

Training program **Constructor** for the program managers of Nokia Networks

Abstract

148 program managers or their close colleagues participated to this training program during 2002-2006. The goal was to study the organizational culture and learn leadership. The training provided Time To Think, tools for understanding and dialogue with the top management. There were 13 groups of 12-10 participants. As feedback they estimated their return on investment to be average 4.5 / 5.

1. History

The design started in May and the first group started in September.

Conventional lecturing was not considered, because the programs were very diverse in size, organization, maturity, technology and so on. The experiential learning (action learning) approach was chosen.

The design team consisted of an internal coach/owner Ari Tikka, external coach, sponsor and a few other contributors.

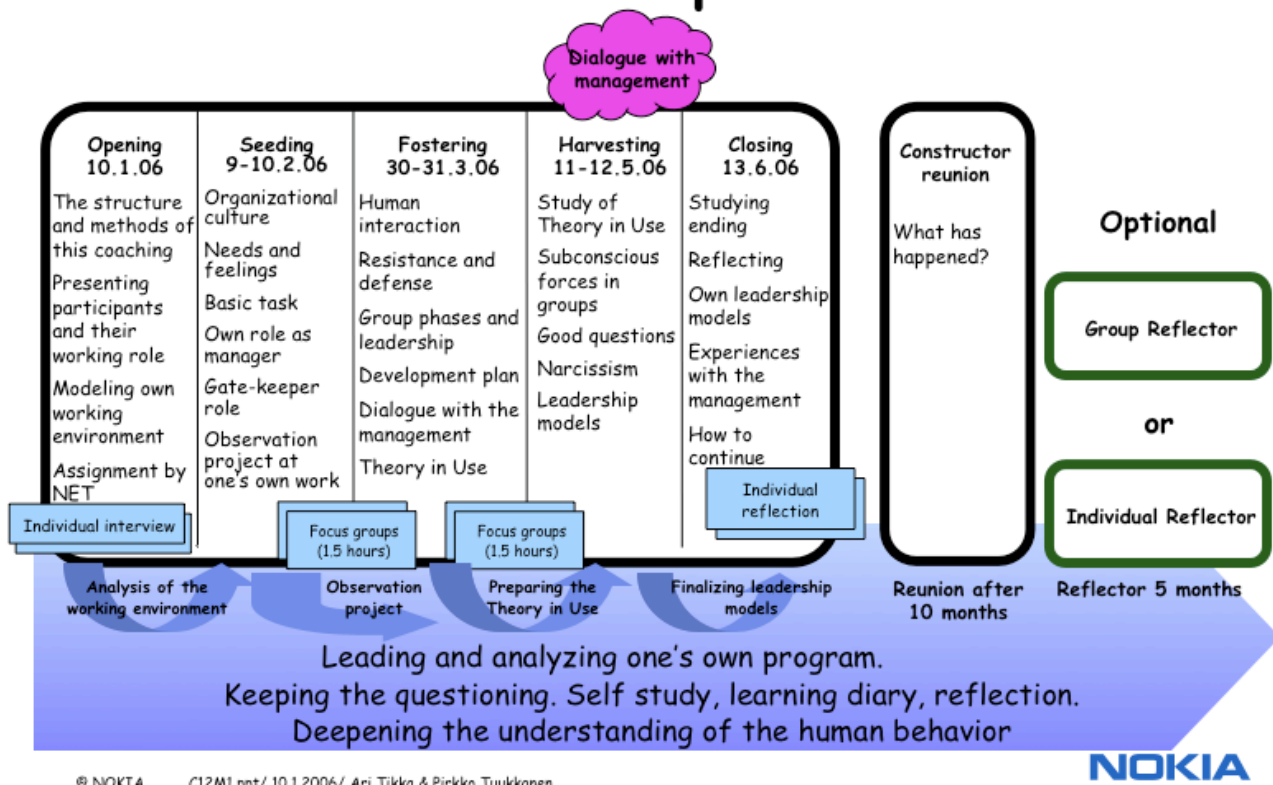
2. The structure

Every group has a pair of coaches with equal roles, an internal and an external. The coaches spend considerable time in reflecting what goes on in the group, analyzing the organizational culture and refining the training. During the program there were two internal coaches, Ari Tikka and Kati Vilkki, and two external coaches, Pirkko Tuukkanen and Soile Aho.

The participants were nominated by the businesses. The internal coach interviewed the nominees to ensure the commitment to the nonstandard approach. The training ended with an individual reflection with both coaches present.

After the basic 1+2+2+2+1 days there was a reunion day after 10 months to reflect longer term experiences. Some participants used the opportunity to continue with extra 4 days of reflective learning in groups.

Constructor Group 12 overview



During the 4 years and 13 groups the themes shifted as the conditions in the organization changed.

3. Coaches experience

The approach works well in a big diverse organization.

The length of Constructor, 1+2+2+2+1 days is short for the group process. Some groups really started at the last day. Trust, reflection skills and restorative effects would greatly benefit from a longer process. A bigger dose would have been needed for some themes. On the other hand, the participants were very busy and longer training would have been difficult to sell.

The background work with sponsors and the organizations of the participants is extremely important.

The pair work between the internal and external coaches is a great opportunity for the coaches, participants, training and organization.

4. Participant feedback

Feedback was collected after every group. A profile study questionnaire was sent to all participants in June 2006. Life is not linear, so we tried to emphasize open feedback.

4.1. The questionnaire a few months after the end of each group

- Value for myself, average 4.5 / 5

- General value of the investment, average 4.2 / 5
- Quality of training, average 4.5 / 5

There was a healthy variation in numerical results, some expectations were not met. Verbal comments after each training were similar as in the following profile study.

4.2. Profile study close to the end of the training program

The main purpose of this questionnaire was to check for long term effects.

The effectiveness in supporting ones own competence development needs was evaluated 4.1 / 5.

Answers to open questions emphasized concrete changes, meaning and understanding. This hints that learning has integrated to daily life.

Some reported a concrete change, for example:

- Changed direction, key trigger in understanding personal interaction difficulties
- I became a change agent, boosted my career and I still love it after 36 months
- Enduring change in own leadership style
- Understanding has made me patient in conflict
- I believe that because of this - I have been more self confident, relaxed, analytical and creative
- I listen and ask what is not talked about
- I take Time To Think
- I manage own feelings
- understanding has improved my change resilience

Some reported perceiving the world in a new way or paying attention to new things:

- Eye opener
- Human aspect is fundamental
- Importance of communication
- Understanding own role/position in the organization
- I see how badly our teams actually perform
- Giving significance to team and people management
- Understanding motivation
- appreciate feelings

Free comments:

Several stated difference from any other training experience: “Expected tools, found understanding and appreciation of the human aspect”

A few experienced participants stated that Constructor was the most significant training ever for them.

The collegial support was significant - “Seeing that others are in similar situations, sharing emotional load, networking, sharing best practices”

The themes were remembered, like “group forming/team building, resistance, needs and feelings”