

WHAT IS THE POOP™ IN YOUR ORGANISATION

AND POLAR BEARS AND PENGUINS

Both polar bears and penguins produce plenty of poop, and poop is one of those topics that makes everyone uncomfortable. It's messy and smelly but ubiquitous nonetheless. In the exploration and engagement phase, you will uncover your fair share of POOP™, which for the sake of our discussion stands for four things: 1. **Preconceived Ideas** 2. **Obstacles** 3. **Obsessions** and 4. **Prejudices**.

Preconceived Ideas

All of us bring preconceived ideas to work with us, and these tend to vary greatly by culture. Preconceived ideas are not wrong in and of themselves. The problem comes when we fail to recognise and critically examine them.

Preconceived ideas often cover the grey areas of behaviour such as the way we demonstrate courtesy and respect. Polar bears may consider it rude if you fail to bow to a new acquaintance, but penguins may be comfortable kissing someone on the cheek when they first meet. Part of exploring and engaging is uncovering these preconceived ideas and determining where they may be causing unnecessary conflict and polarity. Take a few quiet moments alone and ask **yourself** the following questions to become aware of your preconceived ideas:

1. What's the image that you hold of this organisation?

2. How do others see the organisation's capabilities?

3. What other ideas, thoughts and feelings do you have about this organisation?

4. What's the image you hold of this team?

5. How do you see their capabilities?

6. What other ideas, thoughts and feelings do you have about this team/organisation?

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Obstacles

There are all kinds of obstacles that you may uncover when you begin exploring your organisation. The obstacles in POOP™, however, are the personal challenges that prevent individuals from doing their jobs well and reaching their goals. These can include everything from the attitude they bring to work to any challenges they may face involving fear, anxiety or even depression. Other personal obstacles could include skill or educational deficiencies or other professional needs. Begin cataloguing the obstacles you uncover so that you can strategise how to help individuals overcome them. Take a few quiet moments alone and ask **yourself** the following questions to become aware of your obstacles:

1. What challenges are getting in the way of people doing their jobs well?

2. What are some of the fears in the organisation?

3. What's not being said?

4. What concerns you the most about...?

5. What is holding your organisation back?

6. What are some of the barriers?

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Obsessions

Everyone has different preferences when it comes to their workplace environment. These can include simple things like the temperature in the office, cleanliness of workspaces and common areas, as well as more complicated things, such as how frequently individuals are expected to check in with management on various projects or assignments. Different people have different levels of comfort regarding certain kinds of deadlines, and they react differently when there are changes to a particular project or protocol.

An inclination or a preference becomes an obsession when the person in question is unable to bend on the issue when circumstances require it. Diverse organisations need a certain degree of flexibility from everyone if they are to flourish. Take careful note of any obsessions you uncover during the exploration phase, so that they can be handled directly and sensitively. Take a few quiet moments alone and ask **yourself** the following questions to become aware of your obsessions:

1. What are you hanging onto?

2. What are you intolerant to?

3. What are you not prepared to let go of?

4. If you could wipe the slate clean what would you do?

5. What's really important for you right now?

6. What's important about that?

7. What are the drivers behind that?

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Prejudices

All human beings bring prejudices to the table. These may include assumptions about management, co-workers and even the organisation itself. Most people have been repeatedly told that prejudice is wrong, whether in school or in a business setting. Unfortunately, this has led many to believe they must deny having any prejudices at all, rather than admitting them and examining them critically. Do your best to create a non-judgmental, comfortable space where people can admit their prejudices on their own.

Take a few quiet moments alone and ask **yourself** the following questions to become aware of your prejudices:

1. What have you made up about people on your team?

2. What judgement have you formulated?

3. What are the beliefs around this?

4. What are you tolerating?

The best way to get rid of POOP™ is for each individual to learn to dispose of it properly in the first place! Let us remind you the productive reaction to POOP™ in an organisation is not panic, but genuine curiosity to awaken a hunger for something better—that's what the exploration is all about.