

TOOL DESCRIPTION

Developing Hypotheses



This tool sets out a process for developing hypotheses, which form the cornerstone of any change analysis.

When supporting a change process as an external consultant or internal change agent, hypotheses are a central element of the analysis phase. Being humble and considering that not each of your personal assumptions might be true is the key to success when supporting a change.




The step of developing hypotheses is taken in several stages of a change. The first and most important step is taken right after holding exploration interviews (see Tool “Exploration Interviews”) in the analysis phase.

The basic idea behind this activity is to examine how results extracted from all interviews change over time, to hold debriefing sessions to identify key findings/patterns and to structure the first feedback to facilitate the change.

Always keep in mind: Hypotheses are assumptions made about the situation from the perspective of an observer. What is (“really”) going on here?

Duration 3–4 h	Participants the „consulting“ team (external consultants, internal change agents or the core team for the change)	Facilitation no special material needed
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Developing Hypotheses | Process

Individual reflection 30–60 min 	Discussion in the team 2–3 h 	Presentation to sponsor 1 h 
<p>First, every member of the consulting/core team should have time to prepare their individual thoughts and hypotheses by asking some key questions that trigger reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened? Impressions about the mood, openness and interest of the interviewees.• Main challenges seen by people: What are common patterns?• Strengths and weaknesses of people: What are common patterns?• Ideas about the future.• Expectations regarding the change and hints that ensure the success of the change.• Hypotheses from the consultants' perspective: What are the main hot topics and critical aspects that ensure the success of the change?• Requirements from consultants' perspective that ensure the success of the change.• Personal hints for change initiators that help them to lead the change.	<p>Each person shares their hypotheses, and all thoughts are discussed and structured in the team.</p> <p>Think about categories for hypotheses that are closely connected and combine related thoughts.</p> <p>Document your hypotheses by using clear statements and be aware of offering a balanced set of positive and critical hypotheses.</p>	<p>When sharing your hypotheses with the sponsors of the change, be careful to frame these positively.</p> <p>Mention that these hypotheses are assumptions about the situation from an external perspective in the following sense: "What do I/we think about what is really going on here?"</p> <p>Pay attention to how the sponsor reacts to certain messages and make sure you collect feedback.</p>