

Creativity Dialog Map: the Adaptive Organization Development Technology for Positive Change in the Organization

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Abstract

Organization Development is an imperative process for the growth of organizations. The underlying process of the OD framework and its tools and techniques are intentionally implemented for planned change towards its view of an organization's preferred direction and vision. This article presents an important process in planned change, that is, the processing of information. Convergent thinking and divergent thinking are alternative approaches to processing information. The paper presents the design of a new OD technology called "creativity dialog map". The new design CDialogMap2 is a version derived from the feedback from workshops conducted by the author in his classes.

Keywords: problem-solving dialog, divergent thinking, convergent thinking, organization development (OD)

Introduction

Most of organizations are asking for innovation and change management from their own people. Top management wants to see change in their organizations. There are positive impacts for organizational changes and Organization Development (OD) is a practical way to move the organization forward. OD has the three key phases for change, namely: Pre-OD Intervention, OD Intervention and Post-OD Intervention

The action research model is applied as a change model of OD in identifying the three main activities which are Pre-launch, Launch and Post-launch (Rothwell W. and Sullivan R., 2005, p.174, p.56). In each phase, the activities include collecting, interpreting, and analyzing information.

OD consultants with more experience can communicate and collect information in the effective ways. Those with less experience will require tools and technology to communicate in order to collect the information and find out the solution for OD interventions acceptable by all parties. This technology enhances the relationship and creates good environment.

In this research, the adaptive OD technology is derived from creative problem solving, divergent and convergent thinking and dialog to build the new OD technology for problem solving purpose. This OD technology was developed and tested in a classroom workshop.

Research question

How can we design an OD technology for processing information that will allow work groups involved in a common project to reach an agreement point, foster an atmosphere of trust and good relationships and generate a buy-in of the final decisions made in the process?

Review of Literature

OD technology refers to the tools and techniques that are used in interventions to shift the organization to its desired stage. Some of the OD technologies used to collect the information among related parties under the scope of the development are brainstorming, open space, appreciative inquiry (Rothwell, W. and Sullivan, R., 2005, p.181). Most of the technologies require effective communication skills to get the proper information and generate the right positive environment. Generally, the first phrase of the OD project related to collecting information includes building trust to open the communication lines among the team members including the clients. A low trust level may indicate a failure of the OD project. An effective initial stage in communication is a good start for any change project.

Dialog is a very interesting tool, not only in good communication but also a constant use of this skill increases the level of engagement and creativity among people. Most of the dialog tools involve skills in questioning, listening, reflection and exploration of new solutions during the process (Nixon, 2012, Loc 1380). Dialog uses techniques for various contexts such as the use of action learning technique for education or the dialogue that the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program use in the support rehabilitation of alcoholics and in meeting the challenge of mapping a solution for business problems. (Nixon, 2012, Loc 5832-5835)

Any team involved in facilitating the change process finds a challenge in the use of dialog tools not only in defining the solution but more so in building trust, good relationships, and the buy-in of the decisions by all concerned parties. The process for problem-solving dialog is the process that leads to the right track, right pace and right flow of ideas to find the solution (Kaner, Lin, Toldi, Fish and Berger, 2007, Loc 505).

Putting in the “divergent thinking” and “convergent thinking” processes into the dialog enhances the flow of the information and fosters creative thinking for problem solving (Figure 1). The divergent thinking process focuses on the search for ideas regarding the issue while convergent thinking focuses on the selection and analysis of the solution to judgment (Proctor, 2005, Loc 1669-1672).

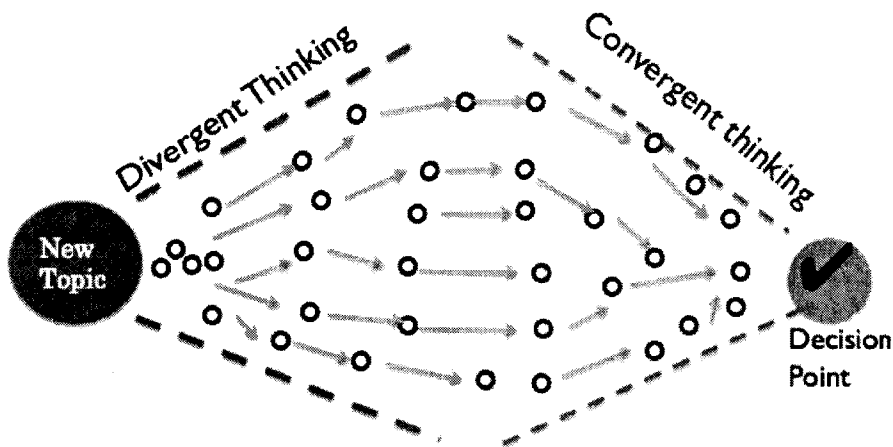


Figure 1. Divergent and convergent thinking processes of problem-solving dialog (adapted from Kaner et al, 2007, Loc 514).

However, the use of this model is not suitable when the team is struggling with very difficult problems due to time and issue factors. Team members try to manage the time and issues to find out the creative solutions, generate more ideas and issues to categorize the ideas under a specific topic. In order for problem solving dialog to be successful, the participants must start by sharing their initial ideas, try to discover the diversity of ideas from other team members (Kaner et al, 2007, Loc 625). Kaner, et. al. (2007, Loc 599) categorizes the area of problem solving dialog into five zones, namely: the comfort (business as usual) zone, the divergent zone, the groan zone, the convergent zone, and the closure zone. Each zone requires different techniques in order to move the process into the next zone. This requires that an experienced team facilitator for the process.

Creativity Dialog Map

The map was designed and adapted from the problem-solving dialog model of Kaner (2007) and creative problem solving (CPS) model of Proctor (2005). The components of the CPS are IDEAL, where I stand for “Identify problems and opportunities”, D for “Defining goals”, E for “Explore possible strategies”, A for “Anticipate outcomes and action” and L for “Lock and lesson learn” for next round of CPS (Proctor, 2005, Location 1976). The components are aligned with the CPS process. The process is sequential but they can be linked to other steps during the conduct of the process. The CPS process starts with objective finding, fact-finding, problem finding, idea finding, solution finding and acceptance finding (Proctor, 2005, Location 2195). The process requires divergent thinking and convergent thinking in the next step. The creativity dialog map was developed (Figure 2) in order to support the team problem solving.

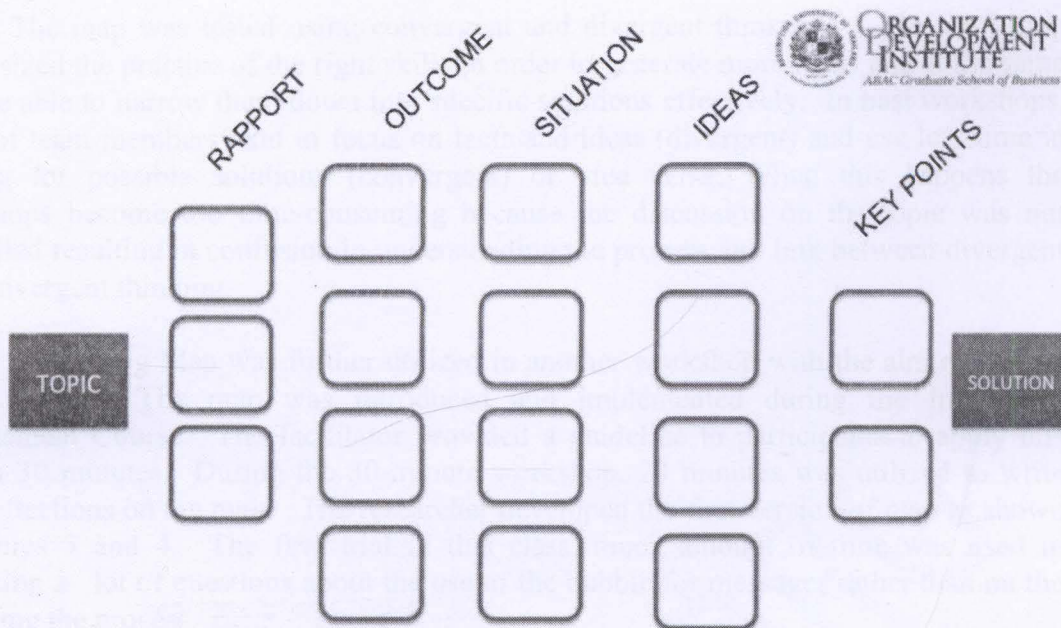
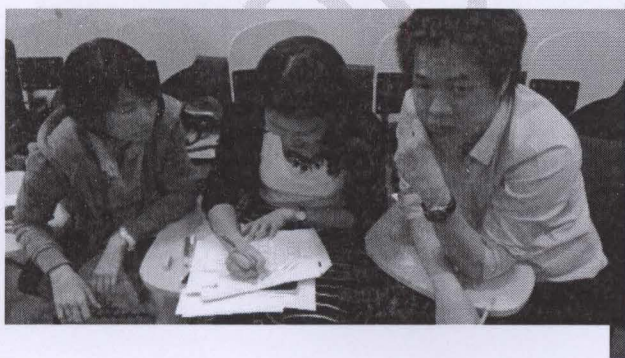


Figure 2. Creativity Dialog Map

The map on Figure 2 is designed for a small team or unit in practicing to solve the problem using creative thinking and positive environment. Each team should be composed of not more than 5 persons because of the limited message block on the form. Before the map process is worked on, the team members must agree on the topic, then they can move on with the dialog by asking the questions and sharing their opinions. The team must assign one person to write down the key message for each step into the message block (rectangle symbol) till they come to the last stage.

CDialog Map facilitating respondents



The CDialog Map was tested in the Master of Business Administration Program. Several students were selected to pilot test this map during a creative process workshop in March 2013.



The map was tested using convergent and divergent thinking. The workshop emphasized the practice of the right skills in order to generate more ideas and at the same time be able to narrow them down into specific solutions effectively. In past workshops, some of team members tend to focus on facts and ideas (divergent) and use less time in looking for possible solutions (convergent) or vice versa. When this happens the workshops become too time-consuming because the discussion on the topic was not controlled resulting in confusion in understanding the process and link between divergent and convergent thinking.

A CDialog Map was further utilized in another workshop with the aim of getting better results. The map was introduced and implemented during the Innovation Management Course. The facilitator provided a guideline to participants to apply this map in 30 minutes. During the 30-minute workshop, 20 minutes was utilized to write their reflections on the map. The researcher developed the first version of map as shown in Figures 3 and 4. The first trial in this class, much amount of time was used in answering a lot of questions about the use of the bubble for messages rather than on the practicing the process.

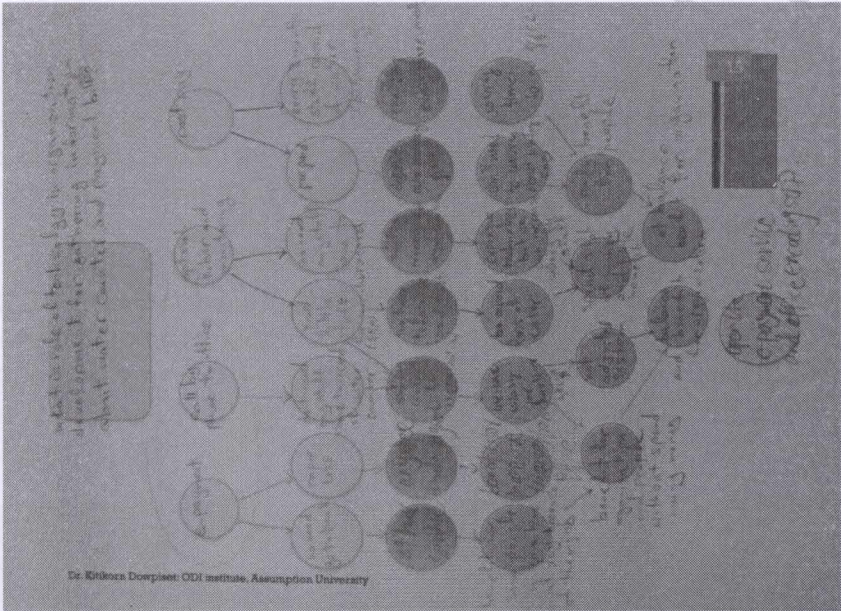


Figure 3. CDialog Map version 1

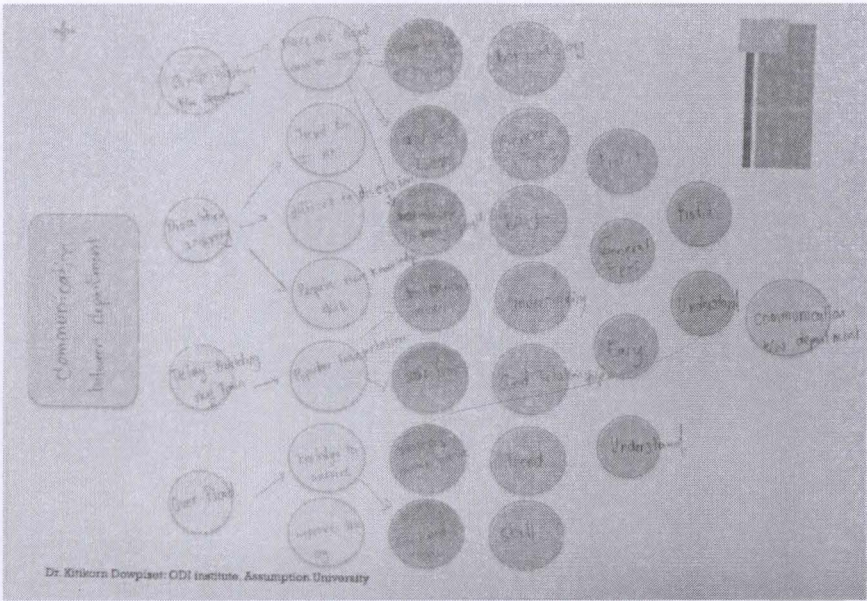


Figure 4. CDialog Map version 1

A revision was further done considering the feedback from the use of the first version of the CDialog Map. The second version of CDialog map was designed and implemented as shown on Figures 5 and 6. This version of the map was implemented in the creative process workshop with a different group of MBA students. For this process, the steps in working with the map was written down above the message box as a guide for the participants during their discussions and in writing down of the content into the right box. The bubble shape was further changed into a square shaped box (message box) to accommodate more ideas to be written down. The revisions proved to be very effective as this encouraged more questions, developed rapport, and the participants worked on their own topics in the last columns of “Sorting ideas”, “Solution” and “Exercise Judgments”. The final version of CDialog Map was crafted as shown in Figure 7.

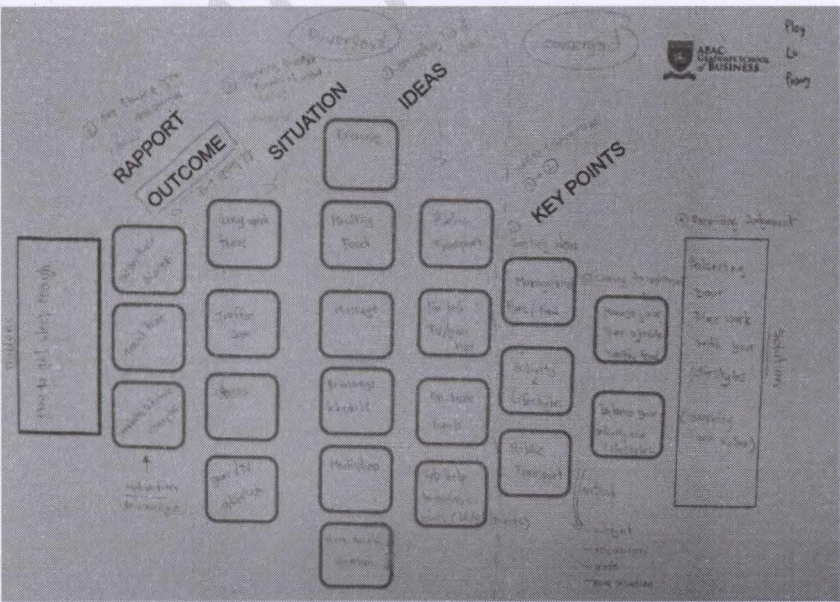


Figure 5. The industry sectors where the respondents work

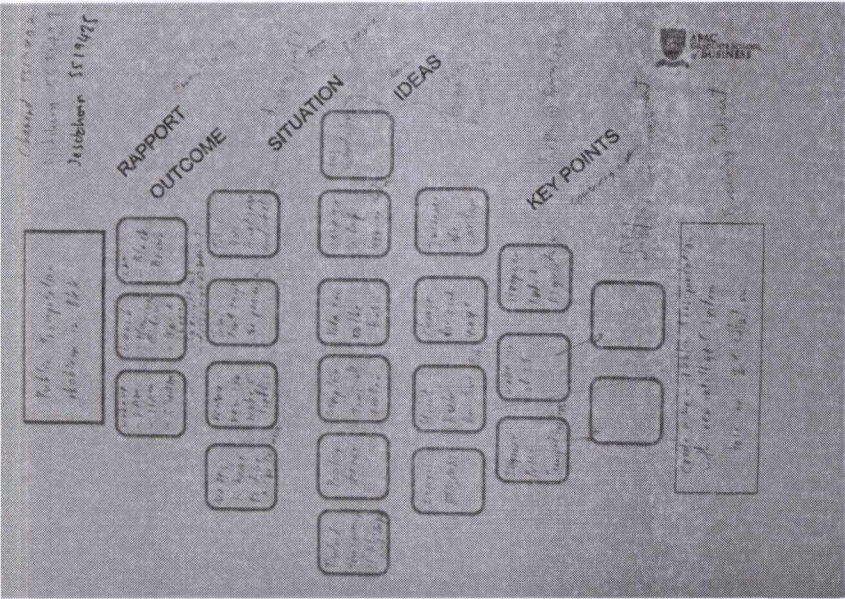


Figure 6. Current job positions held by the respondents

Creativity Dialog Map Workshop

After the collecting the all Creativity Dialog Maps from the workshops, the reflections from each team were also collected and used to further improve the Map.

The CDialog Map can be utilized by small teams/units by following the guidelines as shown on Table 1.

Table 1.
Guidelines for the use of the Creativity Dialog Map.

Step	Guideline	Role of participants or team members	Role of facilitator / team leader
Topic	Define the topic clearly. The topic maybe a problem or a business opportunity.	Agree on the topic.	Team leader can define the topic before starting this workshop. Make clear that everyone sees the same issue.
Rapport	Create a positive environment and build trust among the participants.	Team members ask general information questions. The questions should not deal with the topic/issues that are planned for this	Stimulate everyone to ask the questions and to listen attentively to the answers. Encourage people to share their ideas.

		workshop.	
Outcome	Set clear objectives that lead to team outcomes or decisions.	Propose the question “What happens to the unit/team if we can find the creative solution to this topic?”	Write down the ideas and summarize the key outcomes into the message block symbol. Write at least three outcomes.
Situation	Define the facts that are related to the topic. Separate the facts from the feelings. Root out the problems that are to be considered for the solutions.	Sharing the fact and opinion about the facts in order to figure out the gaps from current situation to the opportunity.	Sharing and reminding the team to make sure that facts are discussed. Write down at least 4 facts in the message block.
Ideas	Everyone is encouraged to share ideas and be open to new ideas. The team may also piggy bank other ideas to generate more new ideas.	Define the questions to find out the new ideas that will lead team to figure out the root issue or give rise to see the opportunity. Questions may be rephrased to encourage a more positive and open sharing of ideas.	Encourage every participant to share ideas.
Key points	Conclude with the point of action that team agrees to implement.	Select, modify, and decide on three possible key action points.	Write down the three main solutions in the message form.

The CDialog Map version 3 exercise shows that each team was able to follow the steps and put the right key message into the right process message box. The Team leader led the team members by the using the guidelines and using the positive questions. The team was able to figure out a solution to the problem within the time frame specified by the process. Everyone was engaged in the process and were open to new ideas. The questions and feedback on the process was further utilized to revise the CDialog to a simpler and functional version.

Conclusion

The new design of creativity dialog map is proposed based on the results of this research. This map can be utilized for research and to build better rapport among team members. The results also showed that by utilizing the topic dialog box, better solutions are derived from the dialog base system. This map which has been developed for small teams may also be utilized by larger teams by adding on more message boxes in situation and ideations. However, the message box in decision and solutions should not be revised further because it is not effective for the team to use more time in selecting more than two or three solutions. More attention to the situation and ideation should be encouraged. Establishing good rapport and ownership of the decision is also a part of the process itself.

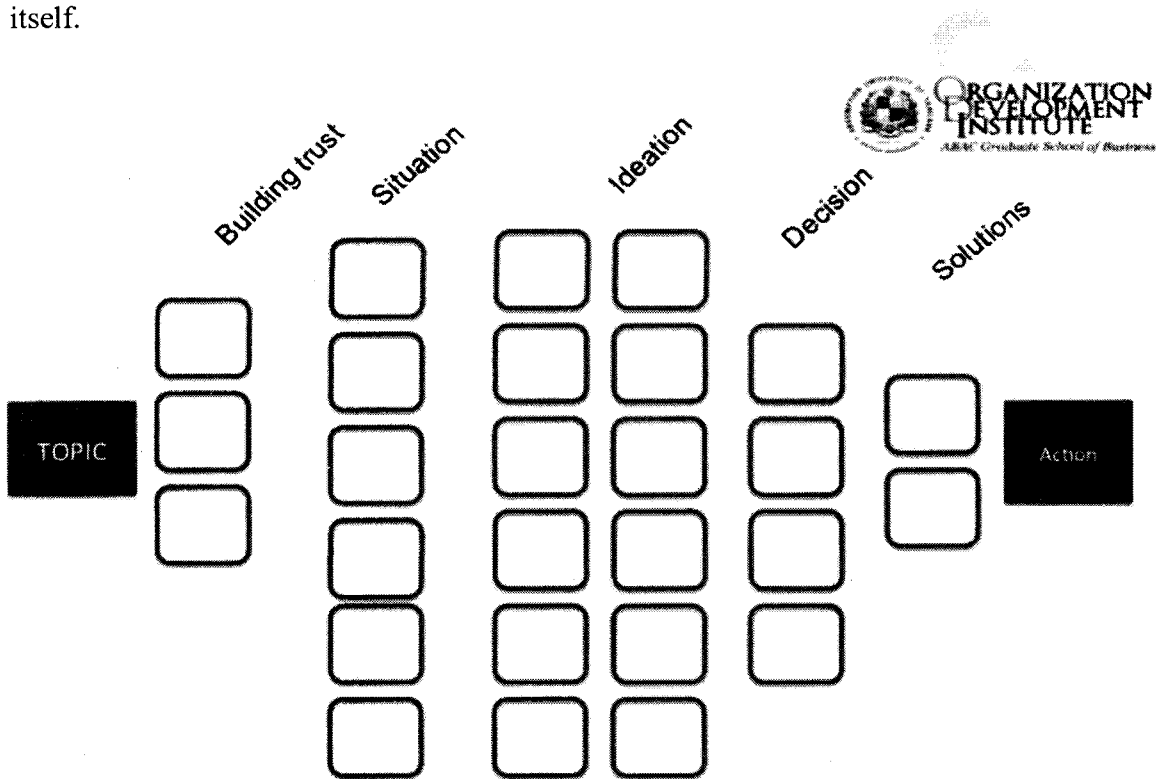


Figure 7: CDialog Map version 3

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