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# 20 EFFICIENT TEAM TOOLS

for the facilitation of teamwork

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Published by Business Academy Aarhus, the Research and Innovation department

# **20 EFFICIENT TEAM TOOLS FOR THE FACILITATION OF TEAMWORK**

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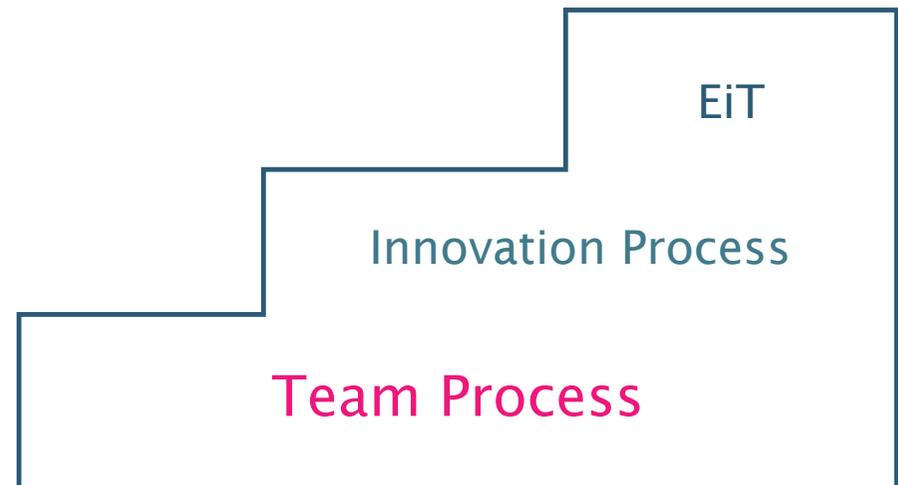
# Prologue

Several studies show that personal skills are just as crucial as professional skills in the 21st Century job market. Companies request employees who can participate in transnational and interdisciplinary collaborations (CCR, 2015).

In future, creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration are particularly valuable competencies.

The programme is developed with inspiration and assistance from our collaboration partner The Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway

Students develop these competencies in the programme Experts in Teams (EiT), which is an interdisciplinary course at the Business Academy Aarhus (BAAA). Students work together in teams across educational programmes with the aim of solving a specific challenge for a company.



*The elements of EiT.*

The toolbox is based on teachers' and students' experiences with teamwork from EiT at BAAA. The toolbox has been tested at both NTNU and BAAA and contains different tools and exercises that can be used to facilitate collaboration in interdisciplinary teams.

The toolbox has four themes that reflect the EiT figure to the left.

- The first two themes deal with the team process and contain tools for forming teams, teambuilding and teamwork facilitation.
- The third theme concerns reflection on teamwork and is related to the figure's top level "Experts in Teams" since reflection is fundamental to becoming an expert in teamwork.
- The fourth theme concerns the 'Innovation Process' and provides tools for idea creation, selection and visualisation processes.

The structure of the toolbox is based on the different processes within teamwork and starts from the formation of a team to the dissolution of the team.

You can read more about the theoretical foundation of the course under the section "Experts in Teams at BAAA".

We hope this toolbox will be applicable as reference work for teamwork in both companies and educational institutions.

Enjoy!

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## **Group**

*Any number of people who interact with each other (psychologically) and consider themselves as a group.*

## **Team**

*A number of people who, within the framework of an organisation, interact at a level that makes it possible working towards a goal that benefits the company*

# Important definitions and concepts

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## Facilitation

The toolbok is based on specific definitions of facilitation and teamwork. We refer to Ib Ravn's definition: "To facilitate is to make it easier for a group of people to accomplish what they want" (Ravn, 2011). Furthermore, we find great inspiration in NTNU's work through the years where facilitation is perceived as a learning tool. Facilitation must support the team members' "reflection on group dynamics and their own contribution to the team" (NTNU, 2017).

In addition to this, facilitation brings out the opportunity to optimise the process within the teamwork and increases the opportunity for a successful outcome. Besides that, also to make sure that team members get the chance to contribute and learn while solving the specific task. For us, teamwork is a discipline that anyone can learn to master. The intention of the various team exercises, reflections, tools and facilitation tips in the toolbook is to help train teamwork as a competence. Many of the tools complement each other and may be used in continuation of each other, both by facilitators and team members.

## Teamwork

Teamwork is defined as all kinds of collaboration situations where more people participate to solve a task. Both research and practical experience show an increasing opportunity for a team to produce better outcomes. Furthermore, a healthy work environment contributes positively to the team's ability to solve a task successfully (BrancheArbejdsmiljørådet, 2015). A team's task may be of very different nature, varying from very specific tasks such as mathematical calculations to more complex and diffuse tasks for example within innovation.

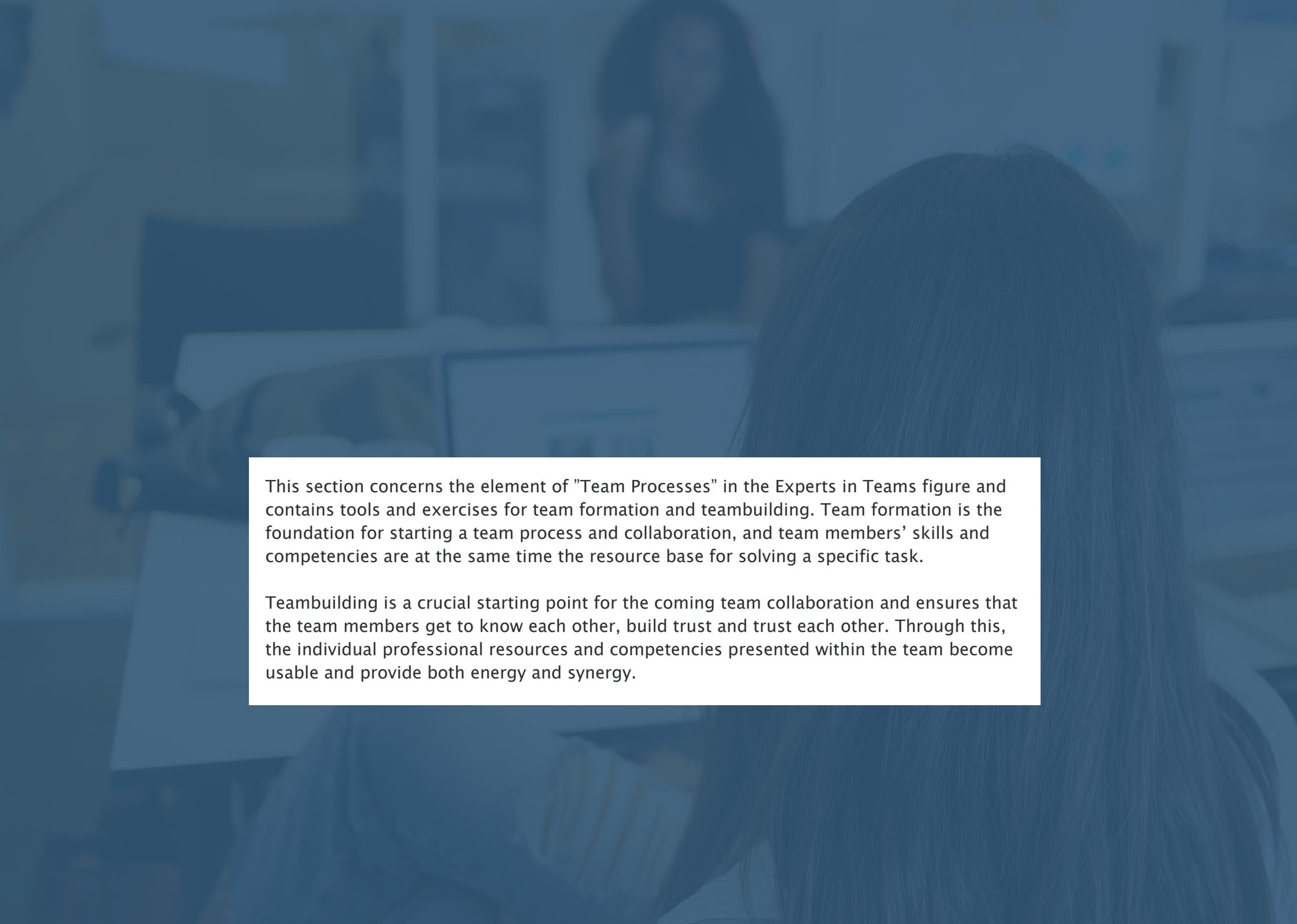
## Group and team

The terms **group** and **team** are often used interchangeably.

A classical definition of a group is: "Any number of people who interact with each other (psychologically) and consider themselves as a group." When it comes to a group in an organisation, it is called a workgroup or team. A team is: "A number of people who, within the framework of an organisation, interact at a level that makes it possible working towards a goal that benefits the company" (Graversen and Larsen, 2004).

# Theme 1

Team formation and teambuilding

The background of the slide is a blurred photograph of several people sitting around a table in what appears to be a meeting or collaborative work environment. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. A white rectangular box is centered on the slide, containing two paragraphs of text.

This section concerns the element of "Team Processes" in the Experts in Teams figure and contains tools and exercises for team formation and teambuilding. Team formation is the foundation for starting a team process and collaboration, and team members' skills and competencies are at the same time the resource base for solving a specific task.

Teambuilding is a crucial starting point for the coming team collaboration and ensures that the team members get to know each other, build trust and trust each other. Through this, the individual professional resources and competencies presented within the team become usable and provide both energy and synergy.

## Background

This exercise originates from NTNU and is useful for forming any type of team-work.

## Purpose

The purpose of the exercise is to get to know each other across academic fields. Or, in case the exercise is used in a company, across departments. This is done by exploring the prejudices in relation to the various programmes: Marketing Management, Financial Management, Multimedia Design, Digital Concept Development and so forth or for example Finance, Marketing, Sale, etc. The aim of the exercise is to crush myths and prejudices – not to create them – and therefore the exercise requires an easy and loose atmosphere.

## Procedure

1. Divide the students into groups across academic fields. Place the groups standing in different areas of the room
2. Ask the student to make a short description of the typical characteristics that they associate with students and the study culture in their own study programme
3. Discuss the myths and prejudices related to other programmes
4. Share with all groups and make a reality check on myths and prejudices

## Practical matters

- The exercise requires space, so make sure to have a room that is big enough.

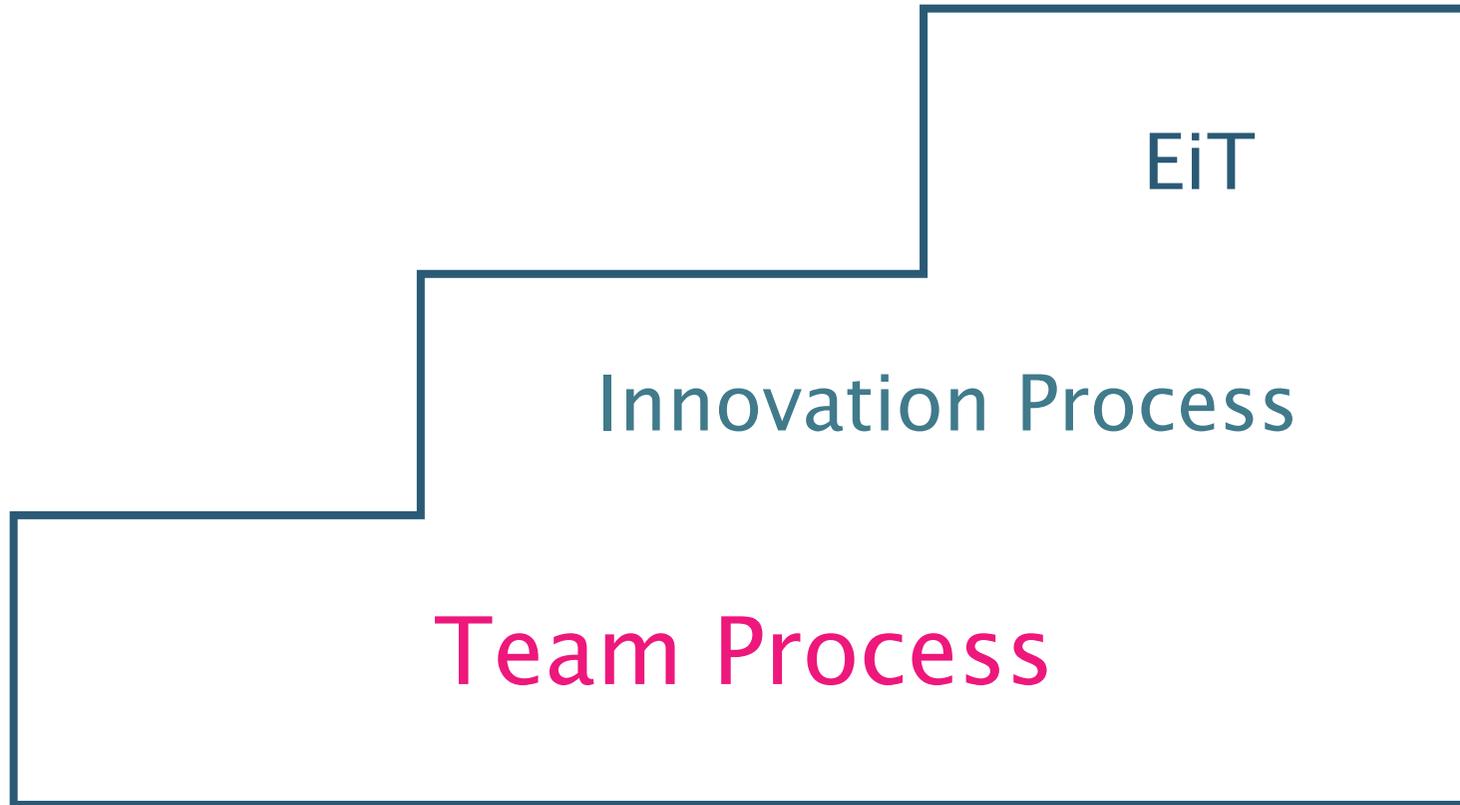
 Approx. 20 minutes

 4–6 people

 The discussion must not take too long time since the exercise is intended to be spontaneous and fun.

## Further information

The exercise is developed by Sven Veine, NTNU, and is inspired by sociometric exercises and 'Diversity Icebreaker', TM from Human Factors.



# #2

Team Process

## Two truths and one lie

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### Background

The exercise originates from the scout movement and has been used in many team contexts at BAAA and other educational institutions and in various courses.

### Purpose

'Two truths and one lie' is a fun get together activity which engages and challenges the individual participants. It also works as a great icebreaker for teams for courses of longer duration. The purpose with this exercise is to get people to talk to each other, also the more shy ones.

### Procedure

Each team member writes down two truths and one lie about him or herself on a piece of paper and then presents these to the team. The team members should try to figure out which of the statements are truths, and which one is the lie.

### Practical matters

- Paper and pencils
- Post-it notes
- The exercise is suitable for indoors and outdoors teamwork.



Approx. 20–30 minutes



4–6 people



The exercise can be carried out in large groups. However, it works best in small groups of 4–6 people.

If the exercise is used as further teambuilding, the team may ask questions and discuss the responses from the team:

Is there a collective theme that characterises the truths from the team members? Can you learn something about the individual team member by looking at the collective statements? Were the lies obvious? Can the truths be guessed on the basis of the lie? Do you find the statement relevant and personal enough to learn something about your team members?

It may be relevant for the team to use these questions to gain experience in working with first impressions and relations.

”

”I have a rattlesnake, I’m married and have 4 children, I won the Danish curling championship”.

”I have more than 50,000 followers on YouTube, I work at H&M, I go to church every fourth Sunday”.

# #3

Team Process

## What my family doesn't know about me

### Background

This exercise comes from a workshop at the Experts in Teams conference at NTNU, June 2018.

### Purpose

This exercise is a fun icebreaker that engages and challenges the individual team members engaged in long-lasting team processes. The purpose of the exercise is to get people to know each other by getting everyone to talk and laugh together.

### Practical matters

- Paper and pencils
- Post-it notes
- The exercise is suitable for indoors and outdoors teamwork.

### Procedure

Every team member gets a few minutes to figure out one thing that his or her family does not know about the person. Afterwards, the team members share their story. Usually, this will get them talking and have a good laugh.



Approx. 20–25 minutes



4–6 people



Give the participants a few examples of secrets that seem appear funny, surprising or maybe even weird, but not intimate and private to them. It is okay to challenge them to push their boundaries a bit.

### Further information

The title of the workshop was: "Skills you need to succeed with interdisciplinary work" and was facilitated by Bogdan Glogovac (Ducky and Gibberish improvisation theatre) and Kristoffer Nergård (Gibberish improvisation theatre) from Trondheim in Norway.

”

**“My family does not know that I suggested the name Nicholas for my first son because I actually had a crush on the actor Nicholas Cage at the time”.**

**“My kids do not know that I was a chain smoker when I was young – today I preach ‘No smoking’ for them”.**

# #4

## Team Process

# Competence triangle

## Background

The competence triangle has been developed with inspiration from NTNU.

## Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to give an overview of the team's overall competencies by mapping each team member's individual competencies.

## Procedure

Start with this exercise before solving the specific tasks. Distribute a flip chart sheet and pens to each group. Ask the group to draw a large triangle on the flip chart and name the three sides 'Theoretical Skills (TS)', 'Practical Experience (PE)' and 'Personal Competencies (PC)'.

Every team member needs to fill in his or her own TS, PK and PE post-it notes. There must be at least three post-it notes from each member in each of the categories. Allow approximately 10 minutes for this part of the exercise. The work should be done individually and in silence. Ask each team member to write his or her initials on the post-it notes.

Afterwards, all the post-it notes are placed on the three sides of the triangle, and the team members then share one post-it per category in turns and go further into elaborating on the specific examples. A round like this is repeated 3 times, so that all the team members are able to explain their post-it notes further.

Allow approximately 30-45 minutes for this part of the exercise.

After this, the team should take a photo of the team's total competence triangle. Finally, the team talks about the team's collective competencies and how they can be used to solve specific, future tasks in the best possible way.

## Practical matters

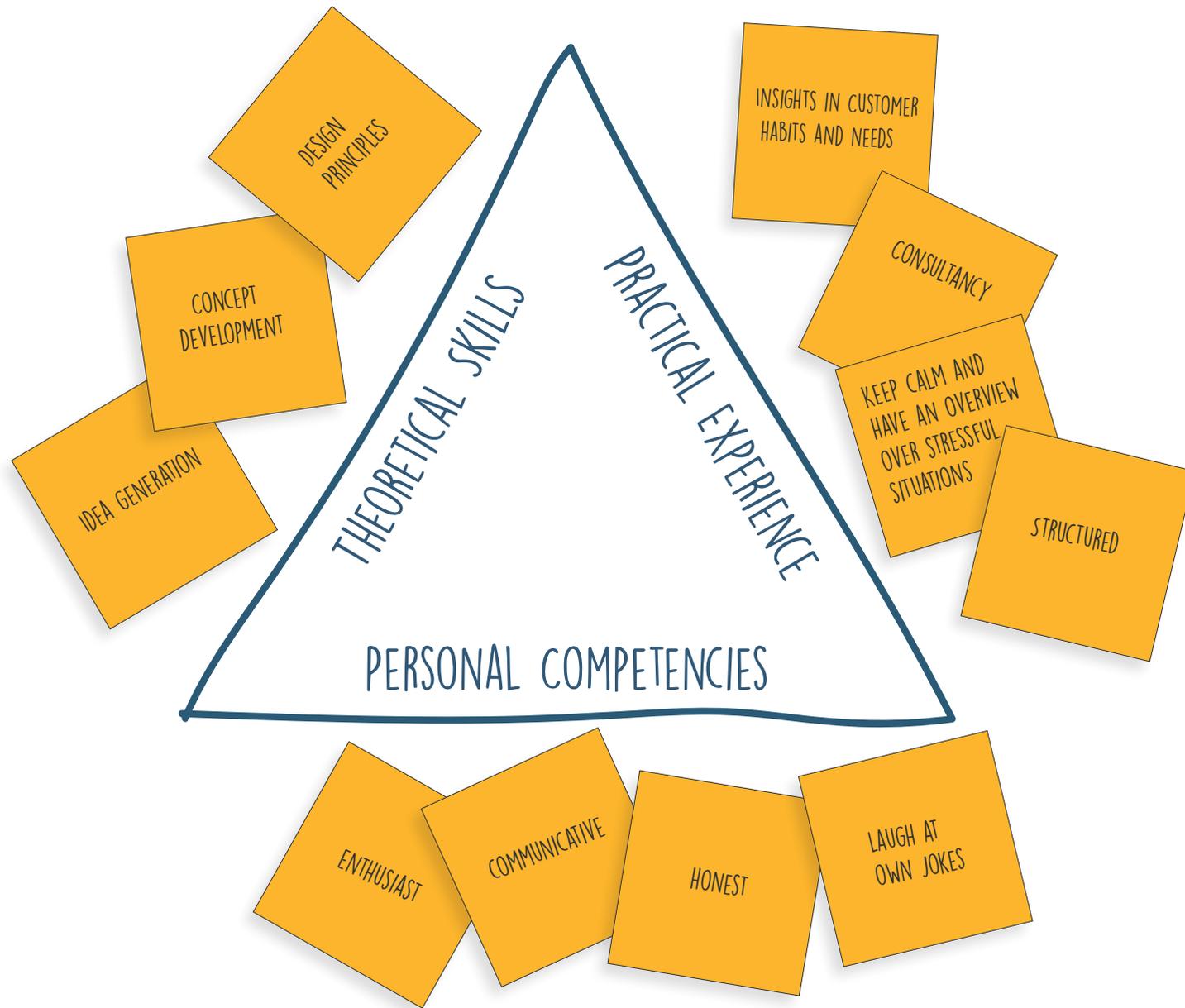
- Post-it notes in 3 different colours (blue, red and green)
- Pens

 30-60 minutes

 4-6 people

 Give examples of TS, PE and PK.

 Watch video on [www.expertsinteam.org](http://www.expertsinteam.org)



Example of a competence triangle

# #5

## Team Process

# Group contract

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## Background

It is important to discuss expectations and agree on the frames of the teamwork. Therefore, the team should discuss and agree upon a group contract that sets the ground rules for the team. The contract is made at the initiation of the teamwork.

## Purpose

The group contract is a functional agreement regarding the ground rules for the team and which allows the team to discuss their wishes, expectations and ambition for the team. Furthermore, the group contract is a common reference point that the team can use whenever they experience bumps on their way, conflicts or disagreements. The group contract is also an appropriate reflection tool when evaluating the teamwork

## Procedure

Provide the team with helping questions and the template in Appendix 1. The team may add further bullets if needed.

The helping questions are: What is a good team? How important are theoretical skills for you? How important is social life to you? How much time would you put into your homework? What is the best thing about working in teams? When do you find teamwork difficult? What are you planning to do if your team members do not keep their agreements? What do you look forward to in working with the project?

Through the discussions, the team will get to know each other's expectations, wishes and ambitions. If they agree on these, they may be integrated into the group contract.

 Approx. 45 minutes

 4–6 people

 Encourage the team to evaluate and, if needed, revise the group contract. The group contract may be revised at set points of time in the EiT process.

 Watch video on [www.expertsinteam.org](http://www.expertsinteam.org)

## Further information

Inspiration for group contracts – Appendix 1.

### Group contract

1. All participants should be active in the group work
2. Everyone arrives well-rested at the agreed time to work
3. If there are conflicts, we should dare talk about these and find a solution
4. We need to know what everyone in the group is doing
5. Etc.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Sign*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Sign*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Sign*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Sign*

*Example of group contract.*

## Background

A team works best if there is energy, dynamics and a good mood. Therefore, it is a good idea for facilitators or team members to prepare energisers (small energy-rewarding exercises). Energisers may be used as icebreakers or breaks during work to activate the brain and the body.

## Purpose

Energisers are a powerful tool to stimulate the energy and dynamics within the team and are useful when the team is formed, after lunch or during a break after a long period of hard work. Here are two examples: "Make a circle with names in alphabetical order and share a story".

## Procedure

"Circle with names in alphabetical order": Place the entire group counting for example 10–20 participants in a circle. The task is to organise the circle in alphabetical order with 'Anna' first and 'Ulrich' last. The exercise is organised by first names and must be done as quickly as possible.

"Share a story": Place the team or all participants two and two either standing or sitting at a table and share a story about a situation where the individual person was afraid or even in danger.

## Practical matters

You can find several energisers online for free.

 Approx. 5 minutes

 4–6 people

 Although the exercises are short and simple, a thorough and precise instruction is required.

Another energiser with the same approach as "share a story" is where the participants tell the history behind their first name. As an example, Margrethe is named after the queen because it is a family tradition and so forth.

## Further information

Make a google search on energisers and find relevant exercises.

