

From conflict to co-operation

Booklet 4:

Organisational growth and development



www.uk.coop/fc2c

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Introduction

The *From Conflict to Co-operation* series aims to help co-operatives not only to deal with conflict when it arises (**Booklet 1**), but also to avoid unnecessary conflict by:

- Improving communication skills – **Booklet 2**
- Improving meetings and decision-making – **Booklet 3**
- Managing change caused by organisational growth and development – **this booklet**
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the board – **Booklet 5**

Booklet 4 explores the tensions that can arise as a co-operative develops and identifies tools, techniques and approaches which will help as the co-operative experiences growth and change. It looks at managing change, policies and procedures to address issues such as recruitment, induction and appraisals or personal reviews. It also looks at growth and alternatives to growth as well as a summary of tools to facilitate participative strategic planning.

Issues of organisational growth and development

The need to acquire new skills and develop new attitudes as the co-operative moves through the early start-up phase to a more stable phase of development can cause friction. However the business is organised, whether it has adopted a formal structure with delegated authority or whether it's run on a collective basis, communication is key.

Different ways of communicating will emerge based on everybody's tastes, preferences and whether or not you have frequent and easy access to a computer. You may be happy to sit in a meeting, or you may prefer to use social networking sites on your laptop or mobile. However you relate, it's essential that the co-op is aware of everybody's preferences and habits and facilitates information sharing using different modes of communication.

A focus on stability should not mean degenerating into what Paul Thomas calls the "managerial mind set" of managers and "their systems, processes and structures, and their need to control". **Dr. Thomas** – known as the BBC's 'Business Doctor' – says "through understanding the people that work within your business and identifying natural leaders as opposed to managers, you can gain a better insight into what works most effectively for your business and the people who run it."



■ See more about Dr Thomas here: <https://drpaulthomas.co.uk>

The success of Elland-based worker co-operative **Suma Wholefoods** demonstrates the benefits of freeing up the 200-strong workforce to be leaders, rather than controlling them with managers.

This booklet addresses tensions that arise as a result of change – changing roles for example, that can lead to stress for founder members as they lose control over ‘their’ co-operative, as well as for newer members who may feel they lack the insights and experience of early members. We will look at how to help members adjust to change and explore some of the reasons individuals may resist it.

We consider the potential for complications as the co-operative develops. For example, from a lack of agreed, written and accessible policies and procedures; from inadequate recruitment and induction procedures; and from misunderstandings around the different approaches to carrying out employee or member appraisals.

We discuss how contradictions can arise as the co-operative experiences growth and looks for alternatives. Finally we explore participative approaches to strategic planning and some tools and techniques which will facilitate member engagement in the process.

Case study: Suma Wholefoods

Suma is the UK’s largest independent wholefood wholesaler/distributor. A worker co-operative, committed to ethical business and specialising in vegetarian, fairly traded, organic, ethical and natural products. Established 30 years ago, Suma members believe that being a worker co-operative is one of the fundamental keys to their success.

Suma operates a truly democratic system of management. Decisions are made at regular General Meetings with the consent of every co-operative member, while an elected Management Committee implements decisions and business plans. Day-to-day work is carried out by self-managing teams of employees who are all paid the same wage, and who all enjoy an equal voice and an equal stake in the success of the business.

Another key feature of Suma’s structure and working practice is multi-skilling. Members are encouraged to get involved in more than one area of business, so individuals always perform more than one role within the co-operative. This helps to broaden the skills base and gives every member an invaluable insight into the bigger picture.

Change

It's true that change is taking place all the time, all around us. In our co-operatives it is taking place in the canteen or a chat between colleagues in a corridor.

So when we plan for change, we need to be aware that formal channels of communication are inadequate, we need to take account of these informal channels too, and of the continuing conversations that are taking place at all levels.

A moment's reflection will remind us that planned change never comes about entirely in the form it was intended. This is because of the constant interweaving of the intentions of all the co-op's members.

Gap analysis cannot reflect this reality; we need to take into account insights that will occur as the plan is implemented, the unforeseen impact of our actions and influences of the surrounding environment.

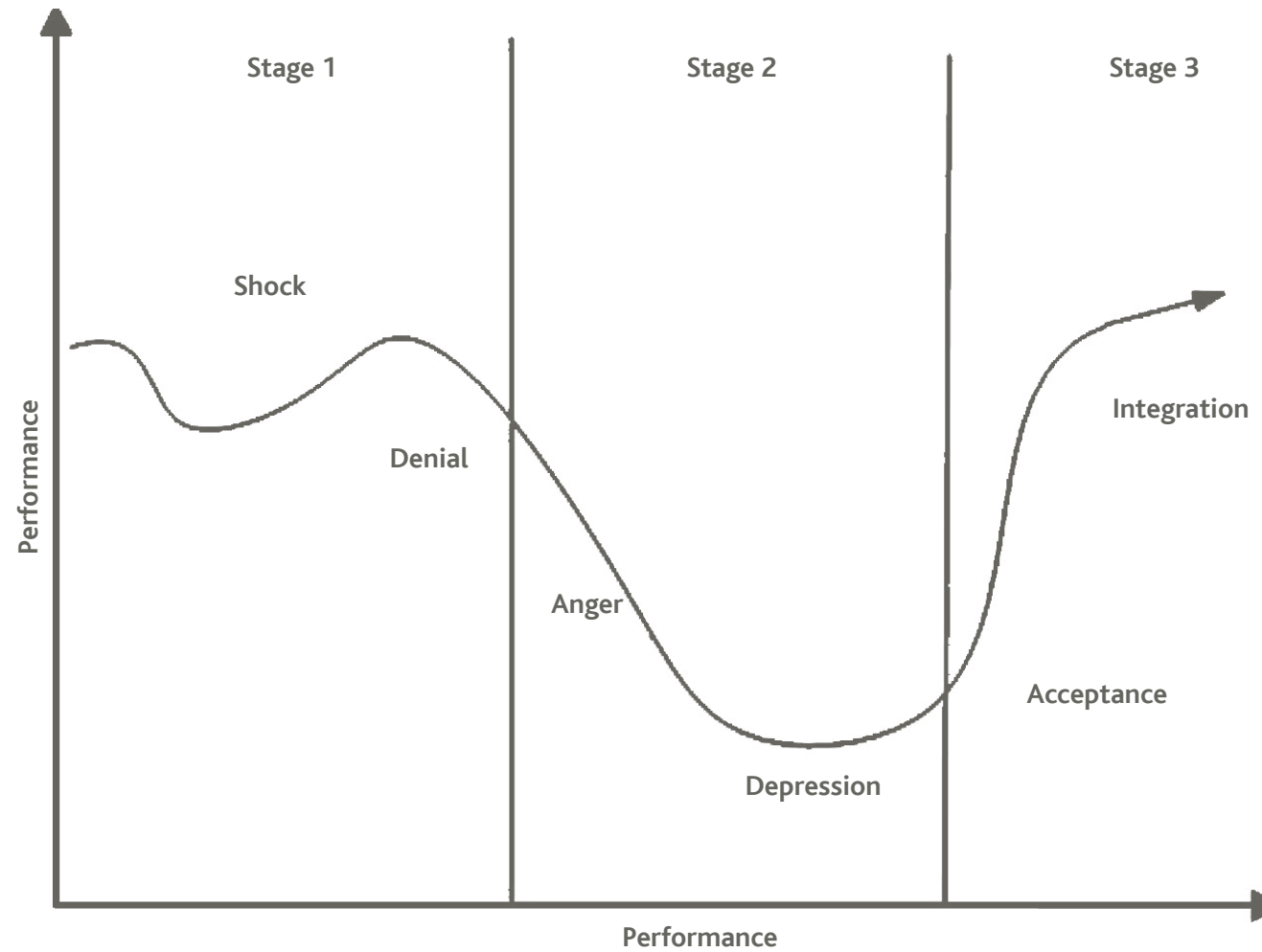
- Read more about gap analysis: <http://bit.ly/2WTAT3g>
- See Stephen Billing's Six managerial myths about organisational change: <http://bit.ly/2Fitvsc>

The Change Curve

People don't resist change out of sheer obstinacy. There are many reasons why an individual might refuse to go along with a decision which is of benefit to the co-op as a whole. They may have developed expertise in a specific task which they enjoy or have earned a position of respect from the old way of doing things. Or more negatively, they may, in a larger co-op, have carved out a little empire for themselves which is of benefit to them personally but not perhaps to the wider co-op!

Those implementing the changes must know they have the support of the whole co-op, because this person will fight tooth and nail to hold on to their privileges. The Change Curve helps us consider how people might react to change in order to understand how they are feeling and how to support them as the changes are implemented. It is a model based on the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross which proposes that people go through three transitional stages – shock and denial, anger and depression and acceptance and commitment – as they react, reject and finally accept and commit to the changes.

The Change Curve Diagram



Introduction	Issues of organisational growth and development	Change	Development	Participative strategic planning	Summary
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At **Stage 1**, people are in shock or denial. The change may have been well planned, and everybody knows it will happen, but this is when the reality of the change hits and people need time to adjust. What's needed is information, understanding about what is happening and knowing where to get help. Good communication is critical. Keep everyone informed, let people know that questions are welcome and where to go for answers. Make sure the answers are accurate and as detailed as necessary.

As people start to react to the change they move to **Stage 2**; now they may be feeling anxious, concerned, fearful or resentful. Changes may be resisted actively or passively. People will want to share their fears and express their anger. This is the danger zone – badly managed, the co-op will suffer. Productivity may drop during this stage, so be prepared for that. Again, good communication is so important. Listening skills are crucial so that prompt action can be taken to provide support and minimise any problems. It's helpful to reassure people that these are normal reactions, this will provide stability to assist the transition to the next stage.

At **Stage 3**, people are starting to test and explore what the changes might mean for them, what new opportunities might arise. They may be impatient for completion, or just relieved to have survived the upheaval. Again, new procedures or equipment or organisational structures might mean that productivity continues to be lower than usual, but in general there will be a more optimistic atmosphere. Plenty of time to implement new ways of working, training or mentoring will help embed the changes. People begin to recognise that the new way of doing things is the new reality. Communication remains as important as ever, as progress reports and praise help maintain the positive atmosphere. It's vital to acknowledge and celebrate everyone's achievements in moving through a difficult time together, and celebrating success will make it easier to embark on major changes the next time it becomes necessary.

Every individual responds differently to change, and people will move through these stages at different speeds and in different ways. It's possible that if someone doesn't get the support or training they need at Stage 3, for example they may regress to Stage 2. The Change Curve is a useful tool for understanding why people react as they do, how to best support them and as a reassurance that these responses are typical transitional stages towards effective implementation of change.

Finally it's important to note that there have been some criticisms of The Change Curve theory as an extension of a single piece of evidence, not tested by subsequent trials, into a taken-for-granted rule. There are arguments in its favour, such as it summarises behaviours which are easily recognisable and at least helps us understand why people often cannot move on beyond the bottom of the curve and accept the change.

However Kubler-Ross's research was based on people facing their own death – surely the most profound change anyone can experience, so can we equate this with the introduction of a new IT system? There appears to be a lack of evidence that the theory can be extended to all types of change.

Emergent change

Perhaps processes of organisational change are more accurately reflected by the Emergent Change model, which recognises that change rarely follows a simple sequence of planned phases:

- Some phases may take several iterations to complete
- Discrete one-off phases may get delayed, whilst others continue
- One-off phases such as governance approval, may become complicated by being only partly completed, or by gaining approval only in principle, or subject to alternative funding sources being identified
- Requirements often change or evolve during the change process

Change is more likely to succeed when this near chaotic reality is recognised, so that plans are adapted to reality rather than attempting to adapt reality to a convenient linear process. To effectively manage change, we need to recognise that the process is cyclical and will constantly evolve. And that there will be a number of activities that may be one-off, iterative, or phased with intervening delays.

- There is an interesting discussion of the interplay of managed and emergent change at:

<https://www.alchemyassistant.com/topics/mpAksPFTmAEKr2nM.html>

Founder's syndrome

Perhaps one of the most common and potentially damaging conflicts arising from change is what's become known as Founder's Syndrome. It happens when founder members' views and attitudes are so entrenched in work practices that changes needed because of growth are ignored and opportunities are lost.

For example, an extremely effective way of undermining the enthusiasm of a new recruit is to say: "*Oh we tried that before – it didn't work!*" – or "*Yes, but ...*". Try starting your sentence with "*Yes, and...*".

Instead it's more helpful to recognise that new recruits can often see opportunities that are invisible to 'old hands' and to let them try. Maybe a fresh approach will work differently this time. Maybe circumstances have changed?

The entrepreneurial dynamism, drive and decisiveness of the leaders whose vision got the co-operative off the ground can sometimes be an obstacle when the strategies that worked to grow the organisation during its start-up phase are no longer appropriate. They are not to blame!

Co-op founders are often highly committed and motivated people concerned only with the good of the co-operative. Rather it is a problem of governance, since newer members may believe that the founders' skills, experience and knowledge gives them a superior understanding of the situation and therefore lack the confidence to challenge them.

The way forward is for everyone – including the founders – to recognise and acknowledge the problem, and to address it together. You might take stock by holding a risk management exercise, asking some hard questions. What if the founders leave? Who would take on their roles? Where is the vital information and the contacts for marketing, financial management or contract negotiation to be found? It's helpful to hold regular strategic planning events, as well as a training and/or mentoring programme.



■ Read more about Founder's Syndrome: <http://bit.ly/31Kq2MC>

Development

Communication and sharing information

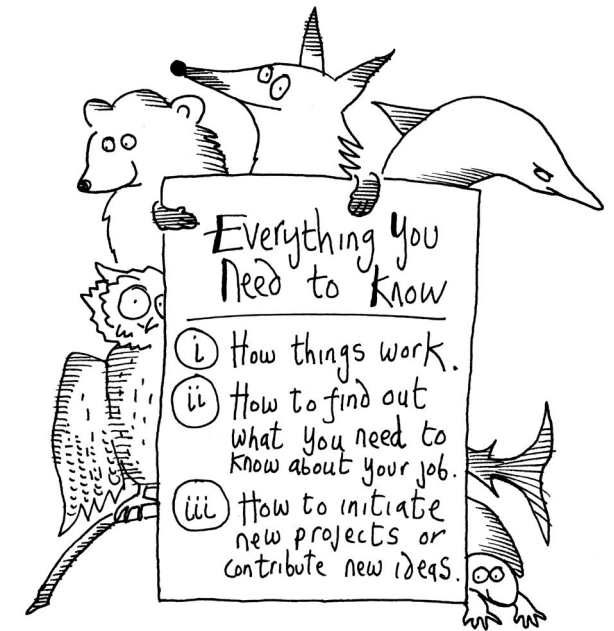
Your co-op may have been started up by a group of friends or neighbours, or might have arisen out of a group with common aims, such as people connected to a campaign or community group. It might be a conversion, where employees have bought out a retiring business owner.

However it began, it is likely to consist of people with largely similar views on the aims of the co-op and how it will work. Communications may have been informal, with information shared casually and irregularly. You may be able to make assumptions about each other's attitudes and values because, in the main, you share them.

As the co-operative develops you will need new skills, knowledge and experience. Once the group grows to more than about seven people, informal and casual communications become counter-productive, because some people will miss out.

Assumptions you may have been able to make in the past about attitudes and values may not be reliable, and, as a result, conflict can arise. As the co-op grows, there begins to be a need for a drawn-up organisational structure, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability, and clarity about decision-making. As ever, effective channels of communication are the key.

In her paper **The Tyranny of Structurelessness**, Jo Freeman points out there is no such thing as a group with no structure, and that an apparently leaderless group will have leaders but they will have emerged on the basis of access to resources, charisma, popularity or some other characteristic.



Such leaders are not accountable, and since they were never elected, they can never be unelected. It's better to be clear about where authority lies, and how those that have it can be held accountable and removed from power if necessary.

It may be difficult for founders to acknowledge the need to do things differently – new systems need time to embed themselves in day-to-day activities and need to prove their effectiveness over the old informal way of doing things.

However, unless it is made clear to new members or recruits how things work, how to find out what they need to know to do their job, or how to initiate new projects or contribute new ideas, you will miss out on the energy, creativity and fresh focus of new recruits. There's a fine line to be walked between valuing past experience and being too ready to dismiss new recruits' ideas with the immortal line: "*Oh we tried that before and it didn't work...*"

Information which, so far, has been in someone's head, or stored at someone's house, now needs to be available to all. This might be a business plan, annual accounts, budgets, action plan, mission statement, or your governing document. Whether it's on paper or an electronic document it needs to be in a clearly labelled file and people should have access to it.

Meetings which, to date, may have been held in someone's front room, or upstairs in the pub will now need to be held at a time and a venue accessible and appropriate for all members. It might be useful to draw up 'standing orders' for meetings, including:

- When and where they are held
- How to get items on to the agenda
- What the quorum is (how many people need to be in attendance to make decisions)
- Any ground rules. Such as turning off or muting mobile phones; no interrupting; respect each other; and punctuality

Ground Rules for meetings

- No interrupting, raise your hand if you wish to speak
- Support the Chair
- Keep to the Agenda
- Mobile phones off

Leadership

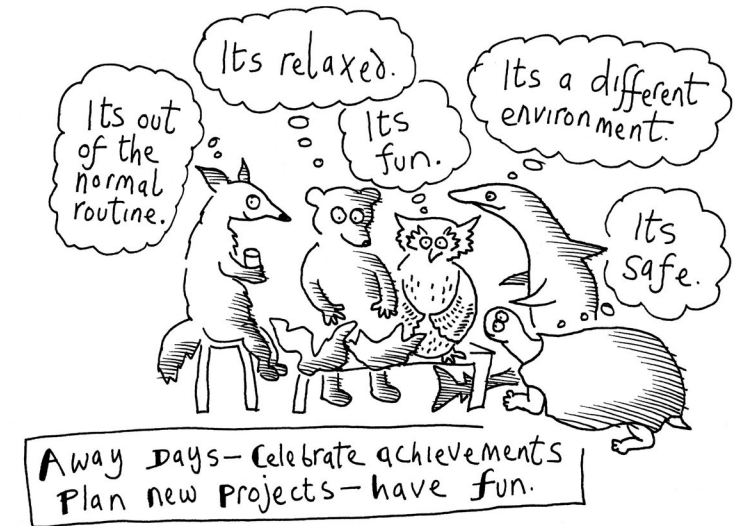
If your co-operative is a conversion from a private enterprise or if you have recruited people who previously worked in private enterprise (most of us!) you might find it useful to consider how much we need to 'unlearn' the how business is organised.

TV programmes such as *The Apprentice* or *Dragons' Den* lead us to believe that all businesses are focused on a return on investment for shareholders; they must have a hierarchical structure, with workers at the bottom who obey managers; and in turn managers who obey the board, which in turn is looking out for the interests of the shareholders.

We come to believe that this model is the only way business can be organised, because it is the only model we are presented with. A good way of understanding how a co-operative is different from a private enterprise is to recognise that in the co-operative model 'Labour hires Capital', which means that the members (the labour) use capital as a resource for running the business in their own interests, rather than capital using the members as just another resource for making profits for owners and investors.

So unless we help members understand that the co-op model is different, there will always be scope for misunderstandings, miscommunication and conflict.

A co-operative is a democratically managed organisation, which means that members make up the sovereign body of the co-operative at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) with every member having one vote. It does not mean that every member has to be involved in every decision – or you'd never get any work done! Depending on your structure and governing document, there may be a board or a management committee, with oversight of operations and responsibility for implementing a business plan, or your co-op maybe be governed collectively by all the members, but whatever the organisational structure, the sovereign body is always the members at the AGM.



New recruits are often at a loss to understand how such an organisation is managed, either leaving the decision-making to more experienced members or seeking to get involved in every decision. What is required is a decision-making structure based on trust, delegated authority, accountability and autonomy. Individuals (in their job descriptions), teams, departments, sub-groups, working parties (in their terms of reference) have decision-making authority, perhaps up to a certain budget limit, and they are accountable to all the members either through regular reports to the general meeting (GM) or to the AGM. Then they are trusted and left to get on with it.

Leadership in a co-operative is distributed, democratic and accountable. Everyone can show leadership in different areas and in different ways.

“ It’s not leadership or even management that is wrong, but leaders as an elite and management as status.

We need leadership as a behaviour of many and management as a function to be fulfilled by the many.

Bob Cannell, Co-operative Business Consultants

■ Recommended reading – The Tao of Leadership: <http://bit.ly/2MZYzU2>

Co-operative leadership involves

- Being assertive, understanding body language
- Being emotionally literate
- Having good listening skills
- Being open to other points of view
- Not being defensive
- Seeking consensus
- Modelling co-operative behaviour
- Functioning well in chaos
- Knowing when to use humour
- Knowing when to follow and when to lead
- Having good Chairing skills

Policies and procedures

To ensure that all members have access to the information they need to perform their role, and to avoid spending time in endless meetings, you'll need written policies and procedures that spell out how the co-operative intends to achieve its objectives, what the various tasks are and how they should be fulfilled.

There is a whole range of areas where written policies and procedures are necessary, including HR (in a co-operative, Human Relations) equal opportunities, health and safety, procedures to support sound financial management, or training policies to ensure that members develop skills they need to run the business.

Policies and procedures will vary according to the type of co-operative, economic sector, stage of development, and how many members, employees or volunteers you have.

Policy is the way an organisation works, written down as guidance for members. Procedure generally means the way in which policy is carried out. For example, an Equal Opportunities policy needs accompanying written procedures, so that when staff are interviewing prospective candidates or dealing with a complaint they can be sure they are complying with the policy.

Recruitment and induction

Co-operatives need to recruit (or be prepared to train) people with an understanding not just of the market environment of the enterprise but also its social aims and democratic management approach and style. An effective equal opportunities policy and recruitment procedure will bring you the benefits of a wider pool of potential recruits both for paid work and volunteering opportunities.

You need to be clear what the job entails so you can write a job description and person specification, which can be used to write adverts for local media and community newsletters. The job description should include a job title, all the tasks and responsibilities of the post, and support and supervision details. The person specification describes the essential and desirable qualifications, skills, knowledge and experience you are looking for.



You will also need to think through how the new recruit(s) will fit into the organisation. Where will they work? Is there a need for additional tools, materials or equipment? Who will show them the ropes and help them to integrate? Are they to be employed part-time or full-time? What about payroll, insurance, health and safety?

When you have thought through all the implications of taking on new staff and you have the job description and person specification written, you will be ready to advertise the post, either through informal or formal channels.

Recruitment can be an expensive process, so be sure to use all the informal channels you can find, bearing in mind that in order to ensure your co-operative is engaging with all sections of the community you will need to place adverts in a wide range of media and social media.

Induction reading could include:

- Co-op background and history
- Mission statement
- Constitution
- Business plan
- Policies and procedures in case of
 - Emergency, accident or fire
 - Customer complaint
- Organisational structure
- Meetings standing orders, ground rules and timetable

Induction of new recruits is vital to maintain the co-op's principles and ethos. If induction is ignored or inadequate, those involved may not understand the co-op's mission or ways of working. As a result they will not be truly engaged, and when more experienced people leave, or when times get tough, the co-op can lose its way or get bought out.

Induction involves helping new recruits understand what a co-operative is, the background of the co-operative, how it was set up, its mission and how it functions. There may be some background reading required, but try not to give the new recruit too much at once! Your website could have links to induction materials, to be downloaded as and when required.

Member job description

Especially in worker co-operatives, it's helpful to distinguish between the member's 'vocational' job – i.e. the job they are employed to perform, and the job of being a co-op member. Some co-ops have devised a 'Member Job Description' which makes reference to the responsibilities as well as the rights of co-op membership. For example, to acquire or perfect 'co-operative skills' such as being a good communicator, participating actively in meetings, being assertive, understanding how to reduce tensions in the workplace and deal competently and effectively with any conflicts that arise.

It's a good idea to appoint a mentor or buddy who will know where to get hold of induction documents as and when the new recruit is ready. They could also lead a guided tour of the premises on their first day, including being introduced to everyone and being shown the toilets, tea making facilities, where to take lunch, bike parking facilities and anything else they need to know.

Finally, away days are useful for the new recruit to get to see and participate in activities involving everyone in the co-op. Away days can be an exciting opportunity to appreciate the scope and extent of what they have become involved in, and what the opportunities are for personal and career development, as well as lots of fun.

An away day is an event, often held away from the work premises, where members get together to celebrate achievements and plan new projects. With plenty of opportunities for fun, good food and getting to know each other, such events can really help to integrate new recruits into the team. If an away day is too expensive and time-consuming for your co-op, there are a variety of other ways in which you can make spaces for people to engage socially, including eating together or brief social events after work. Whatever way you

choose, try to get everyone together frequently. When people understand something about each other's backgrounds, hobbies or likes and dislikes, team working becomes easier and conflict uncommon.



**Away Days—Celebrate achievements
Plan new Projects—have fun.**



Group timeline and stories

- Everybody arranges themselves in line according to how long they have been a member of the co-op
- Divide them into groups of 4 or 5, with 'newbies' in the first group through to 'old timers' in the last
- Ask each group to talk amongst themselves about what it was like when they joined, remembering how things were in the early days – perhaps a funny incident or a disaster that they somehow survived
- Get the newbies to talk about how it was for them joining more recently
- Then each group shares their stories, as much as they want to
- This exercise can be revelatory and is an empowering group experience

Member (or personal) reviews

Member reviews provide members with support as well as providing a structure for accountability. Any kind of business with employees needs to carry out regular staff reviews. But it's how it's done that interests us here. In a co-op you will often find a flatter, more democratic organisation. You may find that all the employees are directors and you may find a variety of organisational structure – management by General Meeting (GM) or Management Committee (MC), which may have delegated powers, or be representative of different teams or departments. See the section on Sociocracy in booklet 3. So we are not looking for a 'one size fits all' solution.

In a private enterprise an employer worth their salt will hold regular employee reviews so that employees have the confidence that they are doing a good job, and the employer gets to know when people need training, or need new software or equipment, or when they need to recruit more staff or give more hours to existing staff.

So in a flat, democratically-managed workplace, it's just as important to have this information, and there are a variety of ways you can do that. But first of all you need to clarify why you want to do it.

Why do it?	What happens if you don't?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It provides security for members – they know that they are doing the right things, in the right place at the right time. They know when they have done a good job • It gives you an opportunity for praise • It makes people feel valued • You can identify when people are underperforming or struggling • The team knows when a member needs training or needs a new app or software • The co-op is informed that there is a need to recruit additional staff or provide existing staff with additional hours. Or that a job description needs to be altered, or split between two people • It allows you to match expectations with reality • It provides a career path • It provides useful information for individual members, and can be the basis for a personal development plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's a cost to the business of 'hiring and hiring' (i.e. finding another role for an underperforming member and recruiting a new member for the post); increased staff turnover; increased cost of new member induction • There's a cost to member morale: "<i>if they skive off why can't I?</i>" • Frustration can build up if people don't get feedback • A lack of feedback prevents people growing and developing their skills • People bottle things up – leading to grievances • A lack of engagement can cause long term dissatisfaction • There's a cost to the co-operative culture: new members will see the contradiction between what you say and what you do; it will undermine the co-op's mission

Here are some approaches...

Member review	Members identify key elements and skills involved in the job description, then carry out a preliminary reflective review using a scoring sheet. A second review is carried out with a colleague who challenges the individual, helping them to clarify their answers. The next step is to identify personal improvements, training requirements and personal targets for creating a personal development plan.
Co-op member and job competencies review	This approach identifies and separates out 'co-op member competencies' from 'job competencies'. This results in a 'Member Agreement' (a list of co-op member competencies that every member must fulfil). Job competencies are the vocational skills, knowledge and experience required for specific roles, and should be attached to each job description. Members and probationary members are assessed either by a colleague or sub-committee, and lack of competencies form the basis of training plans and new member induction procedures
Buddy system	Each member has a 'buddy' colleague to support them – a bit like a personal HR worker. Like the personal review above, the member carries out a self-assessment review and discusses it with the buddy. The buddy then presents it and their recommendations to the board or a personnel team. Action points are agreed by the co-op while the buddy monitors progress, so that it's the co-op deciding improvement actions, rather than the member.
KPIs / personal targets	Worker-members are allocated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relating to their job role. Regular review meetings are held to assess performance against KPIs and discuss related issues. KPIs may be allocated to teams instead of individual members.
Personal review (peer listening process)	There are three elements to this process: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annual: review of business plan and job descriptions 2. Monthly: 'group listening' session. The whole group listens whilst two members receive feedback, based on a 'Stop – Start – Continue' model. Feedback recipients have the option of offering a response at the end of the session, and of offering a further response at the beginning of the following month's session. 3. Monthly: each member has a one hour meeting with a buddy, reflecting on the previous group listening session, and any lessons learnt.
Member review with support of the personnel team	Co-op members receive a questionnaire from the personnel team every 18 months. The purpose of the questionnaire is for members to review each other's work. Each member is expected to complete a review of 75% of the membership. The feedback is anonymised and sent to each member who then meets with the personnel team and the training team to discuss how they feel about their workload, what training they might need, if they have other skills which the co-op might benefit from, amongst others. This information is fed into a training and development plan.

The way you approach designing your review process will depend upon your co-operative culture, the sector of the economy you are working in, your organisational structure, its age and its size. Whichever way you do approach it, bear in mind that this is not a policing exercise. It's a way of providing members with feedback on their performance – praise for a job well done or support for a member who is over or underworked, or who needs training or additional resources. It's a way of helping the co-op to move forwards, responding to new challenges and accomplishing its mission.

Before implementing a member review process:

- Work out what's right for your co-op, be clear about why you're doing it and how you will measure success
- Start small, is there a team that would be prepared to pilot the chosen approach?
- Run a pilot, then have a retrospective look at what happened: What worked? What didn't? Can we do better next time? Keep on tweaking and adjusting till you've got it right.
- Then the next question is how will you scale it to the whole co-op? Can you use the early adopters as champions of the pilot procedures?

Participative strategic planning

***Participative strategic planning* is a means of engaging all members in planning the future direction of the co-operative business. In this way we can avoid conflict caused by lack of information or misunderstandings about 'how we do things here'. It's strategic planning done in a co-operative, collaborative and participative way.**

Strategic planning is a way of coping with change and planning for the future. It aims to accomplish three tasks:

1. To explore and clarify direction for the medium to long term, identifying desired outcomes
2. To select broad strategies that will enable the co-operative to achieve those outcomes
3. To identify ways to measure progress

Co-operatives use the process to build member commitment by involving them in the creation of the plan, but how you go about it will depend on your co-op's structure, how long you have been established, your economic sector and the complexity of your business.

One approach is to hold an annual away day aiming to integrate new members, facilitate interaction between different teams, and discuss co-operative performance and future plans. It's helpful to clarify the language of strategic planning before you start – at least so that everyone can agree a common understanding. Here's an example:

Strategic <i>'Drain the swamp'</i>	Tactical	Operational <i>'Fight the crocodiles'</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals • Aims and objectives • Long term • Outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestones, KPIs • Timetables, rotas • Reactive, opportunistic • Map, route 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day to day • Crisis management • Short term • Outputs
Where you want to go	How you're going to get there	The journey

Some key questions for strategic planning:

- Are your co-operative vision and values clear, agreed and owned?
- How well do you understand the market? Is it growing, shrinking, or flat-lining?
- How well-informed are you about suppliers and competitors?
- How fit is the co-operative organisation? Purring along nicely or bit bumpy?
- Are members ready to act?

Strategic planning – beyond the systems approach

It is increasingly recognised that existing management tools are inadequate, since they are based on 'systems' thinking, which assumes that organisations are like machines that can be controlled by managers 'pulling levers'. Instead, Ralph Stacey of the University of Hertfordshire describes what happens in organisations as 'complex responsive processes' with high participation and constant change. He sees an interplay of human relationships and communication where people create and are created by the organisation, and where no one can plan or control this interplay.

The seminars presented some tools and techniques based on this understanding of business as a series of interactions and conversations between people at all levels of the business.

- Read more on Ralph Stacey and complex responsive processes: <http://bit.ly/2NcjL9F>

Tools and techniques for participative strategic planning

Active Business Planning uses project management techniques, researching information on size and characteristics of the market, acceptable pricing, level of sales, etc. simultaneously and using the knowledge gained in one area to amend others. Active business planning uses a timeline (GANNT) chart to identify the dates of starting and ending each business planning action.

- Read more about Active Business Planning: <http://bit.ly/2WSI2Wp>

Agile is an approach to business planning based on techniques typically used in software development as a response to unpredictability. In contrast to traditional project management, with its sequence of defined aims – (market research); product development (market strategy); implement strategy – the Agile approach is iterative and incremental, with all activities blending into several iterations and adapting to discovered realities at fixed intervals.

■ Read more about agile working: <http://bit.ly/2KXAkTI>

Risk Analysis is a slightly different approach, involving looking at all the risks to your co-operative business and quantifying them in a table according to:

A: How likely is it to occur?

B: What impact would it have on the business if it did occur?

You then multiply (A) by (B) to get a rough and ready way to prioritise action. The final two columns in the table encourage you to think about how to prevent the risk from happening and if it does happen anyway, how to minimise the impact on your business.

■ Download a pdf to help with risk analysis: <http://bit.ly/2FiKGda>

Appreciative Inquiry is a more positive, glass half-full approach. It involves four stages:

1. **DISCOVERY** Focus on what's working, build on success. What are our strengths? What do we enjoy? What do we want to do more of?
2. **DREAM** Use our strengths and what we want to do to create a shared vision of the future – what might be?
3. **DESIGN** Co-create a design to make it happen, based on our values and principles
4. **DELIVERY** What will be? Sustain the vision through empowering people, learning, adjusting, improvising.

■ Read more about Appreciative Inquiry: <http://bit.ly/2WQROsn>

“ *When faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the objects, to the flavour of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear view mirror. We march backwards into the future.*

Marshall McLuhan

Summary

These booklets aim to give you the tools and techniques that will improve communication, make meetings more effective, smooth the stresses and strains of organisational growth and development and enhance the effectiveness of the board.

Paying attention to the process of working together to achieve your aims will reduce conflict and improve team-working. We also believe that this will make your experience of working together more enjoyable and more fun!

- **Booklet 1** outlines the different ways conflict can arise in a co-operative, the different responses and how it can be dealt with.
- **Booklet 2** outlined some basic communication concepts and looked at steps we can take to improve communication, including avoiding misunderstandings arising from cultural or gender differences. We discussed the importance of assertive behaviour for good communication and highlighted how the enterprise will benefit from maximum participation by members.
- **Booklet 3** describes ways in which we can make our meetings more effective. Effective meetings are reasonably short and enjoyable, good decisions are taken and everyone comes away clear who's going to do what. We also look at a range of different decision-making methods and the implications of their use.
- **Booklet 5** addresses the vital role of the board. We look at the different roles that board members can adopt, the relationship of the board with day to day management and what to do if you are a board member as well as an employee – which hat do you wear when?

We believe that if you are willing to try some of the techniques described, these booklets will go a long way towards helping you reduce conflict in your co-operative. In addition, you won't be fazed when conflict does arise, but will recognise it as a symptom of the wealth of ideas, experience and knowledge you have around you.

Above all, we know that these co-operative working techniques will help you work together and help you enjoy working together!

■ **Download pdf copies of all booklets in the From Conflict to Co-operation series at www.uk.coop/fc2c**

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