The Great Book of Work Forms

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The source of inspiration
For results-oriented
meetings, presentations and
other gatherings

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Boom

Foreword

A new idea sees the light of day

It's a beautiful day. We are in the car on our way to a client. The morning is still young and leaves traces of dew in the green grass. While still looking dreamily ahead, we enter the first traffic jam. No problem, there is plenty of material to discuss. Many things have changed in recent years. We have grown older, a little wiser, changed employers, gained many experiences and five children; but put us in a car together and good ideas are still guaranteed. This time *The Great Book of Work Forms* sees the light of day.

The Great Book of Work Forms

This book is published on the occasion of the six-year anniversary of the training and consulting company 2knowhow. In the first years, our Work Forms workshops were an important product in the market and in fact they s t i l l   a r e . Work forms provide structure t o support the process and to work productively on the content. This applies to presentations, meetings, coaching and performance reviews, and training situations. Many managers, project leaders, P&O people, trainers and educators filled their backpack with us in order to use it in their own practice. After an initial publication on work forms within *The Learning Toolkit* series, the need soon arose to publish a larger book filled with many ideas for work forms. For a long time we have been clamoring for this book to come. Many clients kept asking if it was already there.
Now it is here and it marks a moment when we want to share our knowledge about work forms with others in a broad sense. Because we have the experience that sharing knowledge always leads to new and better insights, also for our own work.

From idea to book

For us, ideas are born in an instant, but working them out and finishing them takes considerably more time. What is in front of you is the result of an enormous amount of energy and power, which comes from a special cooperation between both of us and within our team of 2knowhow.

And now: get started with this book!

Sasja Dirkse-Hulscher & Angela Talen

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Reading Guide

This *Great Book of Forms* is a book to *use*. A source of inspiration when ideas are needed to shape meetings and sessions in which to work toward results.

Outline classification

The Great Book of Work Forms begins with a theoretical chapter. In it, we illustrate why the use of working forms is necessary. Read this chapter when you want to know what the real reasons are for always thinking about the form of a meeting, training or seminar.

The core of the book is given in Chapter II. Here we present 120 working forms, clustered according to some common objectives you can pursue in meetings.

In Chapter III we provide guidance on choosing the right working form, because knowing about working forms does not yet directly lead to a good choice. After the most important starting points there is a step-by-step plan for the selection process. Also included is a handy plan that can be filled in when preparing a meeting.

It is essential to prepare a meeting well. In this phase, you have the opportunity to think about points of interest in the implementation, about a setup that supports your objective and work- form, about the invitation and preparatory assignment, and how to engage and inform other stakeholders. Chapter IV is about this.

In the end, it's all about engaging with work forms and having success experiences. In Chapter V, we give our top five work form misses and our tips for avoiding them.

Clusters

Chapter II consists of twelve clusters, in which we describe a total of 120 forms of work. We have chosen the clusters on the basis of objectives that we often encounter in practice. You can use them to find out what your objective is for (part of) a meeting. When the objective is clear, you can find ten suggestions for forms in the cluster.

Classification of the work form

All 120 work forms are similarly arranged and described. Each work form occupies a left and a right page. The right-hand pa- gina shows the minimum you need to be able to choose and supervise the work form. The short paragraph gives a picture of how the form will work in practice so that you can imagine it. Furthermore, on the right-hand page you can read what the results of this work form can be and what steps you must take in preparation and guidance. Experience shows that these descriptions are so concrete that guidance afterwards is a small step.

On the left page are a number of boxes. This varies for each work form, depending on what additional tips and information we can provide. For some work forms, we outline an essay or give additional tips. For others, we have described a practical story or examples of questions or statements that you can use immediately.

Stars

For each work form we have added a number of stars (1 to 4) in the header which give an indication of the difficulty of the work form concerned, i.e. how difficult and intensive the work form is in terms of guidance. Activities for which you don't have to move the group much or for which you don't have to do as much as a facilitator, are marked with one or two stars. The activities with three or four stars require more from you as a facilitator in terms of strict guidance or direction. If this is your first time using a different approach, the stars can help you not to make it too difficult for yourself.

Search and find

120 forms of work is a lot. For quick searching, we provide two overviews at the front of this book:

1 An overview of all 120 forms of work, arranged by purpose.
2 An overview of our favorite forms of work, linked to the role you have in a meeting.

The first overview can help you when you have a clear idea of your goal and are looking for a suitable form of work. The second overview is useful if you have decided that you want to do more activities, but find it difficult to take the first step. This overview describes which difficult situation you can prevent or solve with each form of work. Let this guide your choice.
In the back of this book you will find an alphabetical index with all the working forms.

Further

Perhaps redundantly, but for the sake of completeness, we would like to mention here that throughout the book you will read the words *he* and *him*, even when we mean *she* and *her*. Furthermore, we frequently refer to "participants", by which we mean employees, students or all others participating in a consultation or meeting. Where you read chairman, leader or teacher, you can also read trainer, coach, peer counsellor, guest speaker or facilitator. We describe each working form from the perspec- tive that you are the one leading or directing the meeting and there are one or more people attending the discussion or meeting.

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Why?

Theoretical underpinnings of work forms

Students who fall asleep or drift off during presentations, employees who have little input in a meeting, a trainer who notices that participants apply very little of his lesson in practice, or a coach who wants something different from the conversation for a change. These and countless other situations can prompt you to think about the approach or work forms you use and their effect. Why should you think about work forms? And why use work forms? In this chapter we answer the question of what work forms are and provide a rationale for their use from theory. And to give you a head start: we do not use work forms to 'liven up' meetings. We do use them as a carefully chosen approach or means to achieve a set goal.

What is a work form?

The term "work form" is something most p e o p l e associate with education. For example, people often talk about 'didactic work forms'. However, with the book *Groot Werkvormenboek* we want to show that teaching methods can be used in many more situations than just education. A teaching method 'is a certain way of working', says the dictionary. We consider a work form to be the approach or structure that someone chooses in a consultation or meeting to address a certain content. So working forms are neither new nor special. Even if, as a trainer, teacher, chairperson or coach, you have decided not to use a special form, you use a work form, even if it is a standard round or the beamer presentation. Besides the question of what work forms are, it is also interesting to look at what work forms are not. In line with the above, we see work forms as means to a certain end. They are the way you deal with content or the way along which you steer a process, and are therefore not an end in themselves. A nice working form

do," is insufficient reason for us. What reasons do underlie our choice of forms of work, you will read below. These reasons relate to aspects of learning and c o m m u n i c a t i o n , and are relevant to various situations
- from training sessions to meetings and from coaching calls to conferences.

Because people can only listen intently for 10 minutes

'Why should I have to build different working formats into my consultation or presentation? My story is clear and besides, interaction with the group costs me too much time.' Initially, chairpersons and speakers often have the (unconscious) view that interaction mainly takes time and does not provide much benefit. Consequently, this belief ensures that presentations often become monologues in which little to no interruption and interaction moments are built in. Unfortunately, often with less result than could have been achieved. Even though we would have liked it to be otherwise, research shows that people can only listen to a story with concentration for a limited time. On average,   people have a concentration span of only ten minutes. With some people a little longer than others. With some subjects a little longer than others, and with some speakers a little longer than others. In any case, anything you tell after ten minutes will not stick with some of the group. However, the story of the tension arc does not mean that people could not refocus. After ten minutes, the focus is gone and the tension arc is interrupted. People start dreaming, looking out the window or rummaging in their papers or bags. Video footage shows people averting their gaze and (temporarily) looking at something else or doing something else. In most cases to be able to concentrate fully on the story again after this.

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As a chairperson, trainer, teacher or speaker, you can take a d v a n t a g e of the fact of the arc of tension. Interruptions to the story are essential if you want to hold attention. But, interruptions can be short. If you want to use the breaks to your advantage, you can ask people during the *break* to summarize the core of the story for themselves, to think of questions or to exchange with their neighbor about their own experiences and possible applications. Work forms offer the opportunity to make breaks meaningful and keep them short. After all, there are other possible breaks besides the coffee break.
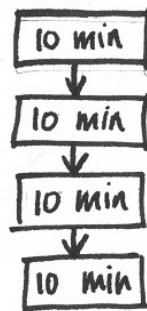
Because people remember more when content is self-experienced

"How can we ensure that what we teach people is still known, mastered or applied after a long time? This is a question that has occupied educationalists for decades. It is the question of 'learning efficiency' or 'transfer,' as this phenomenon is sometimes referred to by peers. Since then, there has been a lot of research on learning efficiency and several scholars have developed their theories and insights on the subject. In 1995, Whitmore presented the results of a study into what people can remember after three months of something they had learned.

explained to them. After three months, a person was found to remember 10 percent of content that was explained, 32 percent of content that was explained and demonstrated, and 65 percent of content that was explained, demonstrated, and experienced (Whitmore, 1995). Note that this was only a question of what people could remember. The question of what they (still) applied in their work was not addressed at all in the study. In our view, this conclusion is not only relevant for people involved in education, but is just as relevant for presidents, project leaders and speakers - or perhaps even more relevant. Because from education, we know that lasting learning results require more than explanation. But what a b o u t the meeting? To what extent are we aware that explanation and explanation i s insufficient to ensure that people remember what was discussed after the meeting? How often are topics in a meeting not only explained, but also demonstrated and experienced by the participants themselves? In short, it seems to us that there is a lot to be gained in meeting efficiency here.

Work forms are the means to convey content. In this book you will find various work for- men to convey information in other ways than just through explanation. The **Knowledge Transfer** cluster gives some concrete suggestions for this, but you will also find practically applicable possibilities in the other clusters.

Because responsible behavior requires direction

Why is it that employees or the group do not take the responsibility you would like to see? It probably sounds logical that you will have to manage a non-self-directed employee more tightly than an employee who can self-direct. However, in practice, the degree of direction by the manager does not always match the degree of self-direction of the employee or group.

A group that needs tight guidance will become passive or show resistance if they are sent away with too vague a task or are not guided. Conversely, a group that can steer itself can also become passive from too tight a form of steering. Vermunt (2000) shows the interaction between steering and self-steering with the model b e l o w .

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Many leaders switch in their style between tight and loose direction. From the need for the group to take more responsibility, they sometimes let go of the process entirely. If it then turns out that the group cannot handle this, they fall back and take over responsibilities again, not letting the group think for itself.

Vermunt shows that there is also something in between tight and loose steering. This form of "shared steering," however, is actively used by few managers. While shared control is the bridge from a rigid to a more loose form of control. In shared control, the leader has figured out where he will steer more tightly (which points are "buttoned up") and where there is room for personal responsibility. The leader is clear about the demands he makes and the freedom given to the employee or group.

In order to let them fill in their own space, he provides options, for example. A case in point: a chairman expects his co-workers to make the program for a planned 'heath day'. Instead of telling them

He can also give them a list of possible topics to choose from (shared control). Another possibility is that he does not give them suggestions regarding the content, but agrees with them when there will be contact about the preparations so that he can monitor the process and t h a t he expresses exactly what he expects from the preparation group.

Work forms help to apply shared control. Forms of work make it possible, on the one hand, to maintain control and provide frameworks, and, at the same time, to leave room for interpretation by the g r o u p . Consider, for example, offering an overview of possibilities on cards so that the group can sort them, or a list of ideas on the flip chart from which the group can make a choice, possibly with stickers.

Because you can manage communication at different levels

In any communication, whether one-on-one or with a group, different types of messages are sent and received back and forth.

Not surprisingly, in addition to the topic at hand, messages can also be sent back and forth (often under the surface) at the level of the process, atmosphere, emotions and behavior of the group. Chairmen of meetings or facilitators of meetings often indicate how difficult they find it to convey content and at the same time keep an eye on and give direction at the "process level. And to further complicate matters, the chairperson can also steer at yet another level: the structure, approach or form of the meeting. The model below outlines the different levels.

All three layers of the pyramid require their own form of steering. Following on from the previous section on self-management, we can say that in addition to the variation in degree of steering (tight, shared or loose), you can also determine what you are going to steer on (content, structure or process). Steering on content means thinking about *what is* going to be discussed or decided, for example by drawing up the agenda (or having it drawn up), introducing content, making decisions and summarizing agreements. Chairpersons who also manage the process are alert to signals they receive from the group (both verbal and non-verbal) and use these signals to intervene and influence the group process. Steering at this level is often difficult because this level often plays under the surface. People therefore often communicate and inter- vent on this level non-verbally, through comments with an "extra charge" or through suggestive questions (questions in which a judgment is packaged). The process level does not seem to be explicitly present, but it ultimately has a great effect on the content and outcome of a meeting.

As mentioned earlier, chairs can also provide guidance on structure. This involves not so much *what is on* the agenda, but *how* it is discussed. Steering at the structure level is much easier and better prepared than steering the process. In addition, you can try to avoid awkward situations that you expect at the content or process level by choosing an appropriate form or approach.

An example. You expect a group in which hierarchy is an impediment to input. A few people are dominant in the meeting and determine general opinion. Other people, partly because of the behavior of their colleagues, c o n t r i b u t e little. As chairperson, you could try t o c u r b the dominant input and invite the others to participate, for example, using nonverbal cues. Finally, you can also feed back your observations to the group. Both are interventions at the process level. Two major disadvantages of steering at the process level are that you mainly steer at the moment that the problem is already present (afterwards) and that you sometimes make the process unnecessarily "heavy" by naming it. A less heavy way of steering is to choose a form in advance that allows everyone to have equal input. For example, make a circle and let everyone give their first reaction in three words, or ask the participants to discuss first in pairs before introducing their opinion to the group, or give each person one minute of speaking time, for example. By such forms, you actually give the behavior you expect little or no chance, so you don't have to steer as much at the content or process level.

To consciously break and direct communication patterns

Every team and every consultation situation has ingrained patterns. Some of these are clearly visible, while others play under the surface. Visible, for example, is the fact that everyone sits in the same place around the table every week or the order of agenda items. Under the skin, patterns can play out such as not building on each other's reaction, laughing off tensions or relating to each other's problems. Some patterns are constructive; others are obstructive. Always having a person summarize if the discussion digresses too much can be an added

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value to the consultation, but the fact that people feel unsafe or misunderstood can stop them from asking questions or bringing up issues. Whether patterns are present explicitly or implicitly, they ultimately have a major impact on the way the consultation takes place, on how participants feel about the consultation, as well as on the ultimate outcome. In consultation situations that regularly take place in the same way, communication patterns are often deeply ingrained. Recognizing patterns is often difficult enough for the chairman or participants, because they are often part of the pattern. Breaking through and influencing the patterns is even more difficult. Experience shows that forms of work can be a tool for breaking and directing communication patterns. Building on the communication levels explained above, you can use work forms (structure level) to influence how the process proceeds. Instead of discussing the patterns with the group (which is sometimes perceived as too heavy, therapeutic or unsafe), you can influence the patterns by choosing a different form. For example, if insecurity is experienced by some team members, you can choose to first "exchange in pairs" before letting people bring their point to the group. Not building on each other can be prevented by having asso- ciation or mandatory summarization.

Influencing communication patterns is not only important for consultation situations. In training sessions or workshops, too, patterns are formed quickly and influence the result. Even if the group does not know each other and there are no patterns at the start of the training, after the first half hour the first patterns are formed and noticeable. Consider, for example, patterns such as "the amount of activity and input expected of the participants. Thus, the opportunity for creating the desired patterns lies in the first

portion of the meeting. Work forms are a tool for consciously building desired patterns.

Because your own preferences don't apply to everyone

In training sessions, as a warm-up, we often do the following exercise to make differences visible. We ask two or three people to come forward and take turns telling the rest of the group something about the subject of "vacation. What soon becomes apparent is that each of them fills in the assignment in a completely different way. One tells something about all the impressions he gained during his past trip. The other tells the group what the term "vacation" means to him or her. When we ask the group afterwards what differences they noticed, they name both the difference in content of both stories and the way the stories were told. What is also apparent when discussing the observations at the same time are the different preferences that exist in the group.
Because one person finds one story more personal and pleasing or clearer, another finds the other story. What we then move on to is the fact that these judgments say something not only about the other person, but also about your own qualities and preferences.

So everyone's qualities and preferences. This is true for the president or teacher, but also for the staff or students. If we put an average group together, it can be predicted that the preferred styles of the staff or students will never all be the same as those of the chairperson. This fact is the first pitfall for creating misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. The instructor thinks he is clear in the information he is giving, while the audience understands it completely differently. The chairman thinks he has made an agreement, while one or more people in the group do not understand the message as an agreement.

coding. What causes these misunderstandings? And what can you do as president or teacher to be more in tune with the differences that exist?

There are currently several theories circulating that map and explain differences between people (Enneagram, Core Qualities and Human Dynamics, among others). The latter theory divides people's qualities into three areas: a mental area, a physical area and an emotio- nal area. The mental area represents our objective side and represents qualities in the areas of having an overview (*helicopter view*), struc- turing, schematizing, logical reasoning, abstract thinking, prioritizing, long-term thinking and taking distance. The physical area reflects our factual side and represents qualities such as being goal-oriented, realizing, finishing, detailing, carefulness and precision, working in a planned way and processing information. The emotional area represents our subjective side. This includes qualities such as creativity, associative thinking, sensitivity, contact ability, enhancing and connecting.

The most dominant area represents the most natural qualities. These are the qualities of which- of which people are sometimes barely aware, and which they take so much for granted that they can overlook the fact that someone else has trouble w i t h them. Consider, for example, the chairman who himself is quick to see the broad outlines and a picture of the future

has in mind. He may forget that others do not have this abstract picture and that it may be necessary for them to make this picture concrete. Besides the fact that people can take their own qualities for granted, your qualities also say something about the way you process information. The person with a strong mental side, prefers information in outline and offered from the overview. While the person with strong emotional qualities can process information when it is offered in inter- action. It is also this person for whom it is necessary to discuss the topic further among themselves after a presentation, in order to sort out the information and make it their own. Where the mental person prefers the main lines and conclusions, the physical person, on the other hand, needs the reason and detailed explanation of the context and goals.

Like everyone else, teachers and chairpersons have their own qualities and preferences. A common pitfall, therefore, is that as a chairperson or teacher you select and offer information that you consider important and necessary to understand the subject. There is also the pitfall of offering this information in a way that suits you (e.g. via a model), but not always to someone else.

As a teacher, chairperson, trainer, facilitator or manager, what can you do with this? First, realize that your own preference does not have to be the other person's way of learning and processing information. So awareness is the first step. Second, vary your approach. Offer information not in one way, but in different ways. For example through a model, own experiences, dialogue, et cetera. In addition, by varying your working methods and choosing working methods that alternately appeal to the quality of the information.

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from all three areas. In other words: not just explain (or have explained) information, but also build in physical acti- vity (take position on line), structure together or have their own experiences exchanged.

Because telling them what to do is not enough for behavior change

Most organizations today have formulated their core competencies and/or core values in a strategic plan. They often include concepts such as result orientation, pro-activeness and personal responsibility. The desire is for co-workers to demonstrate these core values in behavior and for executives to demonstrate exemplary behavior on the identified issues. But, what can you do to ensure that these words are not only on p a p e r , b u t   become behavior?

The most common form is for management to disseminate the core values through presentations and documents throughout the organization. The culture values are mentioned, repeated and discussed. Always with the message, "this is the behavior expected of you. Managers and employees are told that they must work with these values and that they are expected to behave accordingly. Looking at learning and behavior change, we can observe that the message in itself does not guarantee change. It appears to be more effective to talk less about the desired behavior and more about evoking the desired behavior. In short: talk less about result orientation, but ensure that people consult and cooperate with each other in a result-oriented way. H o w ?", you will think. Especially by evoking the desired behavior in meetings. So don't say you expect pro-activity, but through the approach make sure you evoke active behavior. And as soon as possible after opening a meeting, because the patterns

form by then. So your approach directly influences the behavior of participants during a meeting, but also afterwards. Because the behavior that you do not evoke ín a meeting will not arise automatically afterwards.

In conclusion

We are satisfied if, after reading this main piece, you have the understanding that work forms are more than just moments to "liven up" a boring meeting. The question "do or don't work forms?" is irrelevant, because every form is a work form. The question "what form of work?" does make sense. To answer that question, the goal is leading. What do you want to achieve? What should the meeting yield? What behavior do you want to evoke in the group? The more clearly you have the goal in mind, the easier it is to choose a suitable form of work or to come up with one yourself. To give you an idea of what is possible and to help you choose, we have worked out 120 ideas in the next chapter. The cluster names help you find a working form that fits the purpose. The number of stars indicates how difficult or easy the work-form is to facilitate.