



## Liberating Structures

Brainstorm sessions, power point presentations, managed or open discussions. These are some of the conventional ways of facilitating meetings and conversations in organizational settings. Such approaches invite participants to share, interact and engage in conversations – but do not always generate the desired effect: people can become disengaged, or lose attention, easily and some voices may be overpowered by others.

This leads to missed opportunities when it comes to the meaningful involvement of participants, including all stakeholder voices, and creating positive change for and within the organization overall.

Liberating structures (LS) provide a participatory, empowering alternative to the conventional approaches. LS are a collection of 33 simple yet effective ‘change methods’, facilitation techniques that help increase engagement, innovation and participation in groups, despite their size. They provide fun, energetic ways to get people talking about their collective expertise and ideas regarding, for example, organizational processes, project results and/or (future) strategies and solutions.

The ‘structured’ part of LS ensures that a safe space is created for all participants, to freely share their opinions and ideas and ‘liberating’ their potential. The goal is for each participant – introvert or extravert – to feel heard, helping them to become aware of their own creativity and increasing the value and effectiveness of organizational meetings. Empowering participants to become actively involved in such meetings causes them to become ‘owners’ of the ideas that are put forth, increasing their engagement with potential follow up and implementation of the meeting’s results.

Impromptu networking	TRIZ	What' debrief	Conversation café	Appreciative interviews	1-2-4 rapid conversation	5-whys
Ecocycle planning	Shift & share	25 > 10 crowdsourcing	Min – specs	Wise crowds	Wicked Q's	Purpose to practice
Agree/certainty matrix	What I need from you	User experience fishbowl	Heard, seen, respected	Smart network webbing	Design with storyboards	Open space technology
Integrated autonomy	Generative relationships	Critical uncertainties	Graphic recording	Panarchy	Troika consulting	Helping heuristics
Celebrity interview	Stories To Patterns	15% solutions	LS	Improv prototyping	Discovery and action dialogue	Simple ethnography

The approach of LS is practical and feasible, generating concrete results. One of its core strengths and principals is 'to make things small'<sup>1</sup>. Using the methods, large groups are broken up into smaller ones to generate input and ideas from all participants. This ensures the meaningful inclusion of all in a simple, (time) efficient manner.

LS are relatively simple to learn and can be used across sectors, on every level (executive to grassroots), and in a non-hierarchical manner. Although LS do not require extensive training, they are best experienced first-hand in an immersion workshop, to get a true feel for them by experiencing them in practice. Anyone interested in bringing about change in organizational settings can use LS to tap into the talent, ideas and creativeness that exist.

### LS & PMEL

Seeing that including and unleashing all stakeholder voices – ensuring meaningful participation for everyone – is essential for good M&E results, Liberating Structures offer interesting new ways to designing Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (PMEL) process engagement and activities, from design to data collection to analysis and reporting. By combining ('stringing') different structures, one can progressively tap into the collective wisdom, experience and perspectives of selected groups, project teams or organizations, generating valuable insights.



### RiH & LS

Liberating Structures fit perfectly within ResultsinHealth's focus on participation, empowerment and learning which is at the core of all our activities. Together with our associates Nadia von Holzen and Ewen Le Borgne, we offer years of experience with the implementation of Liberating Structures. We are here to guide you and your organization in experiencing the use of LS, whether it is for PMEL, programming, management, or other organizational purposes. We can work with you by providing training ("learning by doing"), mentoring and/or work on an advisory basis.

To discuss possibilities, please contact Nur Hidayati at: [impactteam@resultsinhealth.org](mailto:impactteam@resultsinhealth.org)

<sup>1</sup> <https://leanstorydesign.com/ls/>