

Why

Observation and experience show that behavior in meetings does not always serve the purpose of the company or the team. Egotistical behavior can occur unintentionally, everywhere and anywhere. Your ego is the image you have of yourself. It drives the way you seek to present yourself to your external environment (the clever one, the powerful one, the practical one that has a solution for everything, the stupid one, the clumsy but social one, the helpful one, the victim etc.). Too often people's behavior proves to be a function of their ego as they show their power, force their help or advice on people and strive to prove their intelligence, innocence etc. This prevents an open exploration of all possibilities. But, you must also realize that ego is important! It creates an identity that people need to deal with the world, so there is also a very positive side to it. Nevertheless, it often becomes too strong or too weak and then it starts blocking development and open exploration.

What

A way to pinpoint whether certain behaviors/actions/interactions are in the interests of the company or in the interests of people's egos.

How

Get a pair of tingsha bells and at each team meeting ask who will be ringing the bells this time. That person then rings the bells each time they feel that people are being driven by their egos instead of looking for the best solution or direction to support the purpose of the company. Once rung it takes a while before the sound dies out. In that time no one speaks, they only reflect. When the sound stops, the discussion continues.

Of course, this practice demands a strong introduction. Explain what egotistical behavior is. Perhaps you could have an open discussion with your team about how they perceive ego and egotistical behavior. Keep the discussion very open and explorative. This should not be a discussion about right and wrong only about perspectives on egos and egotistical behavior. Acknowledge that ego also has a positive function.

For the first meeting, leave it at that and start using the bells at the next meeting. An alternative could be to not use the bells and instead ask a volunteer to stop the meeting whenever s/he feels that it has become dominated by ego.

Carefully observe how this turns out and also ask people about their experiences of the process.



When

When you feel that discussions are being dominated by ego and that people are clinging to a fixed set of beliefs about themselves which are blocking open exploration into new ways of doing and thinking.

Skills and necessary training

Find additional information about ego and egotistical behavior.

Possible workshop exercise

Have a discussion about the feasibility of this tool within your company or discuss other ways to talk about egotistical behavior.
Start a discussion and use the bells.

Critical success factors

Good introduction of the concept.
An open discussion using the bells.
Good monitoring of the effect the use of the bells has on people. If it becomes frustrating then perhaps it is time to stop; if people accept it and it opens up discussion about people's personalities and behaviors then you are on the right track.