

How to facilitate when teamwork starts to tear: TalkWise Worksheet

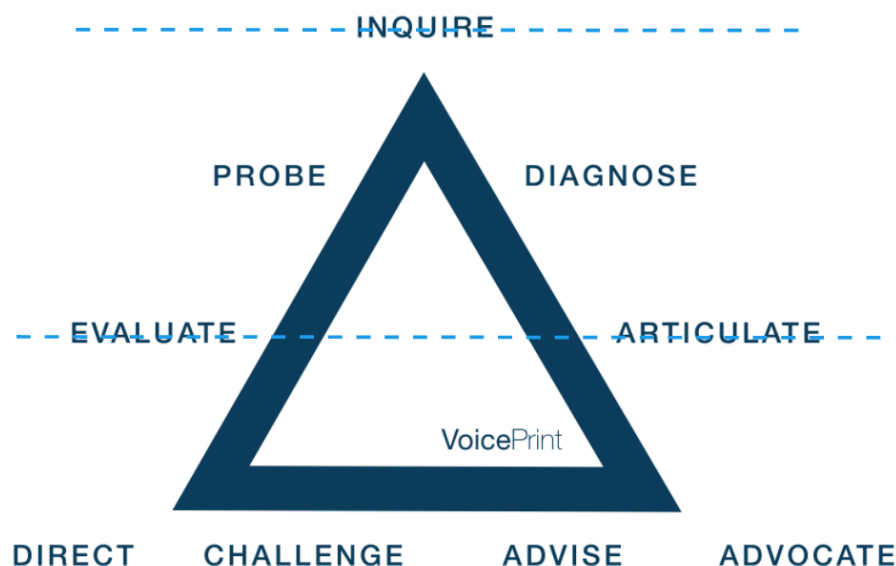
Teamwork: whatever else it might be, it's an issue that is always needing attention. You can usually see, feel or hear whether a group of people is working effectively together. You can certainly feel, see and hear it when they are *not*.

This worksheet is designed to make you aware of three common clues that teamwork is breaking down, and provide you with simple action points to help restore it.

What the evidence tells us

VoicePrint research shows that teamwork very commonly tears along predictable lines. When teams find themselves under pressure, certain voices - three in particular - tend to change significantly.

Look at the VoicePrint map. Teamwork tends to tear along these perforations.



So what happens?

The first casualty is usually the Articulate voice, the voice of exposition and clear, careful explanation. As pressure increases, and patience tends to diminish, use of the Articulate voice reduces with it. The next casualty is the Inquire voice. Under pressure, there is often a shift from Inquire to Diagnose, which while still exploring is no longer rooted in open-mindedness. The third clue that teamwork is tearing comes when the Evaluate voice mutates into its dysfunctional form of subjective criticism.

Review the clues and guidance in the table below, then use the reflection questions to think through a recent situation where teamwork tore and what you could say to get it back on track.

Likely scenario	What you might hear and see	What you can do in response
If Articulate gets lost	Impatience and frustration, increasing tension, competing opinions, prolonged arguing and unresolved disagreements	Reintroduce the Articulate voice by offering a calm, matter-of-fact summary of the situation. Name the shared problem or issue that the team is now facing.
If Inquire moves into Diagnose	Questions become narrower and more closely connected to views that have already been expressed, over-analysis that doesn't move forward OR a rush to premature, insufficiently considered solutions	Reintroduce the Inquire voice. For example by asking ' <i>Before we go any further, is there an unspoken assumption behind our thinking here?</i> '
If Evaluate morphs into Criticise	Weighing up becomes less measured, less deliberate, less structured and less logical. It may become accusatory, dismissive, or one-sided.	Restore the functional version of Evaluate by calling for a careful, systematic, objective weighting up of the case - strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and threats. Agree explicit rather than tacit criteria for the evaluation process.

Reflection questions

Think of a recent occasion where teamwork broke down, then answer the following questions.

- Which of the above scenarios was happening? (Remember, it could well be more than one)

- How did you know? What did you notice?

- What were the consequences of this breakdown?

- What could you have said, to get things back on track? Say it out loud, then make a note of useful phrases that you may need again in future.