

How **LGMs** – Large Group Methods can help your organization manage change, keep current & deliver on its objectives.



# Equilearn

## **On the Engagement of Communities, Organisations, Extended Groups and Teams in Collaborative Initiatives towards Performance Excellence**

### **Background**

Times are tough and change is constant. Everything is so complex nothing can be achieved single-handedly. Everything we do today requires the buy-in of multiple stakeholders which is very often only achieved after a co-consultation in which all involved have both a voice and the obligation to listen. Communities, organizations and groups within these larger entities are often shrinking or merging, realigning to achieve economies within a more fit-for-purpose operational model for current contexts. In times of turbulence such as these there are two or three key questions to ask.

1. Will we bounce or shatter?
2. What types of interventions are best deployed to ensure positive pathways forward?
3. What are some of the key concepts to keep in mind once we feel we are 'on-track'?

### **Thoughts around 1.**

#### **Will we bounce or shatter?**

Rubber balls bounce – rebound - when dropped while glass balls shatter. This is what is meant by resilience and it begins with positivity. Rather than viewing stressors, changes, disruptions and general adversity as catastrophic setbacks, individuals and communities that cope are more likely to see setbacks or unexpected change and challenges as something similar to a speed bump. There is a need to slow down and consider, reflect on what needs to happen next. This approach tends to add meaning to events making them more manageable in the knowledge that nothing lasts for ever; this in turn encourages a confidence that collectively people have the ability to move things forward through inclusive conversation and clear action planning. In this way inertia is avoided and active engagement provides the space for people to add personal meaning to issues. People move along anticipating change, able to see and 'own' their place in this newness that in turn, again, enhances resilience. As Franklyn D Roosevelt often said, people can survive and even accommodate most adversity and challenge provided they have a grasp of its parameters.

### **Thoughts around 2.**

#### **What types of interventions are best deployed to ensure positive pathways forward?**

In multiple stakeholder environments, traditional methods of consultation and/or training and development have been shown to be less than effective. In tough or transformational times, whole community, whole organization, extended team or key stakeholder involvement is the methodology of choice. Research shows that the best (most desirable and sought after) organisations to work for have climates that encourage engagement of employees or members through:

- a) open and transparent management
- b) processes that give employees/members influence and allow them to contribute ideas
- c) opportunities for people to learn and grow

In short, they are anchored in adult to adult communication. This is best achieved by LGMs. Large Group Methods, used when the issues under consideration affect all those in the system, are important to the organisation's future where new ideas and approaches are needed or are seen as offering huge benefits, and where it is clearly beneficial to achieve a broad ownership of the issue and the outcomes. LGMs involve getting all relevant stakeholders in one place in a participative environment that invites people to express their views and join in collaborative problem-solving and forward planning.



## Collaborative Initiatives towards Performance Excellence (cont)

This approach does not take away senior management's responsibility for vision and charting the way forward but each large group has its parameters for participation and decision-making as set up by those in authority and senior leadership of the organization.

These meetings engage the whole system in critical decisions and as a result, solutions can be implemented more quickly than in the trickle-down approach.

### 6 Types of Meetings to Consider

Equilearn offers a portfolio of meeting formats that can accommodate this highly effective approach. These have been used in organisations and communities of varying sizes, in mergers and partnerships, in organizational re-design, and in change initiatives.

1. The Work-Out – a structure problem-solving format
2. Conference Model – for work redesign
3. Future Search – what will our future end point look like?
4. Search Conference – seeking a desired future for groups of 70+
5. Open Space – a methodology that engages large groups in creating an agenda for a series of ½ day meetings
6. AI (Appreciative Inquiry) Summit – this sets the parameters of how participants communicate

The LGM approach has been shown to be very powerful and fits well with the contexts in which we work and live today.

### Thoughts around 3.

#### What are some of the key concepts to keep in mind once we feel we are 'on-track?'

Monopolies no longer work. The internet has enacted a shift in every aspect of human endeavour; a shift from centralized control systems to a new 'ecosystem.' This is typified by open networks, the sharing of ideas, collaboration and communities of practice. The shift has brought coaching and mentoring schemes to organisations of all kinds, new partnerships, plus relationships of a cross-disciplinary nature. In turn this has led to novel communication channels and a growing approach to meeting the aspirations of people and communities around social and professional esteem that goes well beyond positional and monetary reward. Professional esteem and making a difference are growing considerations in intellectual satisfaction and the validation of individual and collective effort. This emerging trend demands a new approach to learning, development, achievement, reward, validation and pathways to positive reputation. Furthermore, the fact that humans are instinctively tribal (we need go no further than Facebook and Twitter to evidence this) has huge resonance in the technologically connected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and on the resultant environments we inhabit and share. These are concepts and realities that need ongoing consideration in how we organise, how we communicate and engage with others, how we chose ways forward in the hope of continuous success.

For more on this and how you can achieve the best outcomes within your workplace at individual, team, project/programme group, organizational or inter-organizational levels, consider a conversation with the Equilearn People Development and Talent Management Learning Design and Delivery Team.