

Tea and The Law of Raspberry of Jam

By Esther Derby & Viktor Cessan



Entering New Systems

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Being aware of yourself

Our presence always has an impact on groups whether we are aware or not, and whether we like it or not. Be aware of what impact you have had in the past e.g. through observations or feedback.

When entering organizations we (often) have agendas. One agenda is for the organization which may or may not be influenced by the agreement we have with our clients. The other agenda, that may be hidden to ourselves, is trickier. It's what we want to get for ourselves. Is it fame? Status? Is it a case study to write a book? Is it belonging?

If you're not aware of your effect and your agenda you have blind spots and the more blind spots you have, when entering an organization, the more you need to actively think about your effect on other people.

Self-reflection questions:

- What's some recent feedback you've received about your behavior as you engage with a new group/system?
- What do you want to get out of this client engagement--for yourself, for the ppl you interact with directly, for the organization?
- What about yourself do you typically pay attention to when entering new groups/systems?

Being aware of other people

Additionally, we need to be aware of other people when we enter groups. Even though we enter systems at a specific point in time there is almost always a history, even with a brand new group. They were brought together in response to some perceived need. They may have past experience with each other, as well as with the system.

Self-reflection questions:

- How do you typically go about learning about the people and groups you'll work with?
- What do the people in the group care about?
- What are they trying to achieve?
- What have they explicitly asked for?

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Being aware of the system

Becoming aware of the systems current capabilities is our final point and important as you enter groups. But how you become aware also makes a difference. We can make judgements (e.g., assessing current capabilities and coming to sensible conclusions) or we can be judgemental (e.g. being critical, fault-finding, condemnatory, disapproving).

As judgemental thinking goes up, curiosity goes down. To a lesser extent, coming to a sensible conclusion can also close off curiosity which can limit your impact if you come to it too soon. So be aware, and check for disconfirming data, as well as changes in what is going on. Probe to see if your hypothesis is approximately correct.

People are trained to come to quick judgements and clients often want quick judgements.

Self-reflection questions:

- What do you know about the purpose of the overall system?
- How do you learn about how the parts of the system interact?
- What are you sure about, and how do you know that is true?
- What do you observe?
- What trends do you notice?
- What do people in the system seem to care about?
- How do people talk about what it is they are trying to accomplish?
- What dissonances and contradictions do you notice?