



Facilitating creative thinking

Exploring the problem

Mac McCarthy

If we could have the problem owner um, just give us any additional information that we need to know.

Sue Morton

Um I work in a number of teams, and I very often have the sort of project officer, coordinator-type role and I'm the sort of individual who's responsible to get... to get all things done but have very very little authority to get these things moving and it's very difficult to be able to exert the power without having, you know, exert the power because there isn't any power, it's powerlessness so it's how to influence without having any power

Penny Vine (V/O commentary)

Sue works in education and juggles several contracts at the same time.

As problem owner, she works with a small group of helpers who'll act as consultants and assist her in redefining and exploring the problem.

Sue Morton

"and yet me as the individual responsible for managing what's going on as very little authority to actually go and say "this is what should be done"

Penny Vine (V/O Commentary)

As outsiders, the other group members can offer fresh perspectives on Sue's problem. With Leila's encouragement they begin a series of techniques for opening up the issues. Sue found one of these particularly challenging.

Sue Morton

The one that I thought worked really well was the one that was the most painful for me, which was when I was sort of being bombarded with the "why?" Why can't you do this? Why do you have to do it this way? Why are you doing this? Why are you doing that? It was the...And they didn't let up, they just kept coming at me and coming at me!

Eric Charles

Why do you need to do many jobs?

Paul O'Shea

Why are there problems through having no authority?

Eric Charles

Why is there a link between interest and influence for you?

Sue Morton

I have professional interests and I have personal interests

Leila Edwards

I was aware that what was going on, at one level simple, at another level was also very deep for her emotionally. She'd made a switch from seeing the problem as being one that belonged in the organization and the nature of the work and herself as on the suffering victim side of that to realizing through a series of many, many 'why' questions, that this was saying something about her, her inability to say no, and I could feel quite a strong emotional reaction.

David Weeks

Why don't you have a major involvement in any one thing?

Sue Morton

Because of the nature of the roles I take on, I think.

Paul O'Shea

Why do you feel so restrained in being able to influence that yourself?

Sue Morton

I think this is more of a personal thing, isn't it, it's more of a.....(Pause)

Leila Edwards

The initial signs are body language, when somebody gets a certain look where their shoulders come up, they sink into defense mode, their eyes might be darting about, so I mean a lot of the body language, the tone, her tone went quite wobbly in terms of tone of voice and she looked quite fragile and also a sense looking down of things going to a lower level which often happens when people are getting into an emotional state.

Sue Morton

Because I feel that I need to be chasing the next contract all the time in order to remain within the institution, if you like.

Leila Edwards

Getting in quite deep here, aren't we?

Sue Morton

Are you OK with this?

Leila Edwards

Yes, I'm OK.

Sue Morton

I was a bit concerned that the group wasn't necessarily noticing the degree to which she was being affected so I was acting as an intermediary, that was one of the points where I intervened and again, a bit jokingly and so on, was saying "come on chaps, be gentle with her!"

Sue Morton

So we will be supporting you looking for solutions not just leaving you with a feeling of needing to talk to victim support.

Leila Edwards

Yeah the Samaritans! I went on this problem-solving weekend and I've got more problems now.

Mac McCarthy

Time keeping I think is actually one of the most difficult parts of the whole "The reason for that is that if the particular session you're working in, does get quite intense and often that intensity is focused on one particular issue. It's then a question of do you run with that and let it take time, in which case, what do you do with the rest of the things that you were planning to do, thinking of doing, what about keeping pace with the methodology of creative problem-solving, what about even the quite practical things of managing breaks and so on. Time management is a difficulty.

Mac McCarthy

We've got now, let's say 15 minutes. Even at quite a basic level when you say to a group "can we just wind it up in 3 minutes, folks, finish what you're writing up on the flip chart", and they take 10, because they start another little argument or discussion. If they're in fairly jolly, co-operative mood, then you can rush them, but if they're still tussling with something, my own

view is that you give them a little bit longer em and then you work with the consequences er that that has for your time-keeping.

Penny Vine (V/O Commentary)

Leila and Mac are still broadly on schedule and now it's definitely time for a break

Mac McCarthy

Going for a walk takes people outside, takes them away from the room, takes them away from the focus of the problem. It also gives them a lot of other stimuli. And going for a walk, particularly if you're in quite nice surroundings like here, you know, there are some trees, the sky's nice and blue and it's a pleasant day. Sometimes that change of state, physical state, produces a change of mental and emotional state which leads to a different way of thinking about the problem our process

Penny Vine (Caption commentary)

The groups quickly discuss what the sculptures convey and then it's on to the next phase of problem-solving.