

HANDBOOK FOR COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

TOOLS AND DEVICES



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WHAT IS COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE?

General introduction

When people work or talk together, they form a type of intelligence that does not exist on the individual level. Collective intelligence emerges from collaboration, discussion, listening and the collective efforts of different individuals.

According to Pierre Lévy (1997), there is *"a form of intelligence that can surpass individual intelligence and specialised knowledge by integrating them"*. This collective intelligence can be drawn out by different devices, presented below.

The fundamentals of collective intelligence

- **Arrangement in a circle**

The circle is a traditional way of gathering together. This is an egalitarian arrangement for discussion: everyone can see each other and each person is spatially of equal importance. The circle thus provides a feeling of inclusion and gives equal weight to each person's words.

- **Establishing an atmosphere of security**

Establishing common rules for the group and creating an atmosphere of security between the participants is essential to guarantee the added value of the meeting. The aim is for the members to cooperate and for each person to be able to give free rein to their creativity.

- **Taking turns to speak**

Systemically giving everyone a turn to speak allows all the participants to express themselves in turn (even the most reserved) and provides time for reflection. This device allows everyone to take responsibility for their words.

- **Respect for what others have to say**

Respect for the words of others has a double meaning. Each person must commit to their statements and individualise them rather than generalising them. Use of the personal pronoun "I" is to be preferred to the impersonal pronoun "one". By contrast, when others are speaking, it is important to listen attentively.

- **The importance of silence**

Moments of silence enable reflection and allow meaningful conversations.

TOOLS AND DEVICES FOR COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

Here are some examples of tools and devices for collective intelligence.

- **Security framework**

Objective: To establish a common culture that promotes the smooth functioning of the meeting and those to come. The purpose is to reflect on the elements that are going to allow everyone to feel at ease and secure so that they can work in good conditions.

Duration: 15 to 30 minutes. Once established, the framework can be quickly restated at the beginning of sessions.

The psychological security of the participants is vital: each person must be in a position of being able to take risks with their spoken statements without feeling judged or stigmatised by others. This security frees up speech, allows issues to be addressed in their complexity and will allow discussions to be more effective. To guarantee continuity of this atmosphere of security, the framework can be restated at the start of each meeting.

Post-its: tool for the collective implementation of the security framework

The facilitator provides each person with two or three post-its on which he/she asks them to write down the elements that seem essential to the smooth functioning of the meeting. Each person must then present their ideas on a board, then the facilitator classifies them with the help of the participants to form common rules. It is important to display the rules on the wall so that they can easily be consulted and modified if necessary. This tool allows individual reflection and then debate about the ideas displayed.

- **Icebreaker or “internal weather forecast”**

Objective: To create an atmosphere of security so that each person feels at ease with the people around them.

Duration: 15 to 30 minutes.

At the beginning of the meeting, the icebreaker, also called the “internal weather forecast”, allows one to express one’s state of mind and put down a flower, which symbolises something that makes us happy, and/or a suitcase, which symbolises something that worries us and can justify our state of mind. This moment of presentation is essential since it “breaks the ice” and allows people to get to know everyone present.

Optional material

To facilitate expression and “speak in another way”, symbolic tools can be made available, such as photo-language cards (as in Dixit, for example) or characters (children’s toys, for example). The facilitator can place them in the centre of the circle and invite each participant to choose one relating to their state of mind and explain the reason for their choice.

- **Management of speech**

There are several devices that allow speaking in a group to be managed, depending on the needs, the time available and the number of people.

1. Systemically taking turns to speak

Objective: To allow everyone to speak up and take responsibility for their words.

One person volunteers to speak first, and from there, it carries on in a clockwise direction.

2. “Popcorn” speaking

Objective: To let ideas and opinions pop out “hot” and spontaneously.

Each person is free to speak up when they wish.

3. Speaking from the centre

Objective: To reinforce the collective feeling and avoid dialogues.

The person who is speaking addresses the whole group and in this way “places” their words in the centre of the circle. The use of the informal “you” is to be avoided since it encourages dialogue between certain people to the detriment of the collective debate.

4. The hourglass

Objective: To be aware of the time available to speak.

The purpose is to establish a given time (that varies depending on the needs) per person or per topic. If the speaking time is limited per person, one person who does not use all their speaking time can offer it to another participant.

5. The “*kapla*” or speaking ticket

Objective: To reinforce reflection before speaking up.

Each person has two or three “*kapla*” or speaking tickets (to be determined according to the needs) and uses them when they wish to speak. This device encourages reflection and allows each person’s involvement to be more strategic given the limited number of actions possible.

6. The speaking object

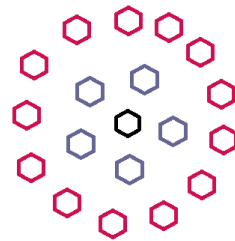
Objective: To encourage listening and bring about respectful and calm discussions.

For this, one chooses an object – a ball or pen, for example – that allows someone to speak when they have it. The turn to speak moves at the same time as this object.

7. The bowl

Objective: To permit the involvement of the greatest number in a small group discussion.

The chairs must be placed in two circles, a big circle (red) within which there is a smaller circle of chairs (purple), in the middle of which there is one chair.



- The people seated on the chairs in the big circle cannot take part in the discussion.
- Those seated in the small circle are the ones who are speaking and the chair in the middle is empty.
- If one person from the big circle wishes to join the discussion, that person must come sit on the chair in the middle of the small circle.
- Then, one person from the small circle must give up their seat because the chair in the middle must always be empty.

During use of this device, it can be helpful for one resource person (who is familiar with the topics debated) to initiate the debate and assist it along the way. It is also recommended that the facilitator remain in the circle to settle the discussion.

- **Hand gestures**

Objective: To communicate without interrupting the debate.

These hand signals allow one to approve or disapprove of statements, request that the rhythm of the discussion slow down, someone to speak more loudly, etc.

Here are 5 examples (other signals can be invented):

	
I am requesting to speak	I need clarification

		
I agree	I disagree	I am opposed

- **Active listening**

Objective: To be able to listen attentively to a person without interrupting them and to be able to repeat their statements.

This is an active or attentive listening exercise to be carried out by two people. During a specified time (of about one to three minutes), person "A" must speak to person "B" without "B" interrupting or taking notes. "B" must then repeat the statements to "A" within a limited time (less than "A's" speaking time). The exercise is repeated and the people exchange roles. The topic of the exercise must be the same for both participants and is chosen beforehand by the facilitator. A simple beginning of a sentence can be enough to initiate the exercise: *"My passions in life are..."* or *"What I find outrageous is..."*.

- **Moving debate or positioning game**

Objective: To actively involve all the participants and encourage listening, debate and reflection.

This is a form of dynamic debate where each person is invited to express their agreement/disagreement with the statements made by the facilitator and to argue for their decision if they wish. A big space is necessary since this type of debate requires the participants to move around.

To delimit the space to allow the participants to position themselves, several techniques are possible:

1. A line (virtual or not) can be traced on the ground delimiting on the one hand the "agree" zone and on the other hand the "disagree" zone. The line in the middle represents a zone of doubt and uncertainty.
2. The corners of the room can represent several possible responses, more nuanced: absolutely not, acceptable, somewhat agree, completely agree, etc.

The facilitator makes a controversial statement, the topic for debate. The participants then divide themselves into the room depending on their decision. The groups formed around the different poles are invited to discuss among themselves the arguments that justified their decision. The facilitator then gives the floor to one person per group so

that each group can outline its arguments in succession. During the debate, each person can change their opinion and move to another pole. These people can then be invited to justify their choice if they wish. If the debate slows down, the facilitator can prompt those who haven't yet spoken or only a little to speak up.

- **The game of little steps**

Objective: To make people aware of inequalities and generate questioning and debate.

The game of little steps is easy to implement but requires a big space and creating:

- “profile” cards for each participant containing fictitious information about the status of a person with which they must identify: socioeconomic situation, nationality, gender, age, etc.
- “situation” cards with actions, facts, events that allow the participants to advance or not.

How it works

- Each participant receives a “profile” card, consults it (but must not divulge their information before the end of the game) and positions themselves with the others to form a line.

- The host, who has the “situation” cards, reads them in succession, pausing between each card to give the participants time to advance a step if they can respond “yes”. However, if they think that their status does not allow them to accept the host’s statements, they must stay put.
- At the end of the game, the most privileged will have advanced the most while the least privileged will have remained near the starting line. It is interesting that each person calls or guesses the status of the participants.

This game therefore allows inequalities to be visually appreciated and can be a starting point for a debate.

Example: In the context of an activity on social inequalities in health, the “profile” cards can be:

- Unregistered female vendor, single with children, 24 years old, Mexico
- Man recently injured at work, 45 years old, Burkina Faso
- Female teacher at a primary school, 34 years old, Mali

The statements made by the host may be:

- “I have access to a doctor within an hour from my home”

- "In case of sickness, I can easily find the medicines that I need"
- "I have insurance coverage offered by my employer"

- **The Open Forum**

Objective: To facilitate the initiation of ideas within a big group.

The concept of Open Forum (OF) was born from the observation that the most interesting discussions happen during informal moments, such as breaks or meals. The goal of the OF is therefore to create an atmosphere, space and moment where each person can speak as spontaneously as during informal moments. The OF allows a variety of contributors to come together around a common problem. Freedom is a notion at the heart of the concept of the OF: the participants are free to choose the topics discussed, to move between workshops and to speak.

Principles

The Open Forum is governed by 5 principles:

1. The principle of mobility or the "rule of two feet": if one person thinks that they are not learning anything in a workshop or that they have nothing

to contribute there, they can freely go to another workshop.

2. The people present are the right ones
3. What happens is what should happen
4. The Open Forum begins when it begins
5. It ends when it ends

Preparation

The OF can apply to a group of 10 to 2000 people and must last a minimum of one day. Organising an OF requires a human, financial and logistical investment. Snacks and meals are to be provided for the participants. Several rooms are necessary:

- A large one for the full group, arranged in a big circle
- Several small ones for the workshops, arranged in small circles
- One with computers and a printer

How it works

The OF begins with an emerging phase and ends with a converging phase

1. Welcome and launch of the OF

The participants are welcomed in a circle by the facilitator who explains how it works and the rules of the OF and states the main question chosen beforehand.

2. Market square: description of the agenda

The participants are invited to come and propose workshop ideas related to the topic announced beforehand. At the centre of the circle is the market square, where each person can come state their idea orally and display it (in A3 format). Once all the suggestions have been received, some ideas can be collected if necessary. Once the number and the choice of workshops has been decided, each participant "goes to the market" by signing up for the different workshops suggested. The facilitator must then designate the rooms and the time allotted for each workshop. Capping the number of workshops at three or four at a time will allow more discussions.

3. Holding the workshops

At each workshop, an initiator – one of the people who suggested the topic of the workshop – as well as a spokesperson absolutely must remain for the whole duration of the workshop. The other participants are free to participate in different workshops.

4. Provision of reports

At the end of the workshop, the spokesperson, who will have taken note of the discussions, and the initiator draw up and print (in A3) the report of the discussions in the "news room". This must then be displayed on the "Big

Newspaper", a wall where all the reports are made available.

5. Development of the action plan

This stage marks the start of the converging phase. Each participant votes for a maximum of three reports whose topics they think are the most pertinent. The vote can be done with the help of stickers, each person placing them on the reports of their choice. From the reports that obtained the most votes, new workshops are organised in the same way as during the emerging phase. At least one spokesperson must remain throughout the workshop and will be in charge of making the report on the workshop in the "news room". The other participants can move between different workshops as they wish. The goal of these new workshops is to formulate an action plan.

6. Closing as a whole group

During this meeting at which all the participants gather together, the different action plans are presented by the facilitator or by the spokespeople. To round off the Open Forum, it is important to have a time of discussion where each person expresses their feelings on this experience and is free to propose new ideas.

7. Follow-ups to the Open Forum

Following up the Open Forum by sending the different reports and action plans produced maintains the engagement and encourages the involvement of everyone in executing the action plan.

- **The World Café**

Objective: To allow a big group to tackle and explore selected issues.

The World Café is a pleasant way of discussing a common problem since its format allows small groups to get together, which facilitates speaking up. It is also based on the observation that informal moments encourage discussions, which created the concept of the World Café. The idea is to promote discussions and stimulate reflection by moving from table to table every 15 to 30 minutes.

Preparation

Just like the Open Forum, the World Café can apply to a large number of people. It can unfold over a half-day or a day. A single room is necessary and must be arranged with tables that can accommodate 4 to 8 people. The choice of topic debated must be determined beforehand.

1. Welcome and launch of the World Café

The facilitator welcomes the participants, explains the concept and the rules of the World Café and presents the topic that will be the subject of the debates. He/she then invites voluntary participants to be the spokesperson of the table, one per table. This person's job will be to take note of the debate and ideas and summarise and repeat the reflections when new people arrive at that table. The facilitator indicates the number and the duration of discussions (e.g.: three discussions, the first two of 20 minutes and the third of 30 minutes to be able to summarise the debates).

2. Progression of the discussions

The people split into groups of 4 to 8 around the different tables to debate the topic proposed. The facilitator is the timekeeper and informs them when the allotted time is up. Then, all the people present around one table, except the spokesperson, are invited to a new table. Once everyone is settled, the spokesperson repeats the ideas that emerged during the previous session, allowing the new group to be informed and to stimulate collective reflection.

The last session must be longer than the previous to allow time for people to select the most important and interesting ideas related to the original issue and in this way to summarise the debates.

3. Closing as a full group

The spokesperson or another member of the table presents the summary of the reflections so that all the participants can be aware of all the debates that took place. As for the Open Forum, the ideas that seem the most interesting and pertinent can be prioritised with the help of stickers.

- **Bono's hats**

Objective: To create an environment for creative discussion and organise thoughts for an efficient collective reflection.

This is a concept invented by Edward de Bono (psychologist, doctor and specialist in cognitive sciences). The hats are a way of sequencing one's way of thinking and avoiding the censorship of certain ideas. They can be useful for organising the results of a meeting, programme etc. or for finding new ideas, solutions, strategies, etc. The order of the hats can be adapted depending on the event.

There are 6 hats of different colours, allowing people to state their point of view from different angles. The facilitator explains the concept then asks the group to speak on each hat. Each person is invited to make the effort "to put on" each hat in order to be confronted by different points of view adopted depending on the hats.

The order proposed below can vary depending on the needs of the group:

1. **The white hat: neutrality.** This allows statement of the facts, without judgments.

Example of questions: What information do we have?
What information do we lack?

2. **The red hat: emotional critique.** This allows presentation of one's feelings, emotions, intuitions, without having to justify oneself.

Example of questions: What is your feeling? What are your intuitions going forward?

3. **The black hat: negative critique.** This allows communication of a negative critical judgement, concerning the negative aspects, difficulties faced, risks to come.

Example of questions: What are our weaknesses?
What could go wrong?

4. **The yellow hat: positive critique.** This allows communication of a positive critical judgement, talking about positive aspects, opportunities and so expressing one's optimism

Example of questions: What are the positive aspects?
What could the new opportunities be? What ideal do we wish to achieve?

5. **The green hat: creativity.** This allows new ideas and alternatives to be mentioned and constructive feedback to be given.

Example of questions: How could we do things differently?

6. **The blue hat: organisation of ideas.** This allows a meta-analysis, giving one's point of view on the functioning of the present meeting and the way in which it has been conducted. It allows a link to be made between the different ideas generated from the other hats.

Example of questions: What has this meeting offered us? What do we envisage going forward?

POINTS ON THE ROLE AND ATTITUDE OF THE FACILITATOR AND TIMEKEEPERS

- **The facilitator**

First of all, the facilitator must be known by their community. This person must be legitimate in order to assume this role of responsibility for the smooth functioning of the meeting. They must ensure that a common culture and attitude are introduced, and ensure respect for the rules as well as the timetables.

Throughout the meetings, the facilitator must:

- Reformulate and summarise the different points of view
- Stimulate debates by asking questions
- Redirect the conversation to the topic
- Know how to manage space (arranging the room, adapting it according to the number of participants) and time
- Give feedback to the participants

- **The curators**

Different people can help the facilitator during a meeting; these are the curators. Appointing them

allows people to be empowered while ensuring better functioning of the meeting

- The **secretary** takes notes, which the facilitator is not able to or should not do, since he/she must be present with the members of the meeting, particularly by maintaining visual contact with the members.
- The **timekeeper** ensures respect for the speaking time allotted to each person and each topic (duration delimited beforehand).
- The role of the **curator of the feedback** is to repeat the key elements of the meeting to absent individuals.
- The **curator of the room** or the **steward** ensures that the necessary material is present in the room and reorganises it if necessary.
- The **curator of the food and drinks** ensures that the snacks offered (teas, coffees, cupcakes) are always available for people.
- The **curator of the heart** ensures respect and kindness in the group. He/she is often equipped with Tibetan cymbals and uses them when the tension is rising too much or tempers are flaring.

