Going deeper together

Principle Lab:
Nerd Out on One Principle

In group, choose one principle and explore it in depth. Your team builds shared expertise and adds its own ideas to the stack of HOW cards.

S M A R T E R

Overview

Who it's for	Goal	Time	Format
Teams with some experience in learning and development who want to explore one principle in more depth together.	Build shared expertise on one principle and develop your own set of applications that work in your specific organisational context.	30–60 min	As a team, ideally 2 to 8 people.

In short

Seven principles at once is a lot. In this activity, your team picks one and takes the time to really understand it: what it is, why it works and how to apply it in your own training.

You end up with more expertise, one or two applications you'll try out straight away, and new ideas you came up with yourselves that fit your organisation.

Good to know

Repeat this session every few months with a different principle. That way, your team builds both broad and deep expertise, step by step.

What you need

- 1 SMARTER deck (see step 1)
- Blank cards or sticky notes, and markers (see step 5)
- Optional: a specific training to use as a case (see steps 1 and 4)

How it works

1 Choose one principle together

Lay out the letter cards in a row so they spell the word SMARTER, with the WHAT card under each letter. Read the seven WHAT cards together. Then everyone casts two votes for the principles they think will bring the biggest gains in your context or the case. The principle with the most votes wins.

Tip

Already done activity 03 (Traffic Light Scan)? Then choose a principle that scored orange or red there.

2 Understand the WHAT and WHY

Take the WHAT card of the chosen principle again and read the WHY card aloud. Then discuss: what does this mean for our participants? Where do we already see it happening in our training, and where don't we?

Turn the cards face down and ask one person to explain the principle in their own words. The others add to it.

Walk the talk

Explaining without looking at the card is retrieval practice in itself. Your team learns the principle by applying it.

3 Explore all the HOW cards

Divide the HOW cards of the principle among the team members. Everyone reads their cards and briefly presents them to the group: what is the application, and where could it fit for us?

4 Choose what works

Put all the HOW cards in the middle. Discuss which application would have the most impact in your context and choose one or two. Working with a case? Then choose the application that makes the biggest difference in that training.

Helpful question

No case with you? Then think about which card you could already use in a training that's coming up soon.

5 Create your own HOW cards

Brainstorm more applications using 1-2-4-All: one minute thinking alone, two minutes in pairs, four minutes in groups of four, then share with the whole group.

Write each strong idea on a blank card or sticky note, in the same style as the printed HOW cards: a short title and a concrete description.

Why alone first?

When you brainstorm as a group straight away, people often follow the first or loudest voice (groupthink). Thinking alone for a moment before sharing keeps every idea sharp.

6 Agree next steps

Agree who will try out which application, and in which training. Add your own cards to that principle in the deck, so they're there next time.

Follow-up and next steps

- At your next team meeting, discuss what you tried out and what you're keeping.
- Start that meeting with the question: "What do we still remember about this principle?" Only then bring out the cards.
- Choose a different principle for your next session.

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