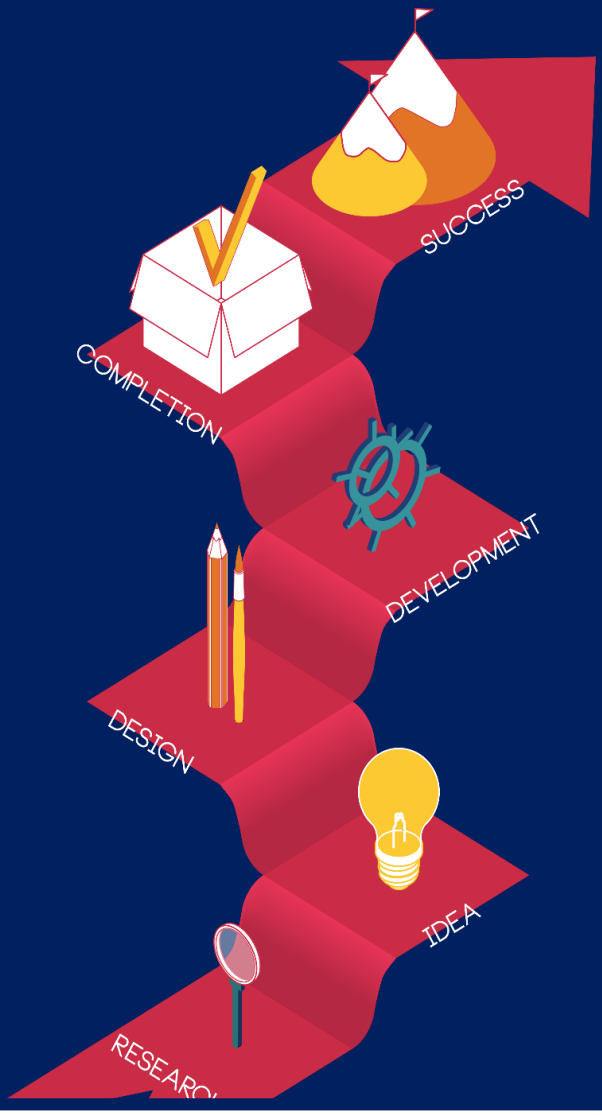

IO2 Toolset for Team Development

Under Construction Tool

Institute Polytechnic of Porto

20.9.2020

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Summary

About the *Under Construction* Tool

Online resources

Session facilitator

Presetting (for the session facilitator) (15-20 minutes)

Steps to follow

1. **Team Onboarding** (up to 10 minutes)
   - Team Welcome
   - Intervention framing
2. **Topic Clarification** (up to 15 minutes)
3. **Constructing a shared ground floor** (up to 15 minutes)
   - Guidelines
   - Construction
4. **Construction of the Team View on the Topic** (up to 15 minutes)
   - Guidelines
   - Construction
5. **"Team Presentation"** (up to 10 minutes)
6. **(OPTIONAL) Extra CONSTRUCTION** (up to 10 minutes)
7. **Analysis and Feedback (for professional facilitators)** (up to 30 minutes)
   - Factual questions
   - Perception
   - Interpretation
   - Feedback

7. **Analysis and Feedback (for team member facilitator)** (up to 30 minutes)
   - Factual questions
   - Perception
   - Interpretation
   - Feedback

8 . Agreement on Actions (up to 10 minutes)

About the *Under Construction* Tool

Working with others is a natural feature of human activity. It's common in our daily life, both in formal and informal contexts, to collaborate with people, and to have common goals with others. However, this task is not always easy! Problems arise from several and different sources and reasons… functional, principles and values, emotions, perceptions… But even when there are no problems in team work, we do not always make the most of the full potential of each other, despite being in a collaboration and common focused mode!

This team development tool relies on the basic assumption that every team, notwithstanding the context, the moment or its development stage (forming, storming, norming or performing) is always UNDER CONSTRUCTION. New challenges stand up continuously both from teams' internal and external factors, both from direct and indirect factors. Moreover, these (positive or negative perceived) challenges appear not all times in an explicit way.

The UNDER CONSTRUCTION tool is a resource - which using symbols and a specific process – facilitates groups to visualize many uncovered aspects, as well as dealing with explicit tasks and goals. Teams' self-awareness, communication, recreation, co-creation, self-efficacy, empowerment, performance, or entrepreneurship are some of the issues that the UNDER CONSTRUCTION tool may exemplarily work with. Designed for use with all types of teams, this intervention set presents several alternative paths to better adapt to different situations. Materials enable all kinds of scenarios and enhance the co-construction and co-expression of different and shared perceptions, both evoking past elements and looking to the future. The symbolic field and resources of this tool give the team an additional language and a unique manner to interpret and communicate.

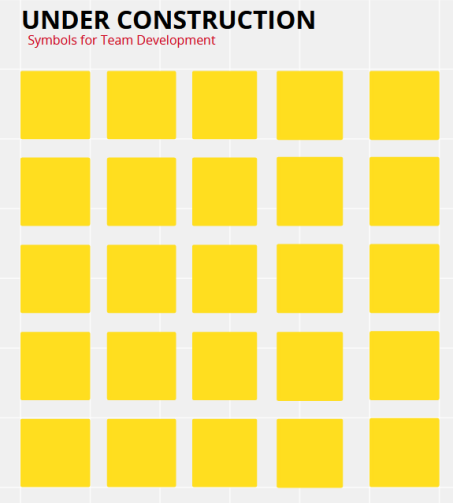
This tool is adequate to:

- *Develop the team itself*
  Facilitating the team to work with all kind of issues, topics, problems, needs, potentials, such as team building; team conflicts; team roles; team communication; team workflow and work organisation; team motivation; team goal setting; team cohesion; team engagement and commitment; developing new competencies within the team, cross-team cooperation; etc)
- *Develop team work content*
  Facilitating the teamwork on specific and concrete work content issues/ tasks, such as creating a new product, generating new ideas, planning work, etc

Online resources

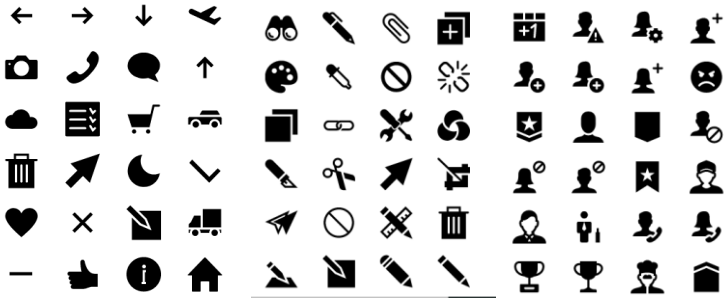
- **Link: Under Construction Template**
  https://app.conceptboard.com/board/q9z4-2qr7-mqhx-pqd9-z9c5#

- **A dashboard** representing the base/ soil for the team construction.



- **The toolbar** with constructing resources, such as an “Eraser”, a “Connecter”, a “Shaper”, a “Colour” resource or a “Moving” resource.

- **Symbols** for adding content to the ground soil of the construction, enabling the build-up of the topic representation.



Session facilitator

This tool can be used by both professional consultants or by the team by itself. In this case, the team has to select a team member to facilitate the tool dynamic.

In the case of professional consultants, it is highly recommended to work with 2 facilitators, mainly if teams include more than 3 people. One facilitator assumes the session dynamic actively and the other observes and intervenes in the factual questions, perception and interpretation phase 7.

Presetting (for the session facilitator) (15-20 minutes)

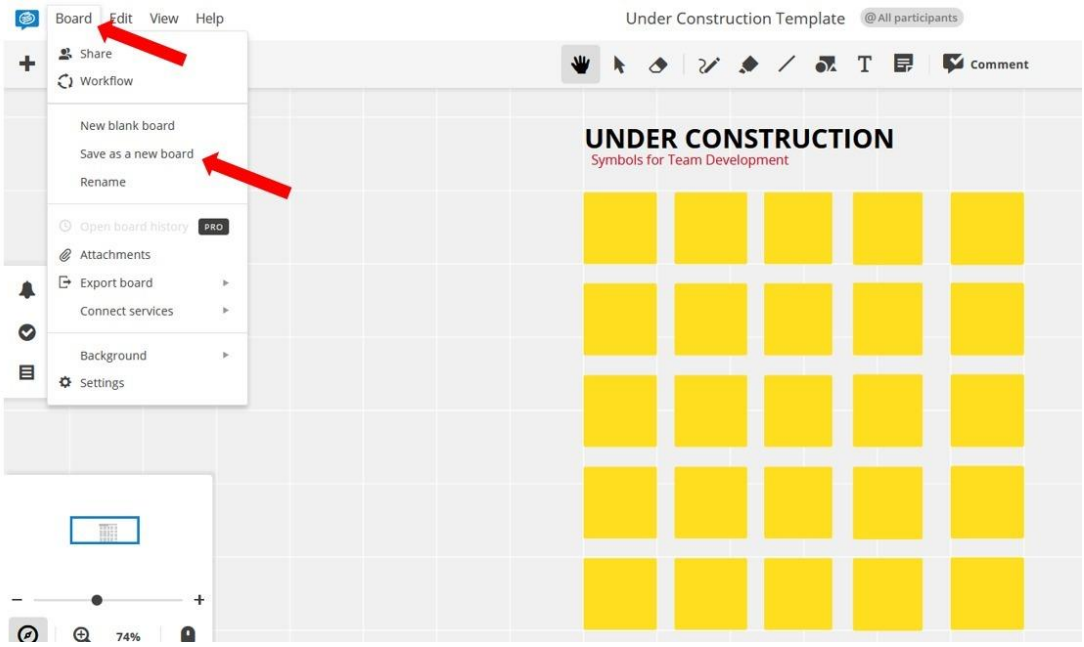
- **The tech tool**

a) Sign up free for Conceptboard (www.conceptboard.com)

Explore the software a bit, mainly the tools bar and the icons library. You can also decide to follow the software proposed tutorial. Play a bit if you like, but you don't need much to handle your task in the tech field!

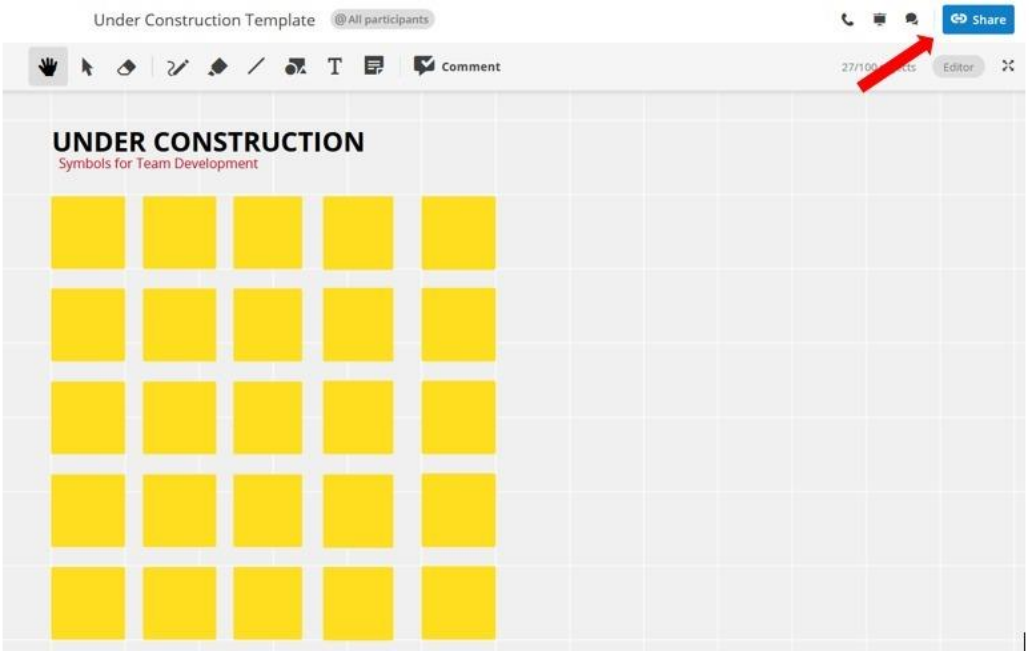
b) Go to this link **Under Construction Template (**and do not change anything, since this is the motherboard for all users).

c) Create an UNDER CONSTRUCTION template for your consultancy session by 1) selecting "Board" in the main menu, and then 2) choosing "save as new board". Give the new UNDER CONSTRUCTION Board, a specific name.

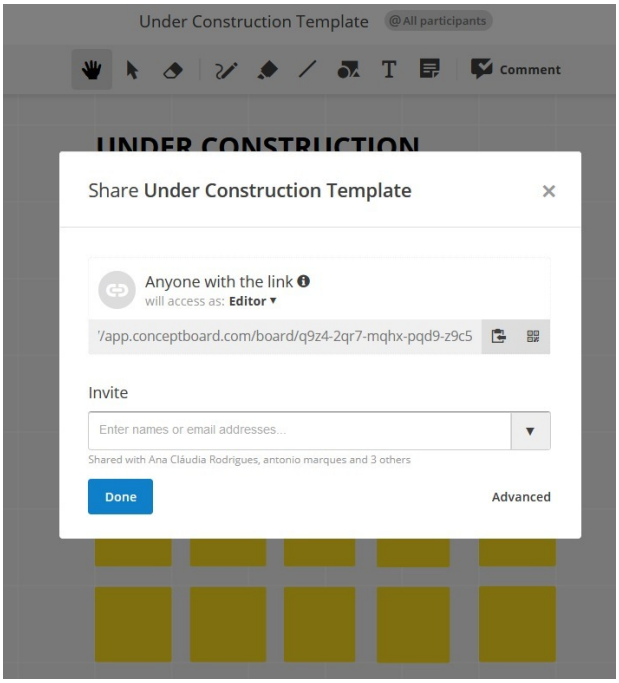


d) Sharing the board to work with the team

Click the button ‘share’



It opens an invitation window. Just invite the team members.



Our suggestion is to share the link only during the consultancy session, specifically after the topic clarification.

- **For the meeting with the team**

a) Invite the team to an online meeting with the usual platform (Skype, Zoom, Microsoft teams, …whatever works for you)

b) Ensure you have the link to the UNDER CONSTRUCTION online board before you start the meeting to share it easily when it comes to that phase.

Steps to follow

1. Team Onboarding (up to 10 minutes)

- ***Team Welcome***
  Welcome team and invite everyone to have their cameras on.

- ***Intervention framing***
  a) Explain why the team is all there, the purpose and the terms of the consultancy request/invitation;
  b) Explain to the group that the intervention process is based on symbols and symbolic representation;
  c) Clarify that it's a client-centred approach, so it relies on the team what they want to express, to say, to decide
  d) The process requests trust, confidentiality, respect, and active listening;
  e) the intervention has an expected duration of one hour (depending on the number of team members).

> *The team is the "client" and therefore the ownership of the content and team dynamics is theirs, the power and the limits are the ones they establish*

2. Topic Clarification (up to 15 minutes)

This phase occurs within the videoconference platform (the Conceptboard link was not yet shared)

- Recall on the initial motive of this intervention presented before, and explain that this is only a broad scope that should be viewed just as a starting point for the concrete work of that session.

- At this moment challenge the team to think on a specific topic/ goal/ theme/situation within this starting frame, which they would like to work in this particular session, that is limited by time.

  During this phase, all team members are welcome to propose the topic/ goal/ theme/situation to use in this intervention, and the team should discuss in order to agree upon / understand what the topic/ goal/ theme/situation is going to be.

  Highlight that there are endless issues that may be explored within the defined scope. In this phase, the team should decide one topic to be worked on today; it is not to determine what is the central issue within the topic initially mentioned. Tomorrow is another day…

  The facilitator gives space to the team, lets the team dynamic flow, and at a certain point, he/she facilitates pragmatism, specification, delimitation, boundaries, and limits settlement till achieving a very specific and limited topic/ goal/ theme/situation.

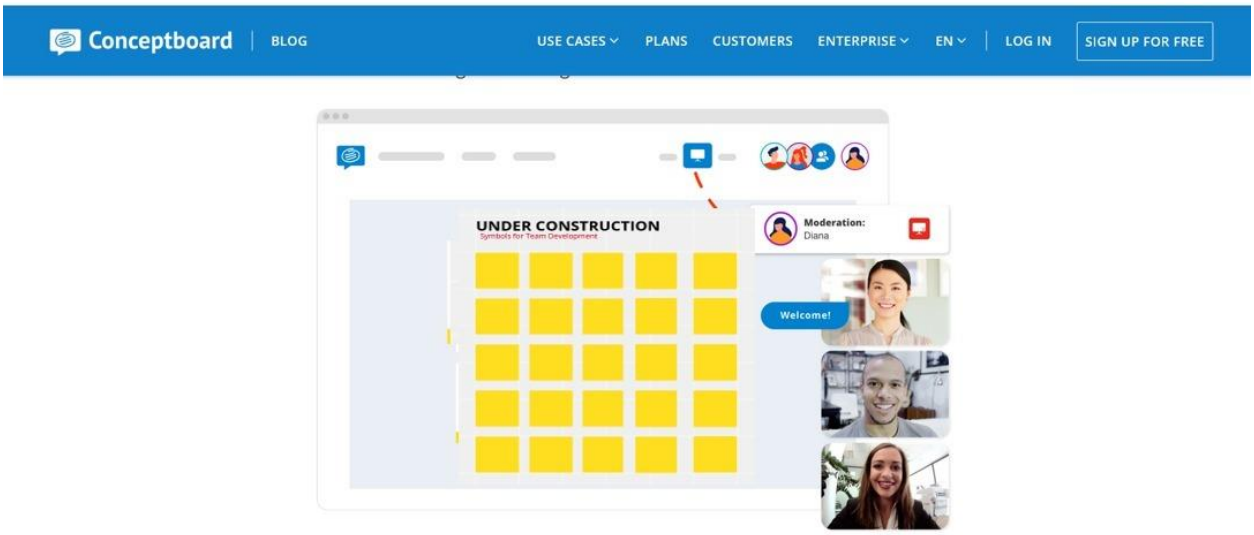
- In the end, enunciate the topic out loud and validate it before going forward. *It is very important that the topic/ goal/ theme/situation is clearly defined and globally understood.*

3. Constructing a shared ground floor (up to 15 minutes)

- ***Guidelines***

a) Share the tool link with the team, and ask the team members to open it as Guest, clicking on the “guest access” button.
b) Ask the team for not working on the dashboard until you invite them to do so.

Give some time to the team to open the link and to adjust the screen in a way they may have both the tool dashboard and as many faces in the screen as possible.

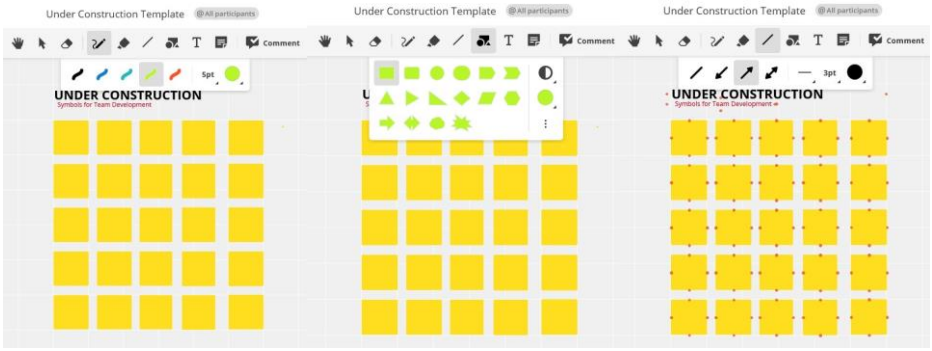


- ***Construction***

Invite the team to represent the basis on which they feel the defined topic is grounded.
Make sure that the members find the toolbar for that.

The starting point in their dashboard, representing the soil is a square made up of 25 equal yellow squares.
The team can customize the soil, to represent the effective ground floor they feel they have as a team to work on the topic defined.

*They may *move squares, *erase squares, *connect squares; *change the colours of the squares, or even *introduce new shapes using the toolbar above the UNDER CONSTRUCTIION yellow ground.*



Professional consultants should not intervene in any way while the team is in the UNDER CONSTRUCTION period.
A team member in the facilitator role should act as normally would in any other team meeting.

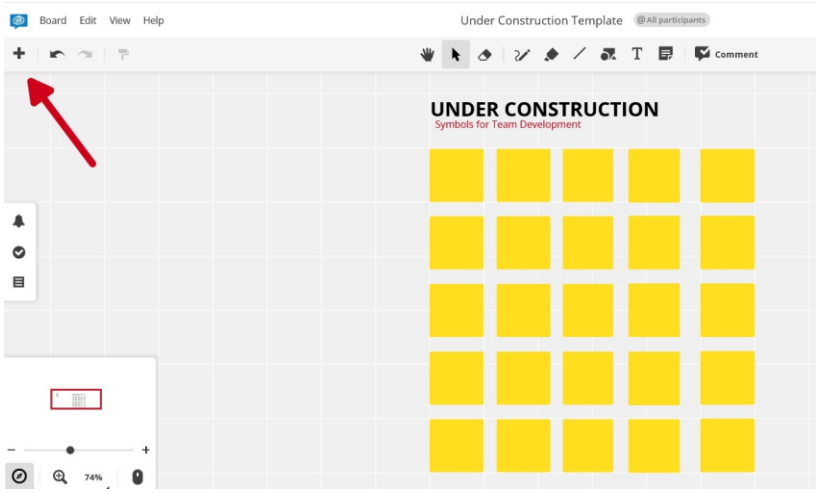
4. Construction of the Team View on the Topic (up to 15 minutes)

- ***Guidelines***

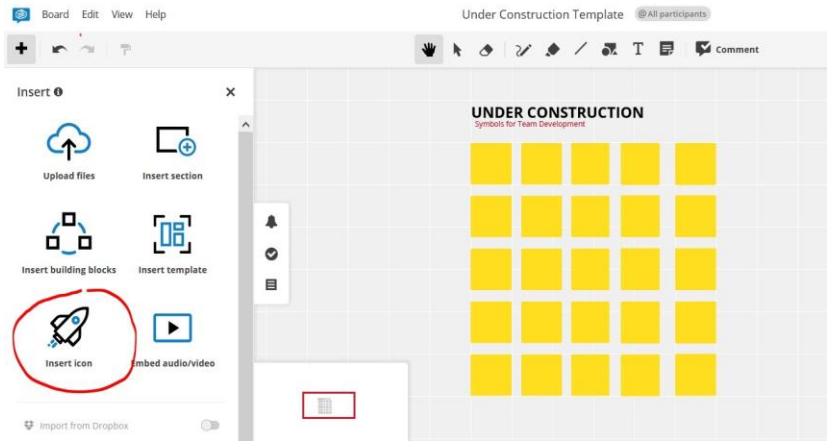
a) After having the ground soil customized, invite the team to further their construction, by adding some content using symbols.

b) Present the symbols as resources (click on the *plus button, as the figure below)

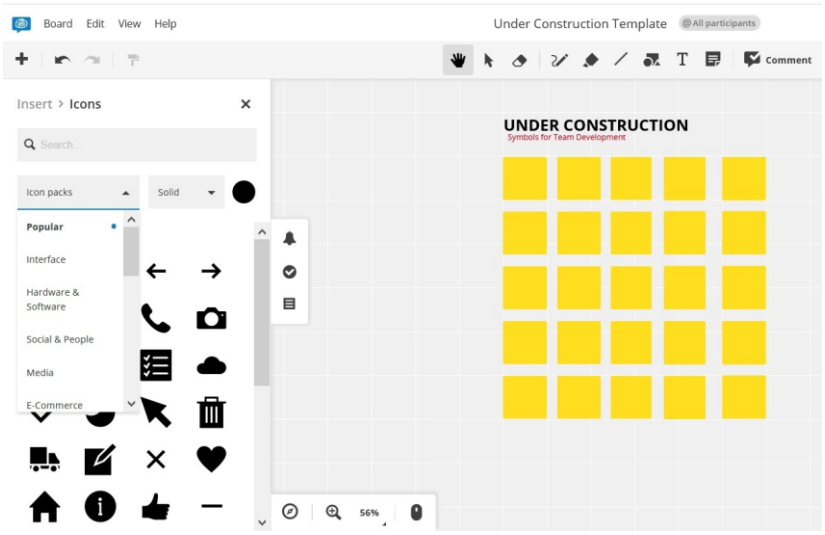
For using symbols participants should click on the *plus button on the top left side of the board screen



and they should use the symbols within the *rocket button (insert icon button).



Symbols are organized by types in different files. To use them, participants just have to drag symbols to their dashboard.



c) OPTIONAL: You may consider limiting the number of symbols to be used to add some pressure on the team debate.

- ***Construction***

d) Give the team time (depending on the team size and the team dynamic) to work on the further construction.

Professional consultants should not intervene in any way while the team is in the *UNDER CONSTRUCTION* period.
A team member in the facilitator role should act as normally would in any other team meeting.
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The intention is to facilitate interaction, discussion and not to have a "beautiful and perfect construction"!

5. “Team Presentation” (up to 10 minutes)

a) Ask the team to verbalize the topic that was UNDER CONSTRUCTION during the last minutes;

b) The team (through a spokesperson or in a shared manner, as the team freely decides) explains the CONSTRUCTION developed, describing the symbolic material disposition.

Professional consultants should not intervene in any way while the team is in the *PRESENTATION* period.
A team member in the facilitator role should act as normally would in any other team meeting.

c) During the presentation, observe and listen very carefully to the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the presentation and the team dynamic. All the facts that occurred during the presentation stage (and only then!!) matter!

6. (OPTIONAL) Extra CONSTRUCTION (up to 10 minutes)

a) The facilitator can invite each member of the team to choose one symbol by him/herself, to add to the team CONSTRUCTION

b) Then invite one person at a time to place his/her symbol in the team construction and to briefly explain the symbolic meaning (so brief as four sentences or half a minute);

No further instruction is given to the participants, the counsellor should keep this instruction general.

c) The consultant explains how the next phases will be for the client.

7. Analysis and Feedback (for professional facilitators) (up to 30 minutes)

- ***Factual questions***

a) These 'factual questions' regard step 5 "Team Presentation" and step 6 (optional) Extra CONSTRUCTION

b) Ask if someone "didn't hear", or "didn't understand", or "would like to hear again" the explanation of any other member about the added symbols
These questions are only factual questions
Only questions about what was precisely said are allowed. Questions are asked directly to the team member who talked and only him/her answer.

No interpretation or explorative questions like: why, or can you talk more about, etc.

c) During all this process, the external facilitator should never touch the construction and its symbols.

d) Sometimes, there is no need of this step, because there are no doubts.

- ***Perception***

Perceptions regard exclusively to what has been heard and observed (verbal and nonverbal aspects). Only facts matter! (E.g. "I saw…", "I heard that…", "I noticed that…")

Address the team directly, saying what you've perceived from the (team and individuals) CONSTRUCTION presentation, as well as from the team dynamic during the presentation.

During the duration of this process, team members just listen and are not permitted to intervene in any sense.

- ***Interpretation***

Include perspectives on reasons, on facts, on consequences and impacts, on solutions, on emotions, on difficulties,… of what you saw and heard before.

One professional consultant
Adress the team directly, saying what you interpreted from what you saw and heard during the CONSTRUCTION(s) and presentation(s) steps, including the team dynamic.

This step is after the perception. The facilitator first says what he/she perceived and then interpret – do not mix!

Two professional consultants

Talk to each other as if the team was not hearing you. Do not address the team or any team member (verbally nor seeking eye contact)

During the duration of this process, team members just listen to collegues and don't explain or justify what others are saying about them /the team dynamics, incluing the facilitator.

- ***Feedback***

a) Ask the team members for feedback about how and what they felt when they heard those comments.

b) Help the team to (re)conceptualize the process, by rephrasing their ideas, supporting them to get to a clearer picture of the situation under analysis.

At this point, the team achieved a higher level of clarification on the topic.

c) Ask the team if they would like to make any change to their CONSTRUCTION (and when the individual symbols option is being applied, also to the individual symbol or the placement of the symbols). If they do, they should explain.

7. Analysis and Feedback (for team member facilitators) (up to 30 minutes)

- ***Factual questions***

a) These 'factual questions' regard step 4 "Construction of the Team view on the Topic", step 5 "Team Presentation" and step 6 (optional) Extra CONSTRUCTION

b) Ask if someone "didn't hear", or "didn't understand", or "would like to hear again" the explanation of any other member about the explanation of the individual added symbol
These questions are only factual questions
Only questions about what was precisely said are allowed (I etc)! Questions are asked directly to the team member who talked and only him/her answer.

No interpretation or explorative questions like: why, or can you talk more about, etc.

c) During all this process, external facilitator should never touch the construction and its symbols.

d) Sometimes, there is no need of this step, because there are no doubts.

- ***Perception***

Perceptions regard exclusively to what has been heard and observed (verbal and nonverbal aspects). Only facts matter! (E.g. "I saw…", "I heard that…", "I noticed that…")

Ask the team what they "saw", "heard", "noticed" from the (team and individuals) CONSTRUCTION presentation, as well as from the team dynamic during the presentation.

During the duration of this process, team members just listen to collegues and don't explain or justify what others are saying about them /the team dynamics, incluing the facilitator.

- ***Interpretation***

Include perspectives on reasons, on facts, on consequences and impacts, on solutions, on emotions, on difficulties,… of what you saw and heard before.

Ask the team to try to explain what they saw and heard during the CONSTRUCTION(s) and presentation(s) steps, including the team dynamic.

The team facilitator can either be the 1st or the last to speak his/her mind. Whatever flows!

This step is after the perception. Both the facilitator and the team first address what you perceived and then interpret – do not mix!

- ***Feedback***

a) Ask the team members for feedback about how and what they felt when they heard those comments.

b) Help the team to (re)conceptualize the process, by rephrasing their ideas, supporting them to get to a clearer picture of the situation under analysis. Ask the team if they would like to make any change to their CONSTRUCTION (and when the individual symbols option is being applied, also to the individual symbol or the placement of the symbols). If they do, they should explain.

At this point, the team achieved a higher level of clarification on the topic.

8. Agreement on Actions (up to 10 minutes)

Discuss and agree on which actions / steps to take to support the team to reach its goal.

The consultant and team / team should agree on very concrete actions.

In the end, the team should be committed to the agreed actions.