DARE TO SHARE

Vademecum

SDC Knowledge Management Toolkit

«Sharing Knowledge and Learning»

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

This Vademecum is published in English, German, French, and Spanish.
A comprehensive version with explanatory texts is available in English only.
All texts can also be found on the Internet: www.daretoshare.ch

Published by:	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) www.deza.admin.ch
Available from:	SDC Knowledge and Learning Processes Division Freiburgstrasse 130 CH-3003 Berne E-mail: wlp@deza.admin.ch Tel. +4131 322 35 79 Fax +4131 324 13 47
Authors:	Agridea, CH-8315 Lindau: Ernst Bolliger, Olivia Hartmann
Layout:	Nicole Moser, Agridea
Photos:	Karina Muench, CH-8000 Zurich
Copyright:	SDC 2009

Introductory remarks to the toolkit «Sharing Knowledge and Learning»

SDC Bern, July 2009

Jörg Frieden
Manuel Flury

Our organisation is a learning organisation

- We know that well proven methods and knowledge are available
- We do have a lot of freedom in organising our work
- Only rarely (if ever) do we ask our colleagues about their experience
- We allow ourselves little time for reading and for sharing our experience
- We take little time to describe our own work realistically, and to look at it critically

➜ As publisher of the present toolkit, the Knowledge and Learning Processes Division of SDC supports the sharing of knowledge and skills

Our organisation is closely related to practice

- A variety of methods exists, and they are easy to apply
- We constantly use new methods
- Sometimes we become tired of using new methods and keep away from innovations

➜ Collaborators of SDC use tried and true methods themselves and reflect on them

➜ By applying the methods, we experience the added value they produce for our practical work

Our organisation is interconnected

- With many other organisations, we are connected and maintain a constructive and trusting relationship
- Reviews, evaluations and studies help us to understand our activities and their effects
- However, we ourselves do not always become aware of what in fact we have learnt
- Still we know that sharing requires a real interest in the experience of other people

➜ We want to sum up the results and the experience of our activities, and to present them in a form that is easy to understand

➜ We want our products to be available to our partner organisations

Our organisation strives for effectiveness

- Obtaining the desired effect is the best argument for getting the support necessary for our activities
- By making use of knowledge proven in practice, we will be effective
- However, in practice our lessons learnt and our successful experience are not sufficiently taken into account when planning future activities

➜ This toolkit makes available the methods proven in practice, and thus supports efficient and effective sharing of knowledge

Table of Contents

After Action Review

An after action review (AAR) is a discussion of a project or an activity. It enables the individuals involved to learn for themselves what happens, why it happened, what went well, what needs improvement and what lessons can be learned from the experience. The spirit of an AAR is one of openness and learning – it is not about problem fixing or allocating blame. Lessons may be learned on the spot by the individuals involved or explicitly documented and shared with a wider audience.

Steps in an AAR

1. Invite the right people - appoint a facilitator - create the right climate.
2. What was supposed to happen? Revisit the objectives and deliverables of the project.
3. What actually happened? What went well? Why? What could have gone better? Identify learning advice for the future.
4. Ensure that everyone feels fully heard before leaving the meeting.
5. Record and share important lessons learnt.

Balanced Scorecard

The balanced scorecard is a strategic planning and management system that helps an organization to align all its activities to its vision and strategic goals, to improve its internal and external communication and to monitor its organizational performance against strategic goals. The core piece of the system is a matrix. This so-called balanced scorecard depicts the strategic goals split into objectives for the important dimensions of an organization. It also includes the related concrete activities, expected results and assigned responsibilities. Special about the balanced scorecard is that it looks at the organization not only from a financial perspective but also includes other perspectives such as personnel, learning and growth, business processes and customer satisfaction. It therefore yields a complete, balanced picture of an organization.

How to go about it?

1. Formulate mission, vision and strategic goal of the organization.
2. Develop the balanced scorecard matrix:
   a) Brake down the strategic goal into objectives and activities within the given dimensions;
   b) Select strategic initiatives/ activities (goal, action, indicator).
3. Group initiatives into strategic projects.
4. Implement strategic projects (clear assignment of responsibilities!).
5. Communicate the planned activities and results by means of a reporting scorecard.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming makes it possible to quickly and, with a minimum effort, extend one's horizon to available experience, ideas and opinions. For application in groups and in workshops, this method consists of collecting uncommented ideas or suggestions. Thus it is especially used at the beginning of a meeting or workshop in order to get an overview of the available experience or ideas to be built upon.

Brainstorming sessions are used for solving problems, making product innovations, improving communication patterns, optimizing customer services, scheduling projects, budgeting, etc.

How to go about it?

1. Introduce a brainstorming question both orally and in writing on chart paper. Set time limits.
2. Invite participants to respond with ideas or suggestions, ideally in concise words.
3. Refuse any comment on participants' contributions. Emphasize that all ideas are equally valid.
4. Record each response on cards or chart paper.
5. Group same and related ideas in clusters. Ask «What is missing?»
6. Prioritize and analyze the results. Make participants feel the value added of the brainstorming in a wider context. Decide on further steps.

Briefing and Debriefing

Briefings are used to update consultants and other staff with newest contextual information, debriefings to inform decision makers about specific situations, findings of evaluations or studies and respective recommendations. The briefing note is a key for every form of briefing, be it oral or written, face to face or distant.

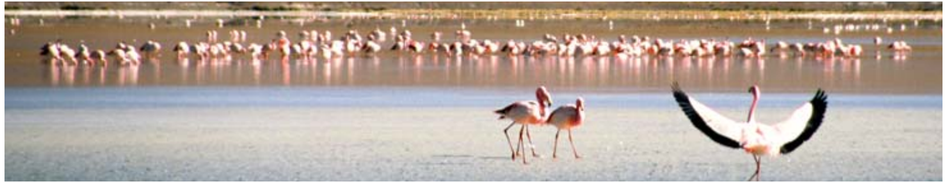
It should be:

- **short**: one or two pages;
- **concise**: use few meaningful words;
- **clear**: keep it simple and to the point; always keep your reader firmly in mind;
- **reliable**: the information in a briefing note must be accurate, sound and dependable;
- **readable**: use plain language and design your briefing note for maximum readability.

Structure of a Briefing Note

A briefing note includes the **purpose**, the **summary of the facts**, and the **conclusion**. Current sections of a briefing are:

- **Issue**: A concise statement of the purpose, proposal or problem.
- **Background**: The details the reader needs in order to understand what follows.
- **Current Status**: Description of who is involved, what is happening now, etc.
- **Key Considerations**: A summary of important facts and considerations.
- **Options**: Including the pros and cons of each, or what will happen next.
- **Conclusion and/or Recommendations**: Clear, direct and substantiated by the facts put forward.



Collegial Coaching

Collegial Coaching is a professional development method aiming at increasing collegiality and improving performance. There are five main functions:

Companionship: Talk about success and failure with a new approach.

Feedback: Give each other objective, non-evaluative feedback.

Analysis: Help each other apply a new approach or method.

Adaptation: Work together to fit an approach to the special needs of an assignment.

Support: Provide needed support.

Steps in a Collegial Coaching

1. Define roles: (A) Requesting person and (B) 3-5 coaches, one acting as a facilitator (3′).
2. A exposes his or her own situation and formulates the core question for the coaching (5′).
3. Coaches (B) ask questions of understanding; A provides answers (5′).
4. Coaches (B) discuss among themselves about A’s case and about the way he presented it. They share own experience of similar situations and challenges. A just listens, sitting a bit off the group (20′).
5. A reacts on the discussion of the coaches (5′). If needed, steps 2 to 4 are repeated with a new core question (30′ more are required).
6. A declares the next steps he will make (5′).

Community of Practice (CoP)

Six essential aspects of a successful CoP

- Strong **community**: active members with lively interest. Member pool is often fluctuating.
- Clear, well-defined **domain**: specific thematic orientation, relevant and meaningful for all members.
- A CoP is based on and **linked to individual practice** of its members.
- Personal **motivation**: members give priority to CoP.
- **Mandate**: organizations are interested in concrete outcomes and allot time and resources to the members.
- **Informal structure**: going beyond organizational structures; linking up units within and/or between the organizations.

Important

- Ensure that key-stakeholders are active members; a balance of giving and taking.
- Strive for most practical and tangible outputs/outcomes; disseminate them widely.
- Carefully select how to «be connected» – balance face to face meetings with other means of communication.
- Combine informality with a basic set of rules for communication and collaboration.
- Ensure ownership within – look well after the roles of manager, expert, facilitator.
- Adjust to changes in the environment.

Exit Interviews

Exit interviews have evolved from feedback interviews with employees leaving the organisation to a knowledge management tool, as a way of capturing knowledge from leavers. Rather than simply capturing superficial information, the interview also aims to capture knowledge about what it takes to do the job. Done correctly, exit interviews can be a win-win situation for both the organisation and the leaver. The organisation gets to retain a portion of the leaver's knowledge and make it available to others, while the leavers get to articulate their unique contributions to the organisation and to 'leave their mark'. Exit interviews are relatively quick and inexpensive. In a knowledge-focused exit interview, a face-to-face meeting is needed.

How to go about it?

1. Start early. Plan the exit handover with replacing staff.
2. Identify persons that might benefit from the captured knowledge. Check their interest.
3. Make sure explicit knowledge documented throughout the whole working period is accessible. Check for relevant additional aspects to be captured now.
4. For implicit knowledge, review the key tasks of the person leaving. Ask about how to go about those tasks and the needed knowledge.
5. Ask for a 'walk through' to identify success stories and success factors, problems and pitfalls.
6. Identify knowledge sources (persons, networks).

The best exit interview happens during an overlap between the leaving and the replacing person.

Experience Capitalization

In an experience capitalization, key stakeholders transform individual and institutional experience and knowledge into capital that can be used in the future. Experience capitalization is future oriented and aims at a change in collective institutional practice. Its focus may be on strategic orientation, basic concepts, or operational activities. Small experience capitalizations can be done in hours or days; more complex ones may last weeks or even months.

Experience capitalization is made up of learning processes that prepare change. Its **output** is lessons learnt, and good practices; its **outcome** is induced changes; a change in practice fulfils its **purpose**.

How to go about it?

There is no standard procedure for experience capitalization. Precise aims, clear questions and a deliberate openness to change are prerequisites for useful results that are easy to put into practice.

The usual phases in an experience capitalization are:

1. **Needs assessment:** Aims, benefits, readiness for change, etc.
2. **Planning:** Aims in detail, fields of observation, process, duration, roles, resources, instruments, etc.
3. **Implementation:** Choice of stakeholders (ownership), process management, documents, synthesis, validation of outputs, etc.
4. **Practice change:** Decisions, planning and monitoring of the changed practice, impact analysis, etc.

Facilitation

Facilitation is the art of guiding the discussion process in a group. The facilitator is responsible for the planning and implementation of an appropriate process; the concerned group is responsible for the content by contributing expertise. Facilitation aims at being economical (goal oriented and time efficient) and at ensuring the well-being of all involved participants (giving room to all voices in a group, establishing an atmosphere of listening to each other, and striving for decisions that are supported and owned by all).
Conditions for successful facilitation are: openness and sharing, benefits for all, and respect for the facilitator based on his / her competence, neutrality, independence and credibility.

What is most important?

1. Negotiate your mandate with the owner of the event. First get clarity about the expected results, and then choose the appropriate methods.

2. Successful facilitation begins with preparation. Make sure, the programme meets the expectations of the owner and the concerned group.

3. Limit yourself to what is feasible. If needed, re-negotiate your mandate.

4. At the start of every event, make a clear agreement with the participants (objective, programme, time frame, roles, and procedure).

5. Stick to your role (process manager) and respect the role of the participants (experts of content).

Good Practice

The essence of identifying and sharing good practices is to learn from others and to re-use knowledge. The biggest benefit consists in well developed processes based on accumulated experience. Most good practice programmes combine two key elements: explicit knowledge such as a good practices database (connecting people with information), and methods for sharing tacit knowledge such as communities of practice (connecting people with people).

How to go about it?

1. Identify users' requirements.
2. Identify good practices worth being shared.
3. Document good practices (title and short abstract, profile of the good practice, context, description of processes and steps, lessons learned, and links to resources and key people).
4. Validate good practices with convincing results in a new context.
5. Disseminate and apply good practices.
6. Develop a supporting infrastructure.

Knowledge Fair

Knowledge fair is an event designed to showcase information in a large amount. Visitors can focus specifically on what they are interested in learning. They can interact directly with the presenters, getting immediate answers to their specific questions. Knowledge fairs also provide opportunities to draw attention to best practices and appreciate employee and team achievements.

How to go about it?

1. Get top level support and publicize the fair widely.
2. Put the fair where there is a lot of foot traffic.
3. Get common displays for booths.
4. Be realistic about how much time it takes for communities to prepare and display.
5. Don't plan in too much detail for the actual booths – communities can self-organize within a common framework.
6. Don't be too serious – a fair can be fun!

Knowledge Map

A knowledge map is a tool for presenting what knowledge resides where (e.g. people, media, organizational units or sources of knowledge outside the organisation) and for demonstrating the patterns of knowledge flow (access, distribution, learning). Its principal purpose and clearest benefit is to show people in an organization or within a network/supply chain very fast where to go when they need expertise. It also helps to understand what knowledge is essential or at risk to be lost and thus needs to be rescued or «secured». The most common way of presenting a knowledge map is a simple graph with typically 60 to 100 nodes representing knowledge repositories/ sources and connections representing the flow of knowledge (physical or mental).

How to go about it?

1. In a series of interviews ask people to provide information about the structure of knowledge in the concerned domain (and its interlinkages)

2. Let them rate the importance for the company, the difficulty to replace it, whether it is acquired mainly from study or practice and the proportion of staff in the knowledge area who would also know about it.

3. Plot the results on a knowledge map.

4. Analyze the knowledge map and integrate the results in a knowledge management strategy, keeping in mind that a knowledge map is a momentary snapshot and might change

Knowledge Network

A Knowledge Network consists of a group of people who provide each other with and share implicit and explicit knowledge and skills and develop them further. This happens through different channels and kinds of contacts: specific one to one interactions (E-mail, Phone, Skype, conferences) or unspecific interactions amongst a larger group (forum discussions, documents, profiles and ratings, newsletters). However, any knowledge network first and foremost functions based on personal contacts that are carefully fostered. A Knowledge Network is not only about exchange amongst colleagues but also about access to a maximum spectrum of knowledge(bearers) and skills for all eventualities.

Important:

- Informal participation and organization, no hierarchic structures,
- the larger a network, the more important a motivated facilitator who stimulates and accompanies activities striving for active interactions and involvement of all,
- a minimal budget that allows to conduct the above mentioned activities and facilitation in a professional way,
- integrate and make use of already existing networks as best as possible,
- in order to be useful for poor and disadvantaged people, special measures are needed to integrate them.

Lessons Learnt

The formulation of lessons is the collection, validation, consolidation and finally documentation of experiences, developments, hints, mistakes and risks found during a project. Drawing lessons makes sense at the end of any project, activity and work phase. Doing so not only gives credit to the efforts made it also leads to a valuable selection of information that can be useful in the planning and preparation of new endeavours. Lessons are learnt first and foremost at an individual level. In a team these (often diametrically different) individual lessons can be consolidated into lessons learnt of the team. Likewise lessons learnt of various teams can be consolidated and made useful for the whole organization.

How to go about it?

- Clarify a) for what area lessons are to be learnt, and b) who has an interest in these lessons.
- Delineate the system boundaries (project, area of activity, action-learning).
- Formulate corresponding guiding questions.
- Collect (individual) answers to these questions and any other spontaneous idea.
- Consolidate individual lessons into shared lessons (team, organization).
- Describe the lessons learnt (and the surrounding setting) in an attractive and well-structured way.
- Make lessons learnt accessible to all interested.

Mentoring

The mentor is an experienced person who is able, willing and available to teach, train or coach a person with less knowledge in a specific area – regardless of age, gender, or expertise in other unrelated areas. The mother of four children may be a mentor to young parents, the young computer champion to a senior staff, and the senior expert to the young professional. Mentoring aims at (1) skills development, (2) fostering the understanding of the organisation and its culture, and (3) career development. Beside this traditional mentoring (with fixed roles), peer mentoring (with interchanging roles) and team mentoring (with a network structure) are practised, the latter two having common features with other methods (peer assist / peer review).

How to go about it?

Reflect on own past experiences as a mentor or disciple (beneficiary). What has been a great experience? What made it successful? Check the mentoring concept (as a part of the knowledge management) of your organisation: What are accepted standards?

1. Determine the goals of the mentoring process. Define the beneficiary's expectations and preferred learning styles, and reveal the mentor's concept.
2. Choose the right mentor. Experience, knowledge and skills are one thing – a fine relationship between mentor and beneficiary the other. Your boss might not be the best mentor for you.
3. Develop a mentoring plan. Include moments for emergencies.
4. Define objectives for each meeting. Focus on the disciple's situation and questions, not on the mentor's experience.
5. Give up the mentoring when you feel strong enough.

Open Space

Open Space is a self-organizing practice that allows all kinds of people in any kind of organization to create inspired meetings and events. It is known to kindle enormous energies and to bring forth fast and well-documented results. Participants of an open space event create and manage their own agenda of parallel working sessions around a central theme of strategic importance. By inviting people to take responsibility for what they care about it releases the inherent creativity and leadership in people, establishes a marketplace of inquiry, reflection and learning bringing out the best in both individuals and the whole group. Open Space is useful to work with 5 to 1000 people, in events of two hours to several days. It is best when the work to be done is complex, people and ideas involved are diverse, the passion for resolution of conflicts are high, and time is very limited.

How to go about it?

1. Select a statement/question that frames the higher purpose and widest context for discussion.
2. Invite all stakeholders and/or who you feel should be part of it.
3. Prepare the workplace: a free space and writing materials (noting down ideas), a blank agenda wall (posting of issues and ideas for discussion or work) and a news wall (reporting back from sub-groups).
4. Explain theme and process of the event and invite people to write down what is important and of meaning to them (form: topic, own name, time, space for meeting).
5. Open the marketplace – «offers» are put on the agenda wall. People sign up and work independently (incl. reporting back to the news wall).
6. Closing round to collect and share highlights.
7. Mail report (collection of sub-group reports) to all.

Peer Assist

Peer Assist is the most economic way of designing a project based on others' experience and knowledge and thus avoiding errors and mistakes. A work team starting up a new project or task – the hosts – call on another team having acquired experience in the respective field of activity. Peer assist allows the requesting team to gain input and insights from people outside the team, and thus, reusing existing knowledge and experience rather than having to reinvent the wheel. It is worth using a peer assist when a team is facing a challenge, where the knowledge and experience of others will really help, and when the potential benefits outweigh the costs of travel.

Steps in a Peer Assist?

1. The host team clarifies the purpose and invites an experienced team (3 to 8 people).
2. Allow time for socializing and create a good climate.
3. The host team explains its project, needs and the expected outcome.
4. The visiting team further explores the situation and gives feedback to what they heard.
5. The visiting team identifies options to solve the problem. The host team listens carefully.
6. The visiting team presents their final feedback and (even unexpected) conclusion.
7. The host team commits to actions and to keeping the visiting team updated.
8. Together, they identify lessons learnt.

Story Telling

Story telling is used in organisations as a communication tool to share knowledge with inspiration. The language used is authentic (experience, not fact oriented); it is the narrative form that most people find interesting and attractive.
Story telling has of course existed for thousands of years as a means of exchanging information and generating understanding. However, as a deliberate tool for sharing knowledge within organisations it is quite recent but growing very rapidly, to the extent that it is becoming a favoured technique among an increasing number of management consultants.

How to go about it as a storyteller?

1. Be clear about the key message of your story.

2. Build your story on an own experience. Note key-words. What is the lesson learned?

3. Warm up. Announce to the public that you are going to tell a story. Invite the public to listen closely, to be receptive and comprehending, and to ask questions only at the end.

4. Tell your story. Build an atmosphere of curiosity. Use a dramatic voice. Observe your listeners.

5. If indicated, relate your story to the topic discussed.

SWOT

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats of a project. It means monitoring the internal and external factors of the project with the aim of getting a clear understanding of what is going on in the project and the surrounding context. It also enables participants to take a breath, make a judgment and share their visions on the four aspects mentioned above in order to enrich the common perception.

How to go about it?

1. Make sure that the objectives pursued are clear to all.
2. Draw the SWOT grid (past ↔ future; positive ↔ negative).
3. Fill the SWOT grid according to this order :
   a. Strengths / Success
   b. Weaknesses / Failure
   c. Opportunities
   d. Threats.
4. Ensure that all experiences are taken seriously.
5. Have the individual actors comment on their contributions and clarify questions of understanding.
6. Record the common view first and discuss contradictory opinions later.
7. Follow-up: Transfer the results into a planning process.

Visualization

Visualization is a way to make presentations and discussions more efficient and effective. The spoken word is supported by a visual representation (text, pictures, graphics, objects, etc.). Current means are beamer or transparencies for presentations, and charts or cards for recording discussions.

Visualization …
- puts the focus on the point under discussion;
- makes the content easier to remember;
- forces the speaker to prepare in advance and to use a precise wording and structure;
- reduces emotional implications in a heated discussion;
- serves as documentation by recording statements, ideas, results and to-do lists.

Rules of visualization

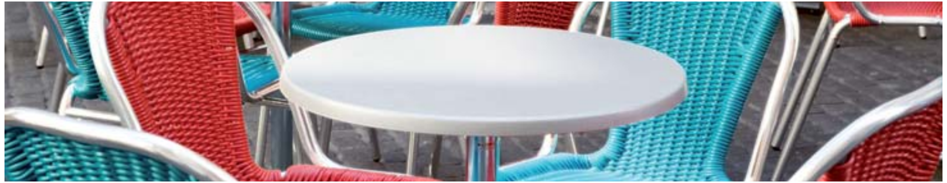
Write legibly! Check font size, density, contrast; block lettering, distance between letters and words.

Use colours restrictively! Use white or light coloured chart paper and pastel coloured pin-board cards. Use black markers for general text and colours for decoration.

Let posters speak for themselves! Put a meaningful title on top or in the centre. Structure your poster to guide the eye. Be aware of the proverb: «If the eye is not attracted, the feet will pass by.»

Use a simple language. Avoid abbreviations.

Install technical means before the meeting! Check if they are running properly. Verify the legibility of the visualization.



World Café

In the World Café, small groups seated around café tables discuss a theme that matters in two to three rounds. The World Café format is flexible and adapts to foster collaborative dialogue. Clarify the **purpose**! Pay attention early to the reason you are bringing people together. If it is not important, don't do it! Create a **hospitable space** from the invitation to the physical set-up of the World Café. Explore **questions that matter** to the participants!

A World Café may only explore a single question, or several questions in progressive steps. Encourage everyone's contribution, from actively contributing ideas and perspectives to active listening. The opportunity to move between tables in several rounds connects **diverse perspectives**. A final plenary discussion helps to sum up and find conclusions.

How to go about it?

1. Seat four or five people at small Café-style tables or in conversation clusters.
2. Set up progressive (usually three) rounds of conversation of approximately 20 – 30 minutes each.
3. Discuss questions or issues that genuinely matter to the community engaged.
4. Encourage participants to write and draw key ideas on their tablecloths (prepare by covering tables with paper and leave markers).
5. Upon completing the initial round of conversation, ask one person to remain at the table as the «host» while the others move to other tables carrying key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations («cross-pollination»).
6. Ask the table hosts to briefly share the main ideas of the previous conversation at the start of the next round.
7. After several rounds of conversation, initiate a plenary discussion and strive for common answers, patterns and possibilities for action.

Yellow Pages

An organisational «yellow pages» is a tool to help people find others within their organisation, who have the knowledge and expertise they need for a particular task or project. It is like a staff directory including details about knowledge, skills, experience and interests. The main benefit results from a multitude of simple ten-minute conversations in which people ask each other for a quick word of advice or a steer in the right direction.

How to go about it?

1. Define the purpose of the yellow pages.
2. Create ownership with the people.
3. Consider formal and informal information.
4. Include name, job title, team, job description, current projects, professional qualifications, CV, areas of knowledge and expertise, areas of interest, key contacts (internal and external), membership of knowledge networks or CoPs.
5. Assure easy handling of entering and searching information.
6. Keep it up-to-date.
7. Encourage its use.

Methods for Knowledge Management and their Specific Suitability							
After Action Review		T					R
Balanced Scorecard			O			A	
Brainstorming		T			P	A	R
Briefing and Debriefing	I				P	A	R
Collegial Coaching	I	T			P		
Community of Practice (CoP)		T	O			A	
Exit Interviews	I	T	O				R
Experience Capitalization			O				R
Facilitation		T				A	
Good Practice		T	O			A	R
Knowledge Fair			O		P	A	
Knowledge Map	I	T	O		P	A	
Knowledge Network	I	T	O		P	A	
Lesson Learnt	I	T	O				R
Mentoring	I		O		P	A	
Open Space		T	O		P	A	
Peer Assist / Peer Review		T	O		P	A	R
Story Telling		T	O			A	R
SWOT		T			P	A	R
Visualisation		T			P	A	
World Café			O		P	A	
Yellow Page	I	T	O		P	A	R

I = Individual	T = Team	O = Organisation
P = Preparation	A = Action	R = Reflection

Notes: