"Could it be that . . . ?"

A Peer-to-Peer Consultation Exercise

Facilitator Instructions

Purpose

As facilitator, you will guide a peer-to-peer consultation session designed to explore each individual's leadership challenges. Colleagues will present their challenges in small groups and—through discussion and feedback—identify action alternatives to help make meaningful progress. Some of your goals as facilitator:

- to create a trusting environment that allows for a range of views to surface
- to maintain a focused, productive discussion
- to ensure an appropriate level of depth and breadth
- to leave participants challenged and hopeful that progress is possible

Preparation

Read the tool kit's "Overview" and "Session Instructions" documents and secure the resources needed, as described. Introduce the peer-to-peer consultation session idea to participants, schedule the session, and request their written leadership challenge with a deadline that allows enough time for everyone to read and reflect on each one prior to the session. Note that if this exercise is part of a larger event, you might strategize where in the program it should take place.

Consider how you want to introduce the session and what context is necessary. For example, will you be holding this exercise at a leadership retreat? Do the participants know each other? How does this fit into the organization's structure and mission? Also, reflect on any norms that you would like to establish for the group, such as maintaining confidentiality; speaking your mind; staying focused; being respectful of opposing views; not interrupting, etc. Ask one or two volunteers (in advance) to present their leadership challenge as an example to the whole group at the beginning of the session.

Process

Arrange the participants into groups three or four (five at maximum) and allow them to introduce themselves and identify a timekeeper for each group. Describe how this exercise fits into the context of your organization. Drawing from the "Overview" and "Consultation Session Instructions," introduce the concept of peer-to-peer consulting and explain the session's goals and the discussion's structure. State the norms clearly so participants feel free to share their insights and opinions.

Ask the first volunteer to summarize her or his leadership challenge to the entire group in three minutes or less, ending with a clear sense of the dilemma. Spend one to two minutes on clarifying questions and then ask the group to launch into "Could it be that . . . ?" diagnostic questions. Remind the presenter that s/he should not respond to the diagnostic questions; s/he should just listen and take notes. (For more details on asking questions, see "Consultation Session Instructions" and "Peer-to-Peer

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Session Slides.”) After several people have asked strong diagnostic questions, move on to the second volunteer and repeat the process. End the example leadership challenge and thank the volunteers for sharing with the wider group.

Ask all the groups to begin their own exercise based on the “Session Instructions.” Remind them of the time allowance for each section, and that the *presenters should not respond to the diagnostic questions; they should just listen and take notes.* Alternatively, you can appoint one person within each group to take notes for everyone.

After the groups have concluded the exercise, encourage everyone to think about what they will do differently given the feedback they received. Lastly, invite follow-up discussions to help forge peer relationships.