



## The fishbone workshop: How to transform

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THE FISHBONE WORKSHOP: HOW TO TRANSFORM INITIAL PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION TO INTERVENTION INITIATIVES

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**Problem**

A successful transformation is central for management and employee support and implementation fidelity (Carroll et al. 2007). Participatory interventions are a means to involve employees and managers in tailoring intervention initiatives to the needs of the organization. However, a central concern in such engaging processes is how to systematically process and transform the knowledge that employees and managers provide. There has been many different approaches to include employees in the development of intervention activities that fit the organization such as dialog workshops, custom made surveys, etc. In 2012, Ipsen and Jensen stated that in knowledge work both employees and managers possess tacit and individual knowledge about the problems associated with knowledge work, and about the causes and potential solutions. Therefore, the authors proposed to establish collective rooms for reflection as an organizational framework in which both managers and employees can participate and talk about the factors that affect quality and efficiency (Ipsen & Jensen 2012). The multi-level reflection should support the development of initiatives that aim to solve core task related problems. The aim of this study is to create central intervention initiatives that relate to core health and organizational processes based on manager and employee involvement in a systematic process. This paper presents a method designed for that purpose: The Fishbone workshop.

**Procedures**

The purpose of the Fishbone workshop is to explore and identify work-related issues that relate to the organizational sources of employee well-being. In two FishBone workshops, employees and managers respectively, explore their work and workplace (Ipsen & Andersen 2013; Sørensen & Holman 2010), one for employees and one for managers. A thematization of the statements, which converge the statements into themes, follows the explorative and divergent phase. The participants at the employee workshop answer the question: "What creates enthusiasm in your work?" and write their statement on a Post-it note and place it on the FishBone chart labelled "Enthusiasm". Successively, the participants fill out the Fishbone chart and when they have posted all notes, an image emerges of the factors that create enthusiasm at this particular workplace. The participants then reflect on: "What creates stress and strain in your work?" The participants post their written statements on a new FishBone chart labeled "Strain". In cases where the answers are related, the post-it notes are clustered on one "side-bone" of the Fishbone. In the managers workshop they answer the same two question and fill two similar charts. The charts illustrate the employees' and managers' perceptions of the working conditions that create enthusiasm or cause stress and strain in the employees' daily work. The workshop creates an opportunity for all

participants to express themselves, and knowledge about work-related problems becomes explicit. The subsequent clustering of related statements express a theme on each side bone. The theme equals an initial problem identification, which during the intervention is transformed into intervention initiatives.

#### Results

In each FishBone the side bones express different themes. Typical themes that create enthusiasm in the work are “Good colleagues”, “Challenging tasks”, “Meaning in the work”, “Solving the problem”, “Making the customers/users happy”. Examples of themes related to strain in the work are “Lack of recognition from management”, “Bad planning”, “Bottleneck in the work process”, “Lack of feedback”, “Lack of cooperation”, “Badly managed meetings” and “Unclear goals”.

#### Practical implications

The upfront implications of the FishBone workshops are three-fold. First, the participants gain insight into what work-related issues create Enthusiasm and Strain. Second, the participants get an understanding of the different situations and perceptions of the work and work-related issues. Third, managers and employees gain insight into that they may not have the same understanding of what creates enthusiasm and strain at work. Forth, the researcher gain insight into the local program theories of the workplace actors, i.e. how they perceive motivators and stressors at work. From a research perspective, the FishBone workshop provides valuable insight into factors at the particular workplace that may be used to reduce the employees and manager perceive at the most salient stressors. By identifying the work related issues the workshop strengthens the link between the current situation at the work place and the intervention initiatives (organizational fit (Nielsen 2013)).

#### Conclusion

The FishBone workshop creates a collective reflective room for systematic reflection in which both managers and employees can participate to develop solutions and thus transform initial problem identification to intervention initiatives. From the identification of work-related and workplace stressors, managers and employees can then initiate changes in the organizational structure, functions, roles and tasks.

Carroll, C. et al., 2007. A conceptual framework for implementation fidelity. *Implementation Science*, 2, p.40.

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Sørensen, O.H. & Holman, D., 2010. Job-redesign in knowledge work. In P. Vink & J. Kantola, eds. *Advances in Occupation, Social, and Organizational Ergonomics*. CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 111–120.

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