ADRP Zooms In
Problem Solving Hand Out 3

Exercise: 15% Solutions

by Liberating Structures
Session Lab: https://www.sessionlab.com/methods/15-solutions

You can reveal the actions, however small, that everyone can do immediately. At a minimum, these will create momentum, and that may make a BIG difference.

15% Solutions show that there is no reason to wait around, feel powerless, or fearful. They help people pick it up a level. They get individuals and the group to focus on what is within their discretion instead of what they cannot change.

With a very simple question, you can flip the conversation to what can be done and find solutions to big problems that are often distributed widely in places not known in advance. Shifting a few grains of sand may trigger a landslide and change the whole landscape.

Goal

Discover and focus on what each person has the freedom and resources to do now

Typical Materials: In-person
- Flipchart paper
- Markers

Digital "Materials":
- Topic(s)
- Breakout rooms
- Possible digital whiteboard and/or scribes

Instructions
Five Structural Elements – Min Specs

1. Structuring Invitation
In connection with their personal challenge or their group's challenge, ask, *"What is your 15 percent? Where do you have discretion and freedom to act? What can you do without more resources or authority?"*

2. How Space Is Arranged and Materials Needed
- Unlimited number of groups.
- Chairs for people to sit in groups of 2-4; no tables required.

3. How Participation Is Distributed
- Everyone is included
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute

4. How Groups Are Configured

- First alone
- Then in pairs or small groups

5. Sequence of Steps and Time Allocation
- First alone, each person generates his or her own list of 15% Solutions. 5 min.
- Individuals share their ideas with a small group (2 to 4 members). 3 min. per person and one person at a time
- Group members provide a consultation to one another (asking clarifying questions and offering advice). 5 to 7 min. per person and one person at a time

WHY? Purposes
- Move away from blockage, negativism, and powerlessness
- Have people discover their individual and collective power
- Reveal bottom-up solutions
- Share actionable ideas and help one another
- Build trust
- Remember unused capacity and resources (15 percent is always there for the taking)
- Reduce waste
- Close the knowing-doing gap

Tips and Traps
- Check each item to assure that it is within the discretion of the individual
- Be ready for BIG things to emerge via the butterfly effect
- Reinventing the wheel is OK
- Each **15% Solution** adds to understanding of what is possible
- Clear, common purpose and boundaries will generate coherence among many **15% Solutions**
- Make it a routine to ask for **15% Solutions** in meetings (15% Solutions are otherwise commonly unnoticed and overlooked)
- While introducing the idea, tell a story about a small change made by an individual that sparked a big result
- Learn more from professor Gareth Morgan, who has popularized the concept at www.imaginiz.com/index.html under the tab Provocative Ideas

Riffs and Variations
- Natural fit with Troika Consulting, Wise Crowds, Open Space, Helping Heuristics, and Integrated~Autonomy
- Returning to a group, you can ask, *"What have you done with your 15 percent lately?"*

Examples
- For any problem-solving or planning activity in which you want individuals to take initiative
- For inclusion in the conveners report in Open Space sessions
- For any challenge that requires many people to change for success to emerge
- For generating small "chunks" of success that can be combined into a simple prototype that is easy and cheap to test (low-fidelity prototype)

Tips for running this activity online
- Use a video conferencing tool where you can assign the pair of participants into breakout rooms (e.g. Zoom).
- When briefing the exercise and assigning the pairs or groups to work together, keep all participants in the main video conference room and explain best practices.

- After this step is completed, turn on breakout rooms so each group can work on their tasks.
- After the breakout groups are completed and participants return to the main room, debrief the exercise.
- When facilitating full group discussion, we'd recommend that participants use non-verbal means to indicate they'd like to speak. You can use tools like Zoom's nonverbal feedback tools, a reaction emoji, or just have people put their hands up. The facilitator can then invite that person to talk.
- If you do not have breakout sessions, keep everyone in the main room, though invite pairs and groups to communicate in private messages or small groups in Slack.

Background

Attribution: Liberating Structure developed by Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless. Inspired by professor Gareth Morgan.

Source: [Liberating Structures](#)