

# Co-creation process



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**A**fter not having written for a long time, I decided to catch up with sharing my experience on group processes thanks to 3 amazing ladies I met during a Kaospilot co-creation training in windy Aarhus, Denmark. (Thanks Mónica, Beth & Gill - this one will be in English especially for Mónica's team in Portugal ;-)) You and your organization or team are just about to start a new project. You want to launch a new product, a new concept, or even change the world. You have done this already several times. (well, not really the change the world issue I guess ;-)) The results were ok, but this time, you really want to go for maximum results: you want to make sure your employees are involved, your customers engaged and achieve a result in a time frame which is as short as possible. But how will you make sure you get your project to the right level?

First of all, go out and understand your users. This might seem easy and simple: it is not. Forget about sending out surveys! Take your time and go out for a day. Leave your office and go on an adventure! Just go and sit in a wheelchair if you want to develop the city facilities, go for a real-deal bbq if you want to develop and brand "meatless" meet, and just watch, observe and take notes. But what is actually powerful if you force your whole team to go on an adventure together. Talk to people, watch people. That is nr. 1.

Especially if you are running a project that might be complex in terms of differing interests or funding, do not forget to dedicate time on mapping your stakeholders.

## Stakeholder mapping?

How does it work? The basic rule here is simple. Do NOT do it alone! And DO NOT let the boss do it and let the rest listen!

**The tool:** draw a box on a huge blank sheet of paper, a whiteboard or just 2 lines of tape on the wall (yesterday we went for this option - using the wall is not conventional,

and more stimulating to interact actively - thanks for my amazing team Beth, Sabine & Leo). The horizontal axis stands for interest (low vs. high). The vertical axis stands for influence. Ask everyone in your group: who are stakeholders in this project? Who would have to connect in any way to this project that we are doing? Do NOT speak! Let every person write each stakeholder she or he can think of on separate post its. Give 5 minutes time. When everyone is ready ask one person to plot the post its on the matrix based on the current situation.

**NOW:** Then ask the second person whether he or she agrees with the position of the mapped stakeholders and discuss: what makes you think that this or that is the right position at the moment? Try to understand each other. Plot the stakeholders that the first person did not mention. Ask the third person to do the same. Discuss.

What you will discover that the more diverse the team is, the more complimentary actors appear! So do NOT be afraid to invite the secretary, the postman, a friend living abroad, even the cleaning lady. They might come up with actors that you did not even consider! **WHY?** Because they are not involved in your project and they are not shaped by your company's fixed mindset. Believe me, I tried it, it works...

**WOW:** This is the interesting part. During the discussion if you have a diverse team which you need, you will have discussions about where people position the stakeholders. And that is fine! Start to explore together which role you actually want to give to these actors in a desired situation! DO you just want to involve some to inform them? Or just to lobby for funding? Or are you actually willing to co-create with a few partners? Reorganize and reset the positions! Try to shake up the status quo! Which structure is the one you think would challenge you most and get you the most out of your project?

If you have too many, you can use the good old dot division voting which always works: give everyone 10 dots and let them divide them among the actors they would consider extremely necessary to involve. Count the dots and define as a group.

During Kaospilot we learned that before

identifying stakeholders you have to decide first how much room you give in your project for predictable vs non-predictable outcome and how much you want to be in control during the process. What I found out that it is a good starting point but in most cases you can not really decide this before you actually go out, map and understand your stakeholders. In the beginning it's easy to say that you want high control and unpredictably excellent results but your perspective might really change when you actually discuss with your team about the stakeholders and their involvement. So do not forget to frame your challenge again after the stakeholder mapping exercise to make sure you are consequent.

If you get stuck or do not dare: try this simple ideation tool:

write down the name of 3 organizations or projects that you consider extremely successful and inspiring and that have **NOTHING TO DO** with your company. Disney? Coursera? Lego? or the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation? Or your local youth club?

Trigger yourself and choose one: What if one of these organizations were in your position? How would they do it? Or how did they do it themselves?

You might want to consider for a real success: what I found out that if you invite people to join in it might be highly valuable to brief them well: what is your definition of the project, or service, or whatsoever. It might be super obvious for you but it is definitely not that obvious for others what you think. During this specific case when I had the honour to work with 3 other nationalities with a fully different professional background living in different areas around the world I realized that we have fully different associations with words, terms or definitions. A school or a library means something fully different to me born and raised in Hungary, living in the Netherlands versus someone living in Denmark, Brazil or Latvia. You need to understand each others definitions to make sure you are talking about the same thing. Otherwise you lose time and will have to compromise output.

Curious to read more? Just visit my blog where I share my experience & knowledge from time to time.