

Ritual Dissent

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| <p>Field of application</p> | <p>The facilitation technique is used in situations where groups of people have defined #solutions and ideas for steps forward (e.g. projects, initiatives, concrete action plan) but they want to get critical #feedback to improve their solutions and adopt them better to the circumstances. The technique can be used e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When students have to develop a #business idea and want to get critical feedback • When the CEO or a department team want to come up with concrete #initiatives and project ideas for a specific solution but still want to discuss the prototype idea before going forward • When a group of local business representatives or local stakeholder networks want to promote certain development initiatives for the development of the business #network or community but want to know what the other group of stakeholders think about it |
| <p>Resume / Brief description</p> | <p>Ritual Dissent is a workshop technique designed by Dave Snowden (Cognitive Edge) to test and enhance proposals, stories, ideas or other content by subjecting them to ritualized dissent (challenges) or assent (positive alternatives). It offers a formalized way to share criticism and disagreement for the purpose of learning and increased resilience. Essentially a group or individual develops and presents a proposal, idea or initiative to another group and then have it subjected to 'ritual dissent' by this group. During the time of the feedback the presenter turns his back to the group who then provides comments on the presented ideas. The presenter is only allowed to listen and to take up critical comments to improve the proposal afterwards. The ritual dissent is normally done in several rounds.</p> |
| <p>Target group</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with a class of students who develop certain initiatives or business models, essay proposals, • Work with strategy departments in the university or in an organisation to intensify their reflection on concrete planned steps forward • All stakeholders who have the tasks to design certain proposals for action and that want to get a constructive feedback |
| <p>Objectives</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase critical feedback for learning and adjustment • Better think through certain ideas and proposals and make them more resilient • Learn from other perspectives • Learn to listen deeply instead of defending the own idea • Evaluating the robustness of a certain move forward • Learning by listening and reflecting on own position and arguments |
| <p>Requirements Material Time</p> | <p>When to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In group contexts where critical feedback and deeper reflection can be useful <p>Material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of tables with at least two tables and groups of chairs • Notebooks for the presenters, listeners and commentators to take notes • A flipchart or pin board for explaining the technique and doing summary of observations and learning <p>Time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting sessions around 3 min • Time depends on the number of adjustment- and feedback rounds that should be made • The format works in smaller groups but also in large groups. |
| <p>Implementation - Overview</p> | <p>The methodology is realized in four main phases.</p> |



Implementation - Guidelines

The technique works best with a larger group of participants who want to adjust their proposals or ideas and are interested to help each other out. In this way the groups can work in parallel in several groups to present and give feedback to each other.

1. CLARIFICATION ON WHAT AND WHY FEEDBACK IS NEEDED

- Groups reflect on the ideas or proposals they want to get feedback on. This can be proposals they still would like to get feedback and where they have still some doubts. But it can also be proposals they are quiet sure about and think they are well thought through but still they are interested to additional perspectives.
- The group decides what they want to present and in how far they need to go into detail during the presentation to the others.
- The presentation should be focused. It should be an oral presentation more understood at bouncing main ideas r proposals to the others, not long power point presentations. The idea is to present key elements within a time frame of max. 3–5 min.).
- The group has to choose the presenter. It is also possible that several persons of the group present their ideas to different other groups in parallel. This depends on the number of participants and groups overall.
- An alternative is that one of the group goes to another group to present, the others in the group become listeners and commentators of a person presenting their proposals from another group.

2. PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL, STORY OR IDEA

- The presenter goes to the listening group and presents the proposals or ideas he and his group have worked out. The listening group receives the ideas in silence.
- At the end the space is opened just for some clarification questions.

3. FEEDBACK FROM GROUP OF LISTENERS

- The spokesperson then turns their chair, so that their back is to the audience and listens in silence while the group either attacks (dissent) or provide alternative proposals (assent).
- The ritualization of not facing the audience de-personalizes the process and the group setting. The attacks or alternatives are not personal, but supportive.
- Listening in silence without eye-contact, increases at the same time listening for the spokesperson. (see also Cognitive Edge,2019)

4. PRESENTATION OF COMMENTS TO OWN GROUP-ADJUSTMENT OF PROPOSAL

- The spokesperson goes back to his group after all comments were made. Only clarification questions can be made.
- The spokesperson provides a summary of the comments to his group
- The group assesses the value and significance of the comments
- If the approach needs to be adjusted, it is now adjusted.

It is possible to have several rounds of ritual dissent rounds between different rounds of groups to get even more comments on (adjusted) proposals. This depends very much on the number of participants.



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| <p>Example of application:</p> | <p>Ritual dissent on local economic development initiatives after an analysis of a local economy and local value chains</p> <p>Description of the context Together with a group of local stakeholders from the tourism sector in the city Korca, the GIZ with the support of Mesopartner did a value chain analysis of their local tourism chain. The objective of this analysis was to promote very concrete local development initiatives that could be implemented within the next 3 to 6 months. The ritual dissent was used to verify the local economic development initiatives if they comply with the 3 criteria for the initiatives. They should be able to be visible in the end, should be able to be realized with joint network forces and financial and motivational resources, it should be realized in max. 6 months.</p> <p>Different groups came up with different initiatives that were presented to each other using the ritual dissent technique.</p> <p>Source: Cognitive Edge 2019, https://next.cognitive-edge.com/methods/ritual-dissent/</p> <p>Starting point Group of stakeholders from the tourism value chain analysed main strengths and weaknesses in the tourism chain with moderation cards.</p> <p>Tourism value chain actors in the workshop</p> <p>Reflection on short term initiatives and quick wins After having identified and prioritized key challenges in the value chain the participants divided into 3 groups. Each of the group had to come up with some initiative ideas according to the criteria mentioned above.</p> <p>Presentation of initiatives to the others using ritual dissent Spokespersons of the 3 groups presented their defined development initiatives to the other groups using the ritual dissent technique. Three rounds of presentations were made and after each round, the groups were able to adjust their proposals according to the reflection process they went through due to the comments from the other groups.</p> <p>Finally, the revised initiatives were presented to the plenary and final decisions were made jointly on which quick win initiatives should be promoted in the next months.</p> <p>Contribution of the ritual dissent to the findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Good initiatives were concretized and defined in a more outcome-oriented way · Some initiatives were dropped because they were not able to apply to the 3 criteria · Infrastructure projects as well as initiatives with a lack of real interest of the local stakeholders in the chain were dropped due to the lack of real support · The ideas were discussed and considered from different opinions <p>Support requirements The ritual dissent is often a real encouraging and dynamic way to discuss proposals and ideas. Everybody has to listen for a period of time as well as to present. The process itself encourages also reflection which provides also a dynamic way of improving proposals.</p> <p>The facilitators role in this process is to manage the time well and to assure that the rules are followed (no discussion, no defence, only clarification questions allowed).</p> |
| <p>Templates, Graphics for download</p> | <p>There are several explanations available. The tool was developed by Dave Snowden and his company Cognitive Edge. This is also the first address to link to for further description. In the premium version you have access to a detailed tool description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cognitive Edge 2019: Ritual Dissent, https://next.cognitive-edge.com/methods/ritual-dissent/ · Knowledge Sharing Tools and Methods Toolkit: www.kstoolkit.org/Ritual+Dissent · SDC learning and Networking- Ritual dissent: https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Learning-and-Networking/sdc_km_tools/Documents/Ritual%20Dissent.pdf · Pearl language: Ritual dissent and ritual assent: http://pearllanguage.org/Ritual_dissent_and_assent |
| <p>Additional format/references</p> | <p>Videos:</p> <p>Value chain on the Tourism Value chain Workshop in Korca, Albania https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3N7utVu-fU</p> |

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