Table of Contents

Facilitation - Ritual Dissent 3
Premise 3
Context 3
Technique 4
What to Know More? 4

Facilitation - Ritual Dissent

Premise

Learning from others implies openness: both by peers and colleagues to formulate openly their critics, doubts and suggestions, as well as by the learner to listen to feedback - positive and negative - and then draw conclusions. Ritual dissent is a formalized way for a group of peers to criticise sketched ideas, drafted proposals or strategies in order to increase their resilience. After a short presentation, the learner turns around and listens attentively to the critics without intervening. Listening in silence without eye-contact increases the attention of the listener and de-personalizes the attacks and critics.

Ritual Dissent is a workshop technique designed by Dave Snowden (Cognitive Edge) to test and enhance proposals, stories, ideas or other content by subjecting them to ritualised dissent (challenges) or assent (positive alternatives). It is a knowledge management tool which offers a formalized way to share criticism and disagreement for the purpose of learning and increased resilience. In all cases, it is a forced listening technique, not a dialogue or discourse.

The basic approach involves a spokesperson presenting a series of ideas to a group who receives them in silence. The spokesperson then turns their chair, so that their back is to the audience and listens in silence while the group either attacks (dissent) or provides alternative proposals (assent).

When this approach is used you will see:

- The dissent on the idea itself and not the person presenting.
- It removes any body language from the discussion. A potentially powerful tool for both sides.
- It makes the person with their back turned listen. It’s a “forced listening technique”.

Context

Inviting peers for a ritual dissent process helps to ensure that the knowledge and experience of others is integrated early enough in the elaboration of a new concept, strategy or proposal. This may mitigate the risk of a “rude awakening” later when presenting for the first time outside the core group in the “external world”.

With the method Ritual Assent, the group comes up with better ideas or major improvement, instead of objections and critics.

Technique

The basic approach involves a spokesperson presenting a series of ideas to a group who receives them in silence. The spokesperson then turns their chair, so that their back is to the audience and listens in silence while the group either attack (dissent) or provide alternative proposals (assent). The ritualisation of not facing the audience de-personalizes the process and the group setting (others will be subject to the same process) means that the attack or alternative are not personal, but supportive. Listening in silence without eye contact, increases listening. Overall plans that emerge from the process are more resilient than consensus based techniques.

Steps are:

1. Appoint a spokesman for presentation. The person is advisable to have „a resilient and robust personality and not bear a grudge”.
2. Invite critical audience. Preferably, being enough external/outsiders to have a different perspective on the issue than you have within the working group.
3. Short presentation of the ideas, proposal, concept or similar that are to be challenged by the group. The spokesman presents to silence, no comments by the audience are wanted yet. It is suggested to limit the presentation to 3 minutes.
4. The challenge: The spokesman is given a clipboard for taking notes and turns around. The group should then attack the ideas with full and complete vigor. The spokesman listens in silence and takes note.
5. Conclusions: The spokesman takes some time to reflect on what he has heard. He then turns around to face the group again and tells the group what he has learned.

The process of ritual dissent can also be designed in a workshop setting, where several groups with multiple presentations challenge each other. In cycling the ritual a significant improvement can be achieved. Further, not only the spokesperson learns, but the group dissenting learns also from different presentations and respective comments.

What to Know More?

- Cognitive Edge: http://cognitive-edge.com/library/methods/ritual-dissent-basic/
- MSP Tools: http://www.mspguide.org/tool/ritual-dissent

Consultant, FacilitationTechnique, Tools

From:
https://www.hanssamios.com/dokuwiki/ - **Hans Samios' Personal Lean-Agile Knowledge Base**

Permanent link:
https://www.hanssamios.com/dokuwiki/facilitation_-_ritual_dissent

Last update: **2018/04/08 16:01**