THE DYNAMIC LOOP METHOD IN HR AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5 phase method for short-term business goals and long-term employee development goals

By authors
Masha Ibeschitz
& Think Beyond Impact Partners

WHY

1. CHALLENGES OF HR DEVELOPMENT

HR AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FACE A THREE-DIMENSIONAL CHALLENGE TODAY

1   **Global conditions are changing dramatically.**

A fragmented, non-linear world is emerging in front of our eyes. There are many people who no longer understand what is happening. They are filled with worry. Positive new things that could emerge during the great upheaval on our planet are not even discernible at this point. Organizations continue to get caught in a whirlwind, pursuing an increasing number of business goals at the same time. Simultaneously, they are introducing agile methods across many levels. The more rapid and agile organizations become, the more challenging it becomes to precisely develop employees. But that's exactly what is needed to keep companies on track in turbulent times.

2   **People in organizations require and seek efficient suppor**

Due to the rapidly changing conditions within and outside an organization, employees are under high performance and time pressure. They must constantly adapt. In addition, young talents in particular are asking for purpose. They are questioning what is the most meaningful use of their scarce time and attention. Consequently, employees demand effective support from HR. They are keen to learn how to master their daily requirements quickly, effectively and seamlessly. Furthermore, it is important for many to make a sustainable contribution overall.

3   **HR and organizational development initiatives must have measurable impact.**

HR departments as well as their external partners are under unprecedented pressure to be efficient. It is no longer enough to set up training designs once and then shuffle employees through them for years according to the motto „it will pay off in the long run". In fact, with that strategy resources were often wasted in the past. But even agile and seemingly highly efficient methods such as e-learning certainly aren't a cure-all, because they often lack strategic input that ensures that learners are focused on development goals and real transfer that actually corresponds to the needs of the current business.

VUCA becomes BANI: New framework explained

Decision-makers had barely become accustomed to navigating a world that was „volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous" when this assessment of global conditions was already evolving. The acronym VUCA, now familiar, had been coined before 1990 in the U.S. military environment to describe the post-Cold War world. Thirty years, a global financial crisis, climate change and one pandemic later, VUCA is only a limited description of our planet. The global dynamics of change have reached a new dimension. We are witnessing conditions on the brink of chaos. Jamais Cascio, partner at the Institute for the Future (IFTF) in Palo Alto, therefore brought the new acronym BANI into play in 2020 in a highly regarded article. Accordingly, our world today is brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible. What does this mean?

Brittleness means illusory strength. The most powerful institutions and organizations may falter or even collapse overnight. In a world filled with fear, the anxiety of making mistakes reigns supreme. Every decision can have incalculable consequences, since things hardly develop in a linear way. Cause and effect appear to be detached from each other. Seemingly tiny interventions in a system can unleash enormous dynamics, and the consequences are then almost impossible to correct. An example: According to Cascio, the concept of „flattening the curve" to combat a pandemic is practically a „war" against non-linearity - including considerable collateral damage. To make matters worse, nobody has a conclusive model for the big picture anymore. There is no answer to all of the questions. What explains one thing contradicts another.

Consequences for HR development

What does this mean for HR and organizational development? First of all, people in organizations should be supported in developing a mindset that allows them to deal with BANI conditions with confidence. Without exaggerated concern, employees can continue to work with motivation on the realization of corporate goals. The answer to brittleness is resilience and serenity. Fear can be countered with empathy and mindfulness. Rather than succumbing to non-linearity, agility and flexibility can be increased. Finally, transparency and intuition help against incomprehensibility. That's what Jamais Cascio recommends.

The next step is making employee and organizational development more dynamic and adaptive. Employees need very timely, precisely fitting learning impulses in order to remain capable of acting in non-linear environments. At the same time, they also need long-term perspectives and the prospect of genuine inner growth. In a frightened world, passivity is the greatest danger. People with a long-term perspective and a belief in their personal efficacy never just wait and see. Employee development and its external partners play a key role in opening up perspectives for people and enabling them to make courageous decisions in the interests of the system as a whole.

HOW

2. DYNAMIC HR DEVELOPMENT

How can we counter these changed framework conditions? And how can the challenges outlined at the beginning be overcome? Today's HR development would have to combine focus, structure, individual support and on-the-job linkage from the „old" world of leadership and organizational development with the agility, responsiveness and efficiency of the digital age. And this is exactly where the Dynamic Loop Method comes in. It is a holistic approach that decisively dynamizes training to provide responsive and precisely measurable results. The Dynamic Loop approach involves business sponsors from the start and keeps their goals in mind at all times. At the same time, it succeeds in meeting employees' changing expectations of development initiatives.

Change perspectives in HR and organizational development

Until very recently, people development, just like management in many companies, has operated with a predictability of several years. The nature of goal setting, the tools used in employee development, and the way employees were managed were all designed in a way as if we could at least anticipate what is coming in the future and what impact it might have. In today's world (see BANI) and with a view to the dynamic corporate and leadership development that is necessary, some things can change.

Mindset previously	Mindset now
"What we have observed so far ….."	"What will make the difference for sustainable success from now on ….."
Classic business and HR development Linear thinking Goal-oriented Focus on processes	**Loop Corporate and HR Development** Circular thinking Resource-oriented Focus on people
Lead followers Tend to follow trends	**Lead leaders** Constantly and dynamically weigh what their organization truly needs Live empowerment Courageously go forward, step-by-step Invest with focus in what is needed next Resilience and belief in their own self-efficacy
Expect followers Are often caught up in reactionism Want „higher, faster, farther" at all costs Risk passivity due to excessive demands and fear	

HOW THE DYNAMIC LOOP METHOD WORKS

Flexible & long term

HR and organizational development based on the Dynamic Loop Method involves being able to react as quickly as possible to short-term business goals without neglecting long-term development goals for employees. Employee development remains sustainable and transfer-oriented – because only continuous development increases the „intellectual capital" of the entire organization. At the same time, however, it is possible to provide employees with very short-term, tailor-made impulses at any time. As a result, they receive assistance in actually putting their performance on the road in challenging situations. For the learners in companies, this reduces everyday pressure. They know that they have both meaningful long-term and short-term support at all times.

Digital & analogue

The dynamic loop method combines the advantages of digital and analogue approaches. The advantage of digital designs to reach large groups or even entire business organizations quickly in order to move them immediately remains. Large group events, which are expensive and deliver delayed results, can be avoided whenever unnecessary. On top of that, the Dynamic Loop Method prevents the other extreme of „over-digitization". Often, people today are left to deal with an almost unmanageable plethora of on-demand offerings. They lose focus on what they need to know and be able to do in order to achieve their current business goals. In the sense of a holistic approach, it is not a question of either/or, but rather both/and. Digital and highly self-determined for the learners - but at the same time supported by personal contacts who create context and specify content. This ensures that employees are always in touch with day-to-day business. That is the dynamic aspect of the Dynamic Loop Method.

Dynamic & regular

Loops, which refers to a quarterly approach in evaluation and adaptation loops, are just as important as dynamics. For each development initiative, the method recognizes a total of five phases, which are examined every three months. Relevance, quality, success - all results at hand are evaluated in every loop. Adjustments can be made in each case as if using sliders - always focusing on what most serves the organization and its most important goals at the time. The five phases then resume from phase one. This is how the Dynamic Loops ultimately ensure an upward spiral. With such extremely pronounced dynamism and adaptivity, HR and organizational development will be better able to cope with the changes that companies are now facing worldwide.

WHAT

# 3. THE DYNAMIC LOOP METHOD IN PRATICE

The Dynamic Loop Method begins with existing development initiatives in companies. There is no need to stop all initiatives and start from scratch. It involves a dynamic framework for timely effectiveness and transfer efficiency. Through regular assessment, evaluation and adaptation, the method ensures that the effectiveness of human resource and organizational development increases. The entire organization is always supported in achieving its most important business goals.

With the Dynamic Loop Method, this is done in five cha acteristic phases:

3. Network Phase

2. Design Phase

4. Experience Phase

1. Goal Phase

5. Loop Phase
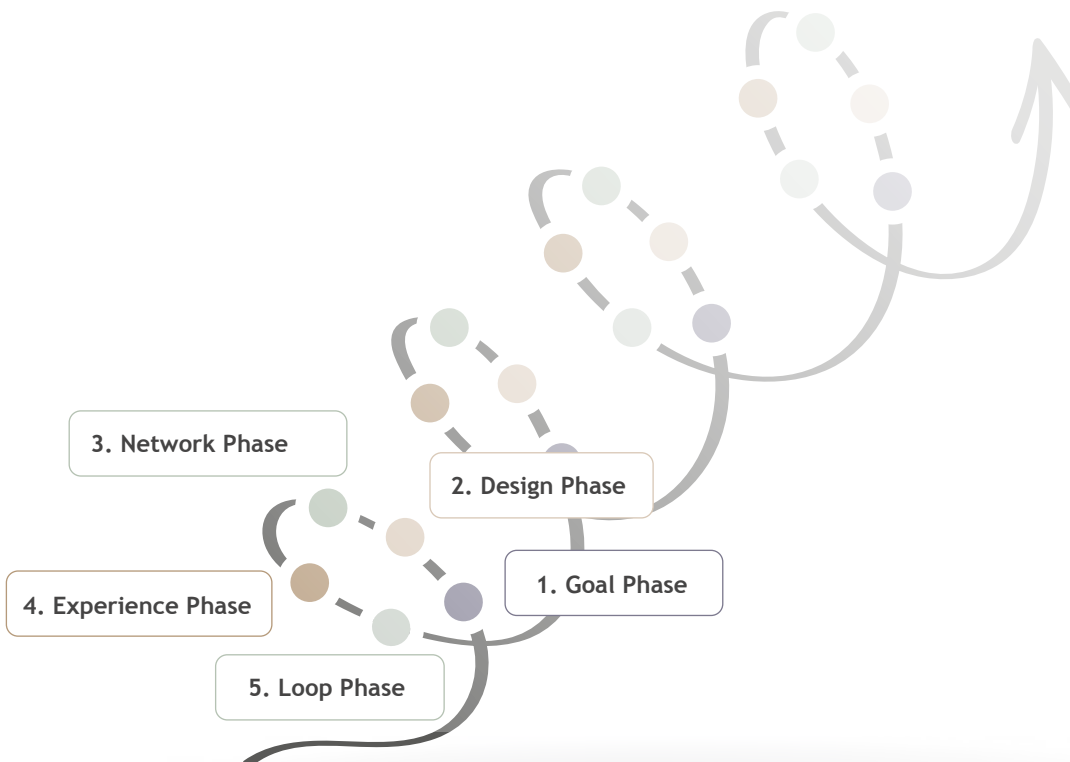
1. Goal Phase

Business sponsors are on board from the very beginning. Based on current business needs, they set short-, medium- and long-term goals. Business managers in the company, HR as well as organizational development and their external partners then jointly analyze and define the need for new success-critical behavior on the part of the employees. What (new) behavior should be demonstrated in the future to achieve current goals? To make it more tangible, you can work with a persona question. For example: the persona of a participant in a development measure is filmed before and after going through the development measure - what new behavior becomes apparent?
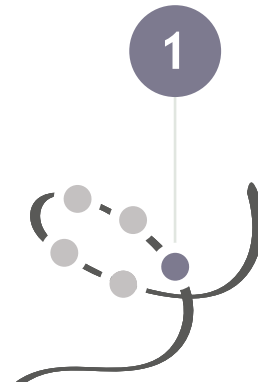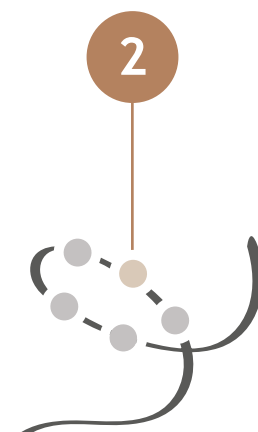
Helpful tools and approaches in this phase

✓ Four Levels of Training Evaluation® according to Kirkpatrick: „Start with the end in mind" is the guiding principle of this method, which aims to build bridges between training and business success. Tools such as ROE, learner-centered feedback sheets, success-critical behavior and leading indicators are hands-on aids for designing effective development measures.

✓ Goal Canvas according to Ina Weinbauer: Business Need, Business Impact and Transfer Goals are clearly worked out in this canvas - also perfectly suited for communicating goals in a comprehensible way.

2. Design Phase

In this second phase, internal HR and organizational development and the external partners design processes that fit the goals defined. In this context, they answer the question: How should employees be prepared in order to be able to demonstrate the expected behavioral change in everyday life? In the process, they either set up new development initiatives or further develop existing ones. Here, content, transfer measures, didactics and formats are defined. (The portfolio ranges from self-directed learning to training, mentoring/coaching, structural/ organizational adjustments, etc.) A foundation has been established.
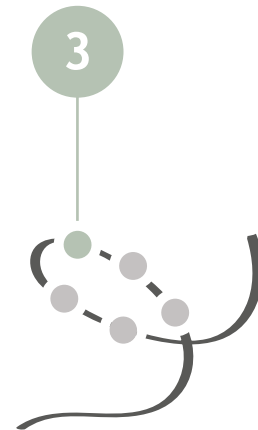
Helpful tools and approaches in this phase

✓ Robert Brinkerhoff's approach of „High Performance Learning Journeys" can provide support in this respect - one of the focal points therein is „engage learners in a meaningful and effective performance improvement process".

✓ 12 levers of transfer effectiveness according to Ina Weinbauer: Based on scientific analysis and practical evaluation, the 12 levers are a hands-on and well-tested set of methods and actions to ensure that training content REALLY finds its way into work practice.

3. Network Phase

Here we focus on sustainable future implementation (transfer effectiveness), which can only succeed in conjunction with the relevant stakeholders and those affected. In this phase, HR and organizational development define all stakeholders and involves them. How will different units and individuals in the company support each other in learning? For this purpose, arrangements are being made. We create a strong and flexible co-learning, communication and implementation network. The more tightly woven the network, the greater the likelihood of success.
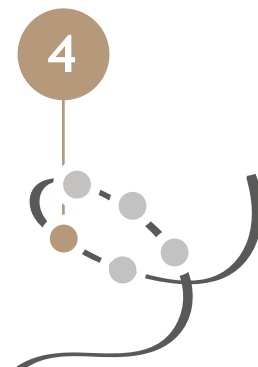
Helpful tools and approaches in this phase

✓ Inspiration for courageous thinking can be found here: Moving Organizations (Barbara Buzanich-Pöltl and Frank Boos 2020). In particular, the following sections: „The 9 levers of agile transformation" Lever 5: Organization as a space for growth and development and Lever 9: Social innovation).

! Practical note on Phase 2 Design & Phase 3 Network
Doing design first and setting up the network next can make perfect sense. However, we've seen it to be mixed up in some projects. As well as a back and forth between both in others. Make sure you take care for both, order is secondary.

4. Experience Phase

In this phase, we deliver. Employees experience the respective development initiative in a precisely coordinated mix of digital and analogue formats. They experience meaning, witness immediate results, and know that their time investment is worthwhile. Short-term support is complemented by long-term perspectives that are repeatedly presented to them.
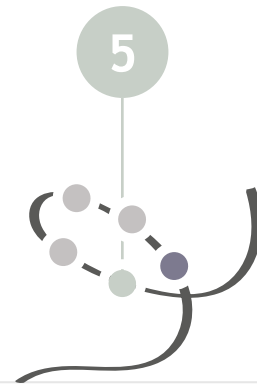
Helpful tools and approaches in this phase

✓ Hybrid Evaluation according to Kirkpatrick: Unlike classic happy sheets („Was the trainer competent?"), hybrid evaluation questionnaires are three-dimensional: How relevant is the learning content for the learners? What did they themselves contribute to the learning success? And how satisfied are they with the course of the learning initiative? Moreover, the evaluation is not only carried out at the end, but continuously throughout the entire development process.

✓ LTEM - Learning Transfer Evaluation Model according to Will Thalheimer: The model works with eight levels of learning, from presence at an initiative („Have heard/seen/read") to independent application („Is part of my behavioral repertoire") and provides valuable impulses for the design and evaluation of development measures.

5. Loop Phase

At three-month intervals, we review and evaluate everything that has happened up to that point. Are the goals still visible? Is the relevance, quality and implementation success appropriate? Depending on the results of this evaluation, the initiatives are re-adjusted. Sometimes more, sometimes less. Last but not least, the sponsors are asked to provide feedback and to refine the goals that have been set. It is possible that profound organizational changes will take effect during the process in a rapidly changing world, especially if your development measures accompany entire transformation processes. The loop phase helps to include this dimension repeatedly in order to adapt the process. The short-term iteration from a business, PE and OE perspective is particularly important here. The loop phase forms the transition to another phase one.

5

Helpful tools and approaches in this phase

✓ When successful, the further development of individuals and organizations is always a positive transformation. The transformation map, for example, has proven to be a helpful tool. Read more about the process of agile transformation in: Moving Organizations (Barbara Buzanich Pöltl & Frank Boos)

IN SHORT

LET'S DYNAMIZE HRD TOGETHER!

The Dynamic Loop Method is a suitable framework for HR and organizational development to optimally support and empower employees in a BANI world. Mental agility, maximum business and transfer focus, permanent learning and continuous development of people and organizations are the key to successful business in a world that increasingly eludes long-term planning and control.

1. Challenges of HR Development
2. Dynamic HR Development
3. Dynamic Loop Method in practice
Dynamic Loop Checklist
Leadership in a hybrid environment
Bibliography
Contact

DYNAMIC LOOP CHECKLIST

Is your company ready for the Dynamic Loop Method?
Which elements are you already implementing?
And what else is needed?

The following checklist can be helpful for the initial assessment of existing or planned development initiatives:

1. GOAL PHASE

- ☐ Our business sponsors are on board.
- ☐ We have clearly defined short- and medium-term measurable goals based on current business needs - coordinated with the business sponsors.
- ☐ We understand the success-critical behavior in order to achieve goals.
- ☐ Business need and success-critical behavior are transparent and meaningful for all stakeholders (business/employees/HR-OD/internal and external partners).

2. DESIGN PHASE

- ☐ Our development processes correspond with the objectives of the planned measures.
- ☐ Content, didactics, formats and transfer measures of the development processes are precisely aligned with goals and success-critical behavior (we select specifically from the overall portfolio of all options).

3. NETWORK PHASE

- ☐ The target group, stakeholders and partners of the development initiative are clearly defined.
- ☐ Clear and regular communication and information structure for the target group, stakeholders and partners is in place.
- ☐ Different units and/or individual people in the company support each other specifically in their learning.

4. EXPERIENCE PHASE

- ☐ The development measures are implemented in accordance with the plan and in a transferoriented manner.
- ☐ Learners report purpose, immediate results, and worthwhile investment of time.
- ☐ The initiative provides immediate, short-term support while paying toward long-term development goals.
- ☐ Staff development and learners are closely linked via ongoing evaluation and feedback on measures.

5. LOOP PHASE

- ☐ The most important stakeholders meet (at least briefly) every three months for a qualitative discussion.
- ☐ Objectives, relevance, quality and implementation success are reviewed and adjusted every three months.
- ☐ The results of the loop phase are transferred directly to the next start phase.
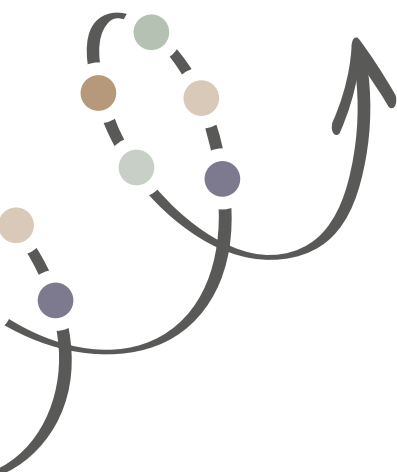
CASE STUDY

- 1. Challenges of HR Development
- 2. Dynamic HR Development
- 3. Dynamic Loop Method in practice
- Dynamic Loop Checklist
- **Leadership in a hybrid environment**
- Bibliography
- Contact

LEADERSHIP IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

Initial situation

TMConnected is a company of the Plasser + Theurer Group that has been developing tools from the tremendous volume of data from track construction machines since 2017, enabling railroad operators to make decisions earlier, more effectively and more cost-effectively. The company is economically successful managed by a young, agile team in a dynamic environment. The goal is to continue to grow successfully. In order to master the challenges of a growing hybrid organization, TMConnected is planning a customized leadership process for the management team. A dynamic, pragmatic and hands-on approach with a focus on the sustainable develop-ment of the executives is important to the management.

And this is how we at Think Beyond worked together with TMC using the Dynamic Loop Method:

1. GOAL PHASE

Management commits to support the entire development process as facilitator.
Clear goals are defined:

Business Needs

To guide the growing hybrid organization to current and future ambitious goals, leaders from 2 teams need to merge and evolve the previous successful agile approaches and add to their repertoire of leadership and communi-cation methods

Business Impact

✓ The self-image and the cooperation between the team members in the management team is optimized (feedback by LT members and employees as well as observations and feedbacks by the management),

✓ Corporate strategy is coordinated and implemented con-sistently (internal reports and regular reflection)

✓ Increased efficiency through optimized balance of different problem solving and management methods based on the situation/problem (e.g. complex or complicated issue (The number of in-time/quality completed projects increases from x to y (Internal Reports)

✓ Collaboration with international remote teams improves (Quality/Time KPI, surveys on the quality of collaboration)

Transfer Goals

✓ The management team (each member) behaves in accor-dance with the jointly developed management principles

✓ Employee appraisals are conducted according to internal standards (process, quality, frequency and duration)

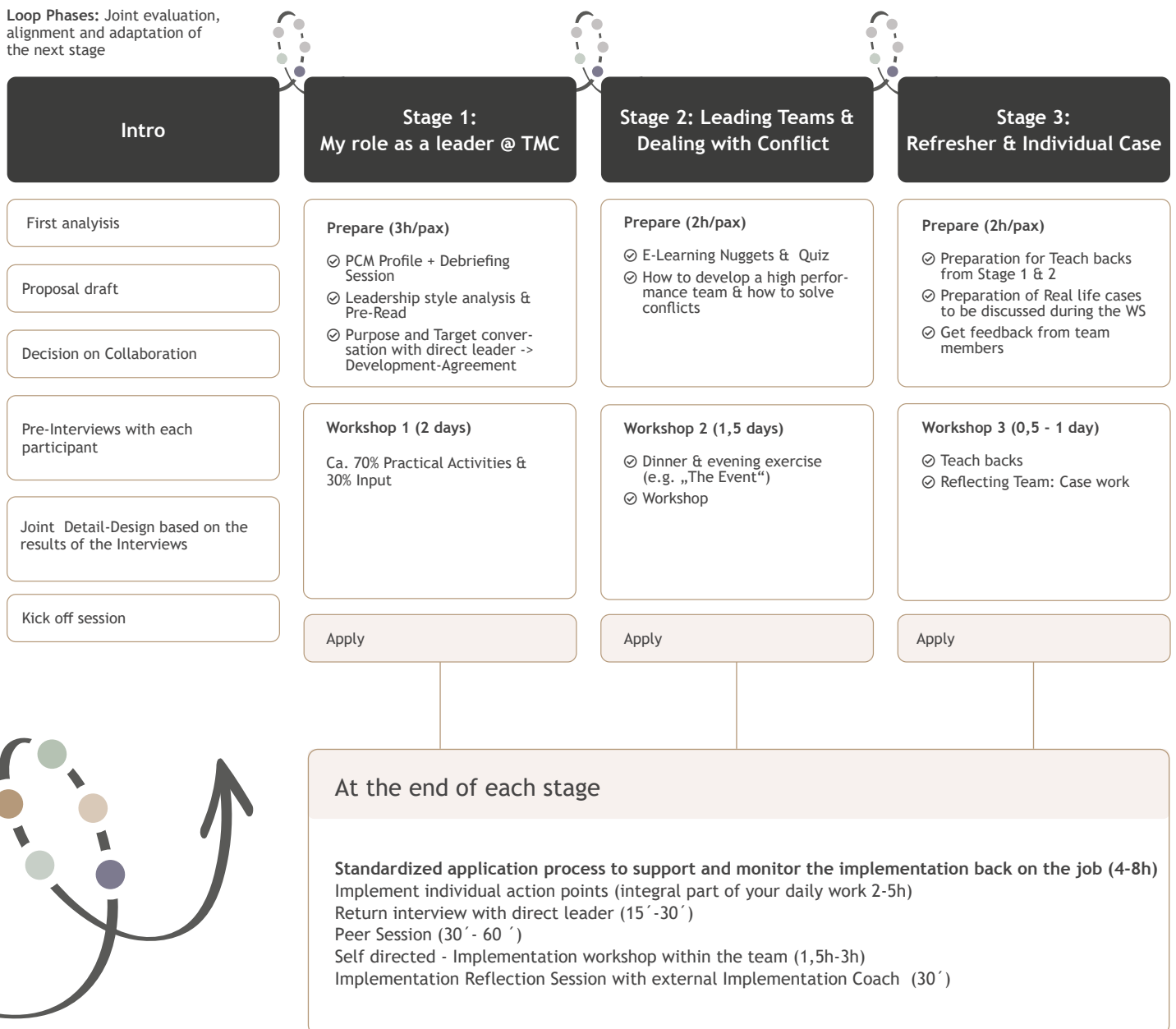✓ SBI feedback is used as a tool for daily communication and optimization of cooperation

2. DESIGN PHASE

⊘ A three-stage development process is designed together with TMC. It supports the achievement of objectives at every moment. The content, didactics, formats, and transfer measures are selected in such a way that the managers get to know the behavior that is critical for success, experiment with it, and can apply it in everyday life even during the process.

⊘ The loops after each phase are already part of the process design

Loop Phases: Joint evaluation, alignment and adaptation of the next stage

Intro	Stage 1: My role as a leader @ TMC	Stage 2: Leading Teams & Dealing with Conflict	Stage 3: Refresher & Individual Case
First analyisis	**Prepare (3h/pax)**	**Prepare (2h/pax)**	**Prepare (2h/pax)**
Proposal draft	⊘ PCM Profile + Debriefing Session ⊘ Leadership style analysis & Pre-Read ⊘ Purpose and Target conversation with direct leader -> Development-Agreement	⊘ E-Learning Nuggets & Quiz ⊘ How to develop a high performance team & how to solve conflicts	⊘ Preparation for Teach backs from Stage 1 & 2 ⊘ Preparation of Real life cases to be discussed during the WS ⊘ Get feedback from team members
Decision on Collaboration			
Pre-Interviews with each participant	**Workshop 1 (2 days)**	**Workshop 2 (1,5 days)**	**Workshop 3 (0,5 - 1 day)**
Joint Detail-Design based on the results of the Interviews	Ca. 70% Practical Activities & 30% Input	⊘ Dinner & evening exercise (e.g. „The Event") ⊘ Workshop	⊘ Teach backs ⊘ Reflecting Team: Case work
Kick off session			
	Apply	Apply	Apply

At the end of each stage

Standardized application process to support and monitor the implementation back on the job (4-8h)
Implement individual action points (integral part of your daily work 2-5h)
Return interview with direct leader (15´-30´)
Peer Session (30´- 60´)
Self directed - Implementation workshop within the team (1,5h-3h)
Implementation Reflection Session with external Implementation Coach (30´)

3. NETWOR PHASE

HR acts as internal process support and communication link

⊘ Regular information about adjustments to all stakeholders

⊘ Active communication with the participants of the development initiative: gathering feedback, following up on transfer tasks, sending out „development reminders",...

Think Beyond project manager acts as external communication link

⊘ Project updates to all Think Beyond trainers and consultants involved

⊘ Communication coordination with TMConnected

Another Think Beyond Impact partner is available on demand for additional topics (e.g. conducting employee appraisals) of the HR partner

People actively support each other while learning:

⊘ Management is present during the first workshop and plays an active role in developing a common understanding of leadership.

⊘ Deployment discussions and development agreement with direct manager before the process begins In stage 3, feedback is actively requested from the own team and processed in the following workshop

⊘ Follow-up meeting with the direct manager after each development stage in the process.

⊘ Peer session of all participants after each stage of development, in which they share experiences and help each other with current challenges

⊘ Independently conducted implementation workshop, in which the participants look together at what learning content they are already actively implementing, including mutual consultation.

4. EXPERIENCE PHASE

⊘ Feedback from participants confirms the immediate effectiveness and usefulness of the chosen formats and content

⊘ Hearing from the participants

Watch here

5. LOOP PHASE

⊘ Evaluation and adaptation of the entire development process after each stage (every three months)

⊘ Quarterly consultations between management, HR of TMConnected and Think Beyond (adjustments were made due to personnel changes, pandemic, relocation,... among others)

WHAT TMC SAYS ABOUT

THINK BEYOND AND THE PROJECT

How would you describe the project and the cooperation with Think Beyond?

It can be best described by the following: a holistic, professionally tailored and massively implementation-oriented accompaniment that has supported us in many ways. I especially appreciated the intensive exchange and adjustments after each stage, as well as the professional and appreciative collaboration with all participants from the Think Beyond team.

Which challenges were solved by the collaboration?

Bringing two leadership teams together to form a new, growing organization, developing a common understanding of leadership, and arriving at a common language within the leadership team

What has TMC achieved through its collaboration with Think Beyond?

The self-image of the management team has improved - today we act as „Team No1" and are able to achieve our ambitious business goals in the interests of our customers, even in the new, grown organization and in the current framework conditions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brinkerhoff, R: Apking,A; et al. Improving Performance Through Learning: A Practical Guide for Designing High Performance Learning Journeys (English Edition) , 2019

Bühler, E; Leading Exponential Change: Go beyond Agile and Scrum to run even better business transformations ,2018

www.leblocnotes.ca/node/251

Thalheimer, W: Performance-Focused Smile Sheets: A Radical Rethinking of a Dangerous Art Form, 2016

Weinbauer, I:; Ibeschitz, M: What Makes Training Really Work: 12 Levers Of Transfer Effectiveness

Durkee, J; Townsley I; practicaltrainingtransfer.com/2020/11/25/how-to-create-lasting-learning-transfer-in-the-new-work-environment

Kirkpatrick, J: The Four Levels of Evaluation - An Update (TD at Work), 2015

Koch, A; Die Transferstärke-Methode: Mehr Lerntransfer in Trainings und Coachings 2018

Buzanich B; Boos F; Moving organisations, Wie Sie sich durch agile Transformation krisenfest aufstellen (Systemisches Management), 2020

Cascio J; https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-

You want to contribute to develop this whitepaper further in co-creation?
Please contact us under: cocreation@thinkbeyondgroup.eu

LET'S DYNAMIZE HR TOGETHER!

Let's have a chat to find out how you can combine short-term business goals and long-term employee development goals

📞 +43 664 396 71 54

✉ welcome@thinkbeyondgroup.eu

in linkedin.com/company/think-beyound-group

📷 @think_beyond_group

🌐 www.thinkbeyondgroup.eu