True Collaboration with the 'Five Misbehaviours' Tool

By Kathrin Köster

We are in the middle of a global transformation. New ideas and solutions are needed for companies that want to survive in a world full of new challenges. What can everybody do NOW to be fit for this future that is emerging?

Make sure you listen to **ALL** voices. Make sure your meeting culture is collaborative. We learn best when we look at what **NOT** to do.

Here is the case:

A company in deep trouble flies in all high-ranking managers for an emergency meeting to develop out of the box ideas. The mission: to save the company. The workshop's idea was to benefit from collective intelligence and diversity. The workshop's outcome was: nothing but cost. Why?

Due to **five typical misbehaviors** that can be observed in many teams:

1. Being 'anti' ("I disagree!")

Mr Critical did not get tired to state loudly his personal opinion on the matter, even before others could finish their contributions. 'To be anti' turned out to be his principle of life.

2. Stereotyping ("You are French!")

Mr Superior had a clear picture about the world and his international team members whom he confronted with statements like: 'I know why you are saying this: you are French!' The international members became increasingly reluctant to contribute anything because they felt treated unfairly.

3. Focusing on details ("What's the definition of new?")

Mr Know-It-All found his role in distracting any discussion about ideas requesting lengthy definitions about the meaning of what the others regarded as common sense. Whilst it is reasonable to clarify differences in meaning in teams that converse in a second language, Mr Know-It-All's motivation was distracting rather than clarifying.

4. Demonstrating superiority ("Really, you haven't heard of Design Thinking before?")

Mr Show-off couldn't believe how illiterate his colleagues were when it came to must-knows in the world of innovation and transformation. He kept on emphasizing his surprise that others were not up to date.

5. Showing impatience ("Can't we speed this up somehow?")

Mrs Important was deeply convinced that time is money. She made it a point to frequently intervene in the discussion stating that she had more important things to do than 'just talking' and that she was missing a rigid agenda. Actually, she was so preoccupied with time management that she couldn't see the meeting structure: iterative learning loops.

Those attitudes are the best recipe to stall the flow of ideas and stop anything new before it can emerge.
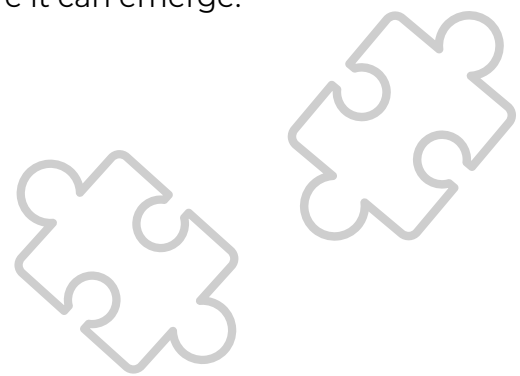
What to do about it?

Regardless whether you are an agile coach, a unit manager, or the member of a sales team: you have an impact on your colleagues and can make a difference.

1. Assess your own behaviour

Here comes the moment of truth: are you willing and able to critically assess your own behaviour? Are you sometimes one of the five types described above? Be honest to yourself. That is the pre-requisite for leading by example.

2. Sensitize your team

Share the 'Five Misbehaviours' with your peers. Start a short round of experience exchange to find out whether and how the misbehaviours have affected each team member in the past. Agree on the ground rule: stop the 'Five Misbehaviours'.

3. Have a meeting facilitator

Appoint a meeting facilitator who is responsible for implementing the ground rule and courageous enough to highlight misbehaviour if it occurs. .

4. Be prepared to intervene

Stop the discussion as soon as one of the 'Five Misbehaviours' pops up. Do this smart. Show a symbol like a stop sign or a red card like in soccer.

5. Debriefing after meetings

Have a short phone conversation or espresso talk with Mr Critical, Mr Superior, Mr Know-It-All, Mr Show-off or Mrs Important to make them reflect on their communication. How do they perceive themselves? How can they work on their communication style?

With the 'Five Misbehaviours' tool you can strengthen collaboration.
This is a simple method how you change communication behaviour and make your company culture more collaborative.