Peer-Group Support Framework – Issues Sessions

1 INTRODUCTION

Issues Sessions are an example of management development by 'action learning' (a term originally used by Professor Reg Revans). We have used it within peer group meetings and the participants gained substantial benefit.

Decide how much time to allow in the working groups, and how many issues to cover in the session, allowing 30-60 minutes per issue. This is a rich technique and, once participants are engrossed, it is much easier to extend the time available than to guillotine.

2 MEETING PROCESS

A.   If there is a large group, allocate members to syndicates of 4-8 people, using a supporting technique or self-selection. Avoid having direct competitors in the same group. Each syndicate should appoint a meeting chair.

B.   In each group, go once round the table. Each participant states the personal or work issue that is concerning them (simply, concisely, with no questions yet).

C.   Again round the table, each person voting for the issues that they want to explore. Two votes per participant – people can cast both votes on one issue if they want, but cannot vote for their own issue. This means content is self-directed by interest.

D.   The issue that polled the most votes becomes the explored issue for the session.

E.   Round the table again, with the first issue owner being asked lots of questions by every other participant (questions only, no answers, to give thinking time and chances to combine or reinforce ideas). This can be stressful for the issue owner, since it 'attacks' the problem from diverse perspectives, many of them new to the owner. However, it is the strongest part of the process in bringing clarity.

F.   Round the table a final time (for any given issue), with other participants giving the issue owner either one or more solutions, or a methodology to reach a solution.

G.   [Optional] If you have time and commitment, you can repeat **E** & **F** for a second issue, normally the one that polled the second-most votes at **C**. Also, if the full group split into syndicates, an optional plenary session when the full group reconvenes allows a spokesperson to give a condensed version of their syndicate's learning.

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