

# Focusing the business case and making use of teamwork – key issues in consulting networks and collaborations

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Research programme “Organization Development in Networks and Collaborations”, iff OD and group dynamics (Ralph Grossmann, Hubert Lobnig, Klaus Scala, Michael Stadlober)

## CONSULTING NETWORKS

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- consulting of networks and collaborations is different to single organizational settings
- connected organizations or coupled systems
- each of them existing mostly independent from each other and each is an organization on it's own
- collaborating systems emerge in a collective process, driven by the partnering organizations who decided to join forces to achieve something special
- structures, processes and management systems are rather fragile or even temporary provide a variety of potential entry points for consultants

## WHERE CONSULTANTS TYPICALLY ARE APPOINTED

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Phase/Subject of the cooperation	Consultancy support (exemplary)
Start/Conceptualising and system building	Due diligence for the cooperation, structuring the network formation, convening the partners, developing basic rules and division of duties, establishing control systems, helping stakeholders defining their role
Defining the goal and visioning the future	Developing strategy and future plans
Transitions, difficulties, and conflicts	Dealing with demands for re-structuring, taking critical inventory, providing conflict management and mediation,
Re-dimensioning /Re-structuring	Providing evaluations, carrying out change management processes
Starting up work teams	Team development and coaching, providing project management

## 4 KEY ISSUES IN CONSULTING NETWORKS

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1. Who is the client?
  - a considerable complexity of the client system
  - usually structured as multi-stakeholder approach
2. The need to define organization:
  - structures for steering
  - processes for decision making
  - formats for transorganizational working processes
  - formation of professional roles
3. The need to embed a consulting project:
  - within a more loosely structured system as a whole
  - including issues like defining the scope of the consulting approach, setting time frames and fees
4. Increasing demand to combine process oriented consultancy and more directive types of counselling

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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- “clinical perspective on fieldwork” ( Ed Schein 1988): individual who is primarily engaged to help is at the same time researcher
- allows for deep insights into many aspects of organizational dynamics
- scientific validation through intersubjectivity of conclusions, exposure to colleagues and in the internal consistency of the set of assumptions with all observations available
- to add scientific evidence:
  - supervision throughout the process
  - feedback sessions during the consulting process
  - continuous reflections with colleagues and
  - self-reflection

## THE GROSSMANN-LOBNIG MODEL FOR NETWORKS AND COLLABORATIONS

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*(Grossmann & Lobnig 2009, 69)*

## SUCCESS FACTOR: PREPARING THE BUSINESS CASE

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- collaborative ventures face the challenge to elaborate a business case, which is attractive enough for the partners involved as well as for the stakeholders
- thus create the required energy to start / continue

### **Business case:**

- a convincing business case is a prerequisite for attractive collaborations
- it results not from a working process
- key decision makers within organizations define aims or a strategy to partner and look whether the strategies are comparable with those of others
- at best an iterative process is set up where the definition of the business case is a result of an intense discussion and learning process of the partners involved
- the work on the business case helps to clarify explicit concerns as well as implicit assumptions and the final decision of "our business case"  
(expressed in a signed document, a presentation, a logo ....)

## CASE STUDY 1

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### The Vienna Network for Workplace Health Promotion: consulting interventions to define the business case

2006:   
WIENER GEBIETSKRANKENKASSE

Health Insurance Vienna Region (Wiener Gebietskrankenkasse, WGKK) decided to set up a network involving all insurance agencies and regional social partners in Vienna. The network would have to assume the form of a collaborative effort and not a project only of WGKK.

Invitation letter: a letter to the leaders of the health care insurances and social partners in Vienna was sent by the CEO of WGKK to invite the partners to participate in the network formation:

-request to every organization to choose a delegate (task was described)

-2 Patterns of delegates:

a) Managers: high decision making power, low professional involvement

b) Experts: high professional competence but limited decision

making power

## INTERVIEWS WITH THE PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS /1

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### **Consultant visited:**

- decision makers , key persons, nominated delegates from each participating organization

### **The interviews included:**

- to identify the institutions´ internal aims, targets, potentials and resources upon entering the network
- the delegates´ roles were discussed
- they were prepared to properly represent their organization

### **The visits also included advice on:**

- how to internally organize their delegation in the network
- how to prepare for the coming collaborative work

### **They turned out to be helpful also for the partners:**

- as they were allowed to talk about their ideas and concerns with somebody involved but without particular interests or stakes

## INTERVIEWS WITH THE PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS /2

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### **The interviews made it possible for the consultant to:**

- understand the players' interests
- optimize their representation in the network
- familiarize the delegates with the network organizing plan
- prepare a diagnose on preconditions and specific challenges the collaborative ventures faces at the start as feedback for the partners and
- to properly develop a workshop design for the kick-off workshop.

## FIRST WORKSHOP

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Participants: delegates from all 11 organizations (20 persons)

Agenda (1 day):

- introduction of each of the participating organizations (one Flipchart each)
- presentation by Consultant: Results of the interviews along the success's factors for networks (Grossmann-Lobnig model)
- input and discussion: What networks need: strategies, structures, working forms
- formation of two working teams with following topics:
  - a) vision and goals,
  - b) structure and working form of network

Two task forces were set up in teams:

- one group edited a paper on visions and goals
- second group a concept for the organizational design of the network
- both were issued to be discussed at the second workshop

After the Workshop: Feedback to an balancing with the home organizations

## WORKSHOP 2: FINALIZING THE BUSINESS CASE

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### Agenda:

- Feedbacks of delegates from the home organizations
- Completion of the position paper: review-groups identified needs for discussion or change and formulated alternatives, online-work on writing the final version (beamer) in plenary
- Drafting the structures for decision making and the working group on a paper wall (metaplan), moving them around until it did fit:
  - Board of "cooperative conference": named and selected by the plenary
  - "operating forum": operative responsibility for the network (delegates from five organizations, with the most involvement in W.H.P.)
  - Coordinating centre: the Vienna Health Insurance Fund
- Compiling rough format of the work plan throughout 2007
- Definition of projects and responsible teams

### Projects initiated:

- Defining the internal rules and procedures for the two boards
- Establishing public relations and media work, Create logo and design
- Formal signatures of the position paper by top executives of all participating organizations
- Prepare first Conference in Oct. 2007

## EXPERIENCES

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The project utilized processes that seriously considered the individual partners' perspectives on the involvement in a collaborative venture.

The initial phase helped the participating organizations to balance their own interests and the requirements for a successful network development with the transorganizational system

The example shows that networks can gain both stability and progress when:

- a clear step is provided to balance the network and the individual organization
- the consultant is able to form a helping coalition with the client

## SUCCESS FACTOR: MAKING USE OF TEAMWORK

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Teamwork can pull together loosely coupled systems.

Difference between team work in collaborations and “normal organizational settings”:  
In collaborative ventures people involved have to:

- invent the details of their work (content and process) themselves
- there is no formal authority that tells them what to do
- they continually have to (re-)define:
  - their goals, roles and processes and thus generate continuously the sense of organizing
- the patterns that result from these reflective processes create the ‘spirit of collaboration’

When tasks in networks and collaborations become highly interdependent between the partnering organizations a case for teamwork is set

- individuals can work together without to be disturbed too much from differences in roles, hierarchy and culture (“cultural islands”)
- the higher the interdependence of the tasks, the stronger the need for true teamwork and the benefits which derive from applying proper working techniques

## THE CONSULTING PROCESS INTRODUCING TEAMS

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To organize as many important functions and tasks in a way, that they create interdependencies which are the container for cross-functional and cross-organizational teams:

- management and control
- working teams for specific tasks
- trans-organizational process-teams
- planning teams for events

## CASE STUDY 2 FACILITY MANAGEMENT AUSTRIA:



The screenshot shows the website for Facility Management Austria (FMA). The header features the FMA logo and navigation links: ÜBER FM, ÜBER UNS, INTERESSENGEMEINSCHAFTEN, JOBS & KARRIERE, MITGLIEDSCHAFT, NEWS & EVENTS. The main content area includes contact information for FMA Austria, three news articles, and a sidebar with the IFMA logo and the text 'BESUCHEN SIE AUCH...'. The footer contains navigation links and the Publique logo.

**FMA**  
Facility Management Austria

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[office@fma.or.at](mailto:office@fma.or.at)

ÜBER FM ÜBER UNS INTERESSENGEMEINSCHAFTEN JOBS & KARRIERE MITGLIEDSCHAFT NEWS & EVENTS

**KUFSTEINER FM GESPRÄCHE 2010 - CALL FOR PAPERS**  
Mo 25.05.2009 09:20 Uhr

Die Facility Management-Gespräche werden von 27. bis 29. Januar 2010 bereits zum zwölften Mal an der Hochschule Kufstein durchgeführt.

[\[mehr\]](#)

**FM AKTUELL - BETREIBERVERANTWORTUNG AM 9. JUNI 2009**  
Do 07.05.2009 10:43 Uhr

Am 9. Juni um 17.00 Uhr beschäftigt sich FM Aktuell mit dem spannenden und immer aktuellen Thema der Betreiberverantwortung.

[\[mehr\]](#)

**FM RUNDE - NATIONALE UND INTERNATIONALE NORMEN IM FACILITY MANAGEMENT**  
Mo 20.04.2009 10:25 Uhr

Am 6. Mai um 17.00 Uhr findet die nächste FM Runde zum Thema Nationale und Internationale Normen im FM statt.

[\[mehr\]](#)

**BESUCHEN SIE AUCH...**  
**IFMA**  
International Facility Management Association  
Austrian Chapter

NEWSLETTER | LINKS | KONTAKT | IMPRESSUM | SEITE DRUCKEN

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# **FMA:** APPLYING TEAM-WORK TO LEVERAGE THE NETWORK

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As a consultant I was called in to help with a strategy-process that was done by a research team failed.

Idea was to collectively build the strategy mainly by cross-functional teams integrating the different parts of the network in a structured and fast paced way.

## **The design:**

- a series of three meetings to set up the process
- conduct an interim evaluation and feedback
- a final meeting for refining and finalizing the strategic concept

Time frame: 4 months in 2006

Strategy teams were seen as essential: the composition of each team was crucial. The teams were given assignments for the time between the meetings. They were asked to work face-to-face and/or virtually together.

## THE PLANNING WORKSHOP (MAY 2006) /1

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### **A planning workshop was held with:**

- the steering group's spokesperson, the coordinator, the consultant (me)

The working principles agreed upon:

### **1. The process should be built on the existing roles and structures of FMA:**

- Leadership: who takes the initiative?
- Broad participation: what do the managing board and other committees contribute?
- how are the members involved?
- Explore differences : how are the different interests being resolved?

## THE PLANNING WORKSHOP (MAY 2006) /2

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### 2. **As much participation as possible:**

- FMAs success depends on a vital exchange between and commitment of people in many different roles and relationships
- teams could create an essential format for that participation.

### 3. **Stringent coordination:**

This type of process requires a manager who

- coordinates and supports the process
- continuously informs the managing board
- fulfils general management duties
- helps the teams to proceed in an organized and inter-coordinated way

## THE KICK-OFF WORKSHOP (MAY 2006)

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Board members, chairs of working groups and committees were invited (May 2006)

Six topics for the strategy refinement were chosen by individual ratings and subsequent discussion:

- Define content and goals of FMA
- Develop member structure (number and variety) and membership rules
- Identify services (for members)
- Map association's internal structures, processes and rules
- Develop public relations/lobbying strategies
- Develop alliances and partnerships

The instrument of the task force was introduced as format:

- sets cross-sectional teams at the centre of the activities
- defines internal roles to secure connectedness to the overall network

## FMA 'S TASK FORCE MODEL /1

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A mentor chairs each task force to guide the group and keep them on track. Board members could only take on the role of a mentor for one group.

At minimum one other person from the managing board joins the task force

The managing board's spokesperson and the chair invite at least one other person from FMA which is not in an official function to join the task force

All functional branches and initiatives have to be actively involved (meta-perspective).

A minimum of four people work together

The COO helped to coordinate and document the task force's work.

## FMA 'S TASK FORCE MODEL /2

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Task force meetings were held in dispersed settings.

No direct involvement of the consultant but provision of checklist with assignments.

On the content side, the tasks was assigned to the following topics:

- Goal elaboration and clarification,
- Diagnosis of the status quo,
- Developing a need to change the current situation,
- Developing first solutions and suggesting appropriate work methods.

The coordinator helped the groups with sending templates for documentation of actions and results and with "softly looking after them in a caring mode".

## REVIEW MEETING (JUNE 2006)

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### **Main part of the agenda:**

- to test and reflect the results of the six task forces
- examine them in terms of what they could contribute to the future of FMA
- to draft an action plan how the strategic options could be reached, which were commented by other task forces and the board

With those comments equipped the task forces were sent to finalize their conceptual papers and to present them at the general assembly two weeks later.

### **At the end of the meeting I helped the board:**

- to plan the milestones for preparing the general assembly
- to decide upon the central issues to be communicated as the strategy of FMA or to be left as invitations for further clarification and feedback at the convention and later work

## EXPERIENCES

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The FMA consulting process design proved to be quite suitable to this type of network and allowed for a fast paced approach to strategy development:

- in a short period of time, many stakeholders were involved in discussing problems and developing solutions
- hands-on work tools made it possible not only to come up with a strategy proposal in time but also with a committed piece of work where most relevant key persons were actively involved in contributing to the association's future
- the coordinator cared personally about the outcomes, called the members regularly asking them about progress and difficulties. Continuous calls between the consultant and the coordinator (2-3 times a week) helped to align the real progress with the interventions at the consultant part
- a trusting relationship between the consultant, the managing board and specifically the spokesman of the board and the coordinator helped to proceed quickly and with big steps

## CONCLUSIONS /1

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### **When a consultant contracts with networks and collaborations:**

- he faces a different reality to single organizational projects – at least in some instances
- he finds a vacuum in existing structures, processes, strategies and power systems
- this makes the system receptive to consultant's interventions in many ways

## CONCLUSIONS /2

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### **Some principles which seem to specifically fit well to that:**

- trust emerges from good relations between the primary client and the consultant. A real interest and basic knowledge on the content side helps.
- respecting the double reference of the home organization and the collaboration/network is a guiding principle for designing processes and consultants interventions. They are of particular importance in the initial phase.
- networks want to have:
  - a strategy , structures, rules, projects
  - but in my experience in-depth designs will overcharge them and modest approaches will help to create more solid and sustainable results
- Instruments for community building, team work techniques and formats, tools for practically implementing participative structures and cultural islands help to bridge the gap between claims and reality.

## CONCLUSIONS /3

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### Consultants:

- can be influential specifically to networks lacking stable organizational designs or suffering some imbalances of power
- working with networks will have an increased responsibility to contribute to the good (or the great) of the whole collaborating system
- I see them rather to be positioned on the side of the solution and action and on the side of change agents than on the side of introducers of reflective communication