and trap are mutually reinforcing? And if so, what could they do or how could you change your attitude so that cooperation becomes more productive?



Source

[1] Ofman, D. (2005). *Core quality and core quadrant*. Core Qualities International, The Hague

**Attention: This summary may only be used for non-commercial purposes. Otherwise the permission of the publisher Core Qualities International must be obtained in advance.**

## Digital Collaboration

By Eve Müller

### Occasions

- Use of a communication tool
- Collaboration within a distributed team
- Collaboration via digital tools

### Outcomes

- Can clearly describe the case and goal of a digital collaboration
- Can select a suitable communication tool
- Can sketch a viable plan for digital collaboration

### Application

#### Vision and Strategy

- What is the reason for the digital collaboration?
- What is the objective for the digital collaboration?

#### Methods and Processes

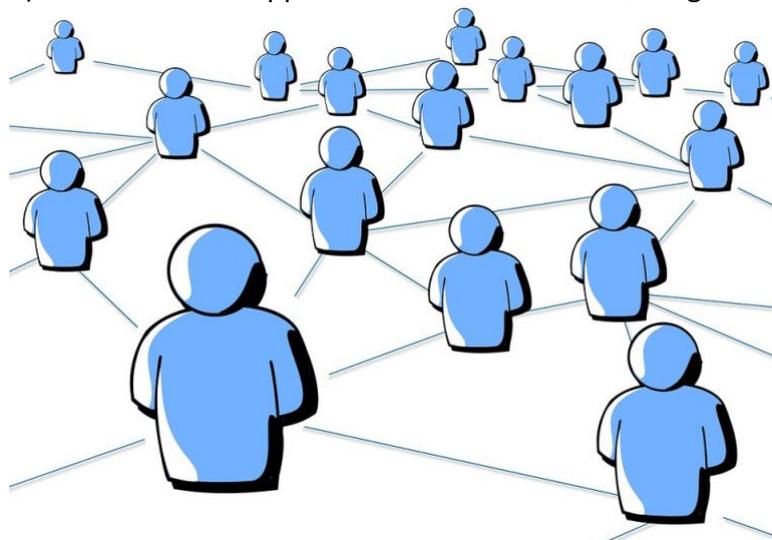
- In what form and for what purpose should the new communication tool be used?

#### Systems and Technologies

- Which communication tool should be used for digital collaboration in order to support the work processes?

### Impulses

Collaboration means working together (also "co-work"). More specifically, collaborating means that two or more people are working on a common task or goal. As a result, they are interdependent and have access to common resources. As a result of digitisation, cooperation is increasingly being digitised, too. The special feature of digital collaboration (or eCollaboration) is therefore to support collaborative work with digital tools.



The introduction of digital collaboration takes place on the following levels:

### 1] Level of vision and strategy

The introduction of digital collaboration should be based on a clear strategy. The occasion and objective for the introduction of a digital collaboration should be defined and communicated.

### 2] Level of methods and processes

Possible applications of the communication tools are defined in coordination with the work processes.

Employees are informed about how the tools can be used efficiently.

### 3] Level of systems and technologies

Specific tools and functionalities provide digital support for collaboration.

Tools do not dictate the workflows - workflows dictate which tools are used to support them!



[Interactive Resource - Presentation "Implementation of a Digital Collaboration"]

### Referral

The following advertising video of agentbase AG gives an overview of the development of a digital collaboration in the company:

<https://youtu.be/OZvfpWxZNc>

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