

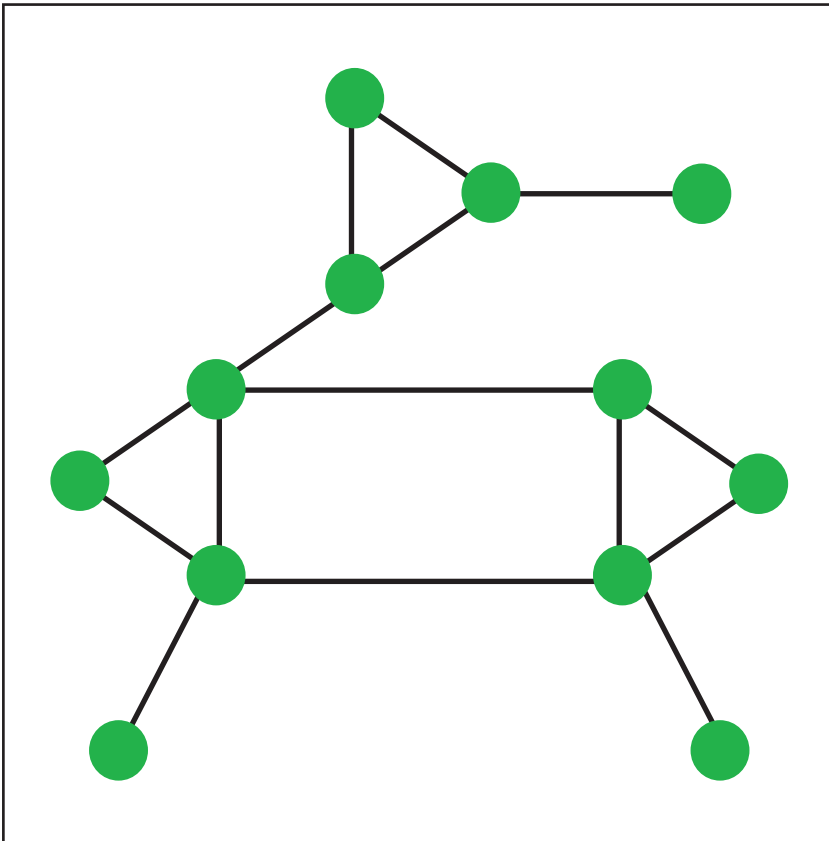


EXPERIENTIAL  
LEARNING

DESIGN

# Matrix

## Facilitator Notes



# Matrix: Facilitator Notes

An activity to explore networks, connections, interdependency and information flow

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



This activity involves working within a collaborative system in which every individual has a specific target that can only be achieved through co-operation with others. The system has strictly enforced rules that must be followed at all times. Participants attempt to achieve their individual goals, whilst also supporting others in achieving their targets. The activity raises questions about flows of information, channels of communication and organisational structures. It offers opportunities to explore the effectiveness of different matrix, cell and linear reporting systems.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- To explore the balance between individual and team/organisational targets
- To consider how best to contribute individual effort to a team task
- To understand the importance of correct and complete team briefing and effective on-going communication in achieving shared goals
- To understand how to design effective networks and avoid problems in internal supply chains
- To explore appropriate management and leadership approaches when working in highly interconnected networks and matrices.

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION



Working in a group, up to 16 participants are placed in a network in which each person has physical connections, via extended cords on belts, to other people in the network.

Within the system are coloured links, representing resources or pieces of information that have to be moved around the network via the existing cord connections. There are strict rules about how and when the links can be moved. Each individual participant has a target card which illustrates a particular sequence of 3 or 4 coloured links to be collected. The aim of the exercise is to ensure that the resources / information within the network are managed effectively and efficiently so that every person involved can meet their target. Upon completion of an individual target, the individual concerned is removed from the network and the links attached to that belt are removed. Planning for individual completion and exit from the system is important, to ensure that the achievement of individual targets does not compromise the ability of the wider organisation to succeed.

Depending upon the learning objectives for the specific use of the activity, opportunities may be offered to reshape/reconfigure the network, by moving cord links or adding in additional ones in order to improve performance.

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## DURING THE ACTIVITY



1. The facilitator should monitor activity as the participants work. Pay particular attention to:
  - Ensuring that all links are 'owned' and that none are left hanging on the cords
  - No-one has more than 4 links in total in their possession
  - No-one removes a link from a card after it has been placed there
2. When an individual has completed a card, ensure that they leave the network immediately and disconnect the cords from their belt. **Do not** reconnect the loose cords to another belt.
3. When all cards have been completed, check that they are correct and finish the exercise.

## OPTIONAL INTERVENTIONS DURING THE ACTIVITY



This matrix activity offers a number of possible 'changes' that may be introduced during the time allowed for completion. The facilitator will use personal judgement to determine whether these would illustrate key learning points and add value to the learning. \*

These interventions include:

1. The participants may be offered the opportunity to change the position of a limited number (1-3) of the connecting cords. In order to do this, they may disconnect and re-connect the agreed number of cord links in the system, eg to avoid a bottle neck, or to bring an isolated individual into a 'loop', so allowing more movement.
2. The participants may be offered the opportunity to completely change the structure of the network. In order to do this they may disconnect and re-connect any number of cord links in the system and completely re-arrange the shape of the network. They may choose to do this in order to improve the efficiency of the flow of components around the system or to reduce the 'stress' on individuals in hub positions in the existing system. (For example, this may represent the re-structuring of teams in an organisation, or a move towards a flatter management structure,)
3. The participants may be offered an additional cord (or cords) to put into the system at a place of their own choosing. This additional link may increase the movement options available and enhance the speed or ease of information flow. (For example, this additional link may represent the opening of a direct channel of communication between members of two parallel teams, rather than communication happening only via team leaders.)

\* All of the above options are useful if the activity is being used as a network modelling tool. They allow participants to experiment with different systems and illustrate the advantages and pitfalls of each and, potentially, to understand why change to existing structures and systems has taken place or is necessary in the future.

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## REVIEWING THE ACTIVITY



The choice of review questions and discussion topics will depend upon the reason this activity was selected and the learning objectives it was intended to achieve. Here are some examples of possible approaches to the de-brief, relating to different learning objectives.

### 1. TEAMWORK AND TEAM PROBLEM-SOLVING

Key points for discussion:

- Were all participants clear about the objective and process for the task from the beginning? Did they understand that the goal was to complete ALL the target cards and not just their individual targets?
- Were the rules closely followed (especially the removal of only the available link, the need to transfer links via the cord connection and not simply pass by hand and the need to retain ownership of a link until it is received by someone else?)
- Did the team members raise questions about non-compliance and how was this dealt with if they did? (ie. Did they 'police' themselves and adhere to the standards laid down?)
- Were team members clear in their communication about what they needed and what they had to offer? Were all members allowed/encouraged to contribute?
- How did team members deal with individuals who were more passive or uncertain in moving links around? Were they encouraged to understand the process or simply instructed in what to do next?
- Was there evidence of negative emotional reactions (eg. frustration, boredom, irritation) during the activity? If so, how did team members address this and overcome it?
- Did anyone complete a card and leave the system before others were in a position to do the same? What was the impact of this and how was it managed by the remaining team members?
- Were individuals willing to defer completion of their own cards, in order to ensure that others could succeed? Were there examples of situations in which an individual passed on a coloured link that would have completed his/her card in order to facilitate movement of links elsewhere?

There will, of course, be many other examples of team process illustrated during this activity. Facilitators should be observant of any patterns of behaviour that are interesting eg. around team roles, contributions, decision-making processes etc and challenge them appropriately.

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