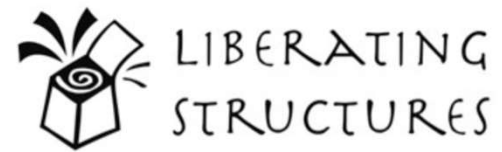


# Liberating Leadership

Employing Liberating Structures  
to Unleash the Collective  
Intelligence of Your  
Organization

Adapted from work created by Keith McCandless &  
Henry Lipmanowicz



# Where We're Going....

- Introduce the concept & case for liberating structures
- Provide an opportunity to practice some examples
- Invite you to consider how you might use LS in your own context



# Big 5 Conventional micro-Structures

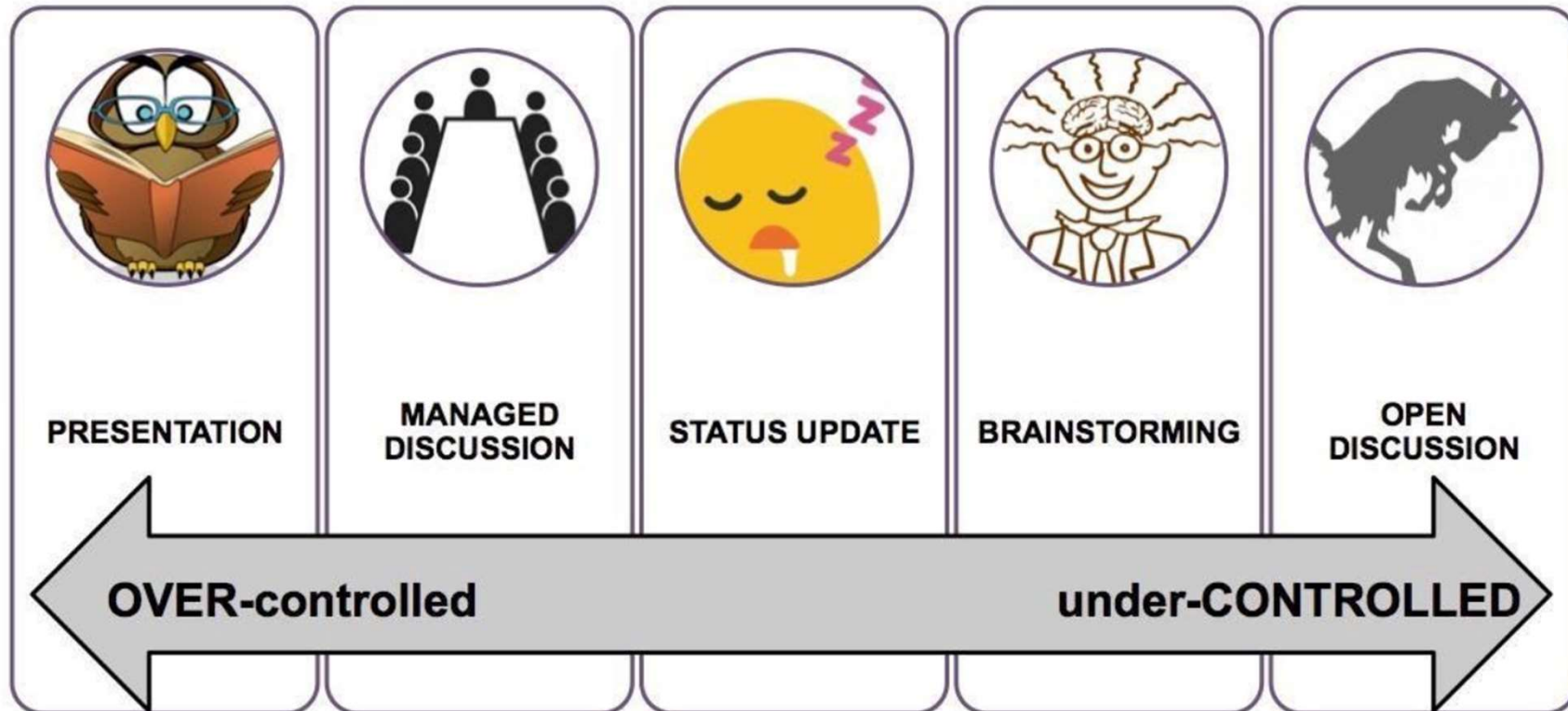


Figure 1: The Big Five Conventional microstructures in common use

From *Liberating Structures: [Change Methods For Everybody Every Day](#)* by Henri Lipmanowicz & Keith McCandless



**HOW THE SPACE IS ARRANGED AND WHAT MATERIALS ARE NEEDED** (ROWS OR U FACING PRESENTER, SCREEN, PROJECTOR AND PPT SLIDES);



**HOW PARTICIPATION IS DISTRIBUTED** (NEARLY 100% OF TOTAL TIME FOR PRESENTER);

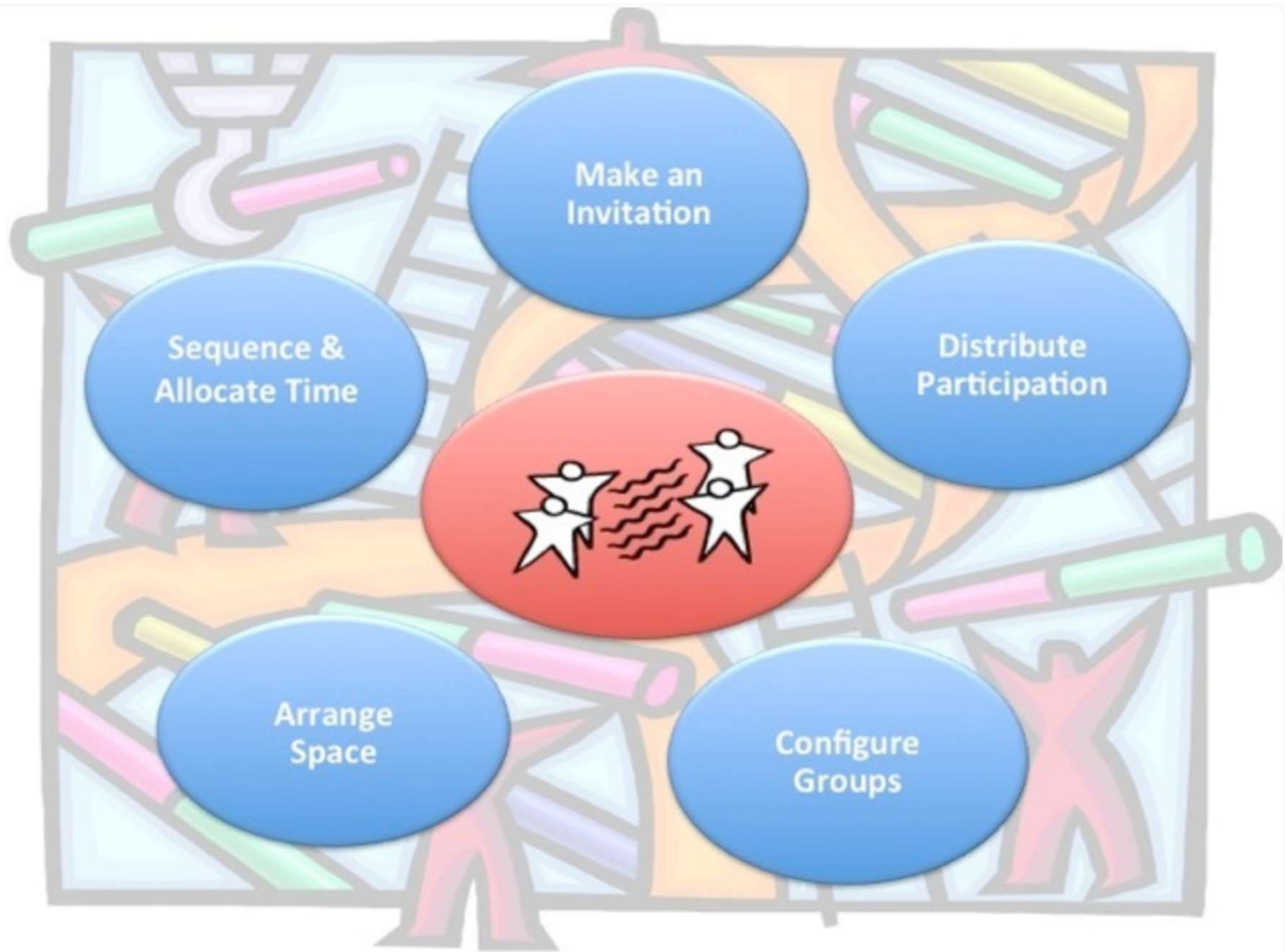


**HOW GROUPS ARE CONFIGURED** (ONE GROUP, ONE PRESENTER); AND,



**A SEQUENCE OF STEPS AND TIME ALLOCATION** (PRESENTATION FOR MOST OF TIME; POSSIBLY Q&A FOR BALANCE OF TIME).



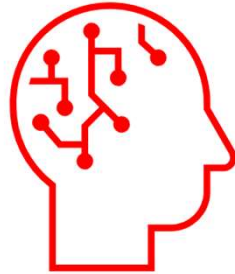


What big challenge do you bring to this session?



What do you hope to get from and give to this community.

Impromptu Networking



Think about a time when you were really engaged in meeting...

What do you remember?

What elements do you remember?

1- 2-4-All

## TRIZ

You are designing a meeting for your organization:

Your mission:

Design a meeting that will spectacularly **FAIL**

**HAVE FUN!**



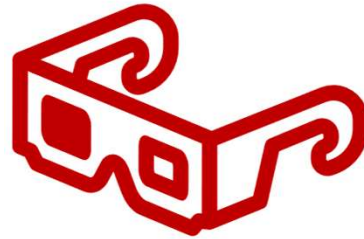


## **15% Solution**

What is your  
15%? Where  
do you have  
discretion and  
freedom to  
ACT?



# Thank You



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# Liberating Principles

What is Possible When Liberating Structures  
Are Part of Everyday Interactions

*How we behave when we decide that we belong together*





# 1. Include and Unleash Everyone

## **Must Do's (start and amplify)**

- Invite everyone touched by a challenge to share possible solutions or invent new approaches together.
- Actively reach across levels, beyond the usual suspects.

## **Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)**

- Appoint a few to design an “elegant solution” and then tell all others to implement it after the fact.
- Confront resistance with hours of PPT presentations. Force buy-in. Separate deciders from doers.



## 2. Never Start Without A Clear Purpose

### **Must Do's (start and amplify)**

- Dig deep for what is important and meaningful to you and to others.
- Take time to include everyone in crafting an unambiguous statement of the deepest need for your work.

### **Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)**

- Maintain ambiguity by using jargon.
- Substitute a safe short-term goal or means-to-an-end for a bold reason to exist or deep need.
- Impose your purpose on others.



### 3. Practice Deep Respect for People and Local Solutions

#### Must Do's (start and amplify)

- Engage people *doing the work* & familiar with the local context.
- Trust and unleash their collective expertise and inventiveness to solve complex challenges.
- Let go of the compulsion to control.

#### Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)

- Import *best practices*, drive *buy-in*, or assume people need more training.
- Privilege experts and computer systems over local people and know-how.



## 4. Build Trust As You Go

### Must Do's (start and amplify)

- Cultivate a trusting group climate where speaking the truth is valued and shared ownership is the goal.
- Sift ideas & make decisions using input from everyone.
- Practice “nothing about me without me.”
- Be a leader and a follower.

### Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)

- Over-help or over-control the work of others.
- Praise and pretend to follow the ideas of colleagues.
- Indirectly, respond to ideas from others with cynicism, ridicule, criticism, or punishment.



## 5. Learn by Failing Forward

### **Must Do's (start and amplify)**

- Debrief every step.
- Make it safe to speak up.
- Discover positive variation.
- Include and unleash clients as you innovate.
- Take small risks quickly, reducing time between iterations.

### **Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)**

- Focus on doing and deciding.
- Avoid difficult conversations and gloss over failures.
- Punish risk-takers when unknowable surprises pop-up.



## 6. Practice Self-Discovery Within A Group

### Must Do's (start and amplify)

- Engage groups to the maximum degree in discovering solutions on their own.
- Increase diversity to spur creativity, broaden potential solutions and enrich peer-to-peer learning.
- Encourage experiments on multiple tracks.

### Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)

- Impose solutions from the top.
- Let experts “educate” and tell people what to do.
- Assume that people resist change no matter what.
- Substitute laminated signs for conversation.
- Exclude front line people from innovating.

# 7. Amplify Freedom AND Responsibility

## Must Do's (start and amplify)

- Specify minimum constraints and let go of over-control.
- Use the power of invitation.
- Privilege fast experiments over playing it safe.
- Track progress rigorously and feed back results to all.
- Invite the frontline to create local performance metrics.
- Celebrate mistakes as sources of progress.

## Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)

- Unleash people without structure such as a clear purpose or minimum specifications.
- Let rules and procedures stifle initiative.
- Ignore the value of people understanding how their work affects one another.
- Keep frontline staff in the dark about performance data.





## 8. Emphasize Possibilities: Believe Before You See

### Must Do's (start and amplify)

- Expose what is working well.
- Focus on what can be accomplished now with the imagination and materials at hand.
- Take the next steps that lead to the edge of creativity and renewal.

### Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)

- Focus on what's wrong. Wait for all the barriers to come down or ideal conditions to emerge.
- Work on changing *the whole system* all at once.



## 9. Invite Creative Destruction To Enable Innovation

### Must Do's (start and amplify)

- Convene conversations about what is keeping people from working on the essence of their work.
- Remove the barriers even when it feels like heresy.
- Make it easy for people to deal with their fears

### Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)

- Avoid or delay stopping the behaviors, practices and policies that are revealed as barriers.
- Assume obstacles don't matter or can't be removed.

# 10. Engage In Seriously-Playful Curiosity

## Must Do's (start and amplify)

- Stir things up – with levity, paradoxical questions, and improv – to spark a deep exploration of current practices and latent innovations.
- Make working together both demanding and inviting.

## Must Not Do's (stop and reduce)

- Keep it simple by deciding in advance what the solutions should be.
- Control all conversations.
- Ask only closed *yes* or *no* questions.
- Make working together feel like drudgery.