Patterns for Collaboration between Companies and Local Communities on Social Issues: Co-facilitating Dialogue Workshops

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We propose an additional set of patterns for Contact-Activity communication processes that a company can use to collaborate with its local community on social issues. The Contact-Activity process starts from building relationships among members who have gathered based on common interests, rather than picking team members based on required functions. People then gather and come up with an "issue in common" for starting a project. For the past five years, this Contact-Activity communication process has been tried and tested in three different places in Japan. We have found that co-facilitating dialogue workshops play an important role when building relationships and finding an "issue in common." Indeed, core ideas have been shared and repeated among the employees of Fuji Xerox in co-facilitated dialogue workshops with local community members. This paper outlines these core ideas (patterns) learned through such a venue. The patterns described in this paper are an extension of our previous work that identified four patterns for co-facilitating dialogue workshops, which constitute one practical way to engender Contact-Activity communication: "Learn from the Field," "Involve Everyone," "Wear the Participants' Shoes," and "Be Content with Remaining a Stagehand."

1. INTRODUCTION

Companies are increasingly learning the practice called Creating Shared Value [Porter 2011], in which they participate in and collaborate with their local community on important issues, specifically to approach and act on social issues. In this study, we propose and outline a Contact-Activity communication process that companies can use to collaborate with local communities on social issues [Takahashi 2015, Kawano 2016]. Contact-Activity is a cyclic communication process consisting of four steps: developing personal relationships, waiting for common challenges and desires to emerge, creating small-scale prototypes, and presenting the results. The first step is a communication process that starts by building relationships and personal interaction among members from the company, local community, and others, whomever is interested, by promoting contact through gathering based on common interests, rather than picking team members based on required functions. In the second step, members identify an "issue in common" for starting a project to work on as a shared activity. Subsequently, in the third step, members are encouraged to create small-scale prototypes to work practically on the "issue in common." At this step, members work in small groups based on the prototype they make. The fourth step involves presenting and sharing the results to current and new members. The members could continue working on the same prototype; at the same time, new members are encouraged to join. Thus, the process can start over from the first step of developing personal relationships. We have learned the importance of starting from personal interaction as we have found that performance of activity toward the issue works best when it stems from the inner motives of each member. By conducting the Contact-Activity cyclic communication process, we believe company and community members can approach and act on social issues together.

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Fuji Xerox has undertaken research in the last five years to demonstrate this communication process. This research started with a 10-person team that went to Tohoku, Japan, to find ways to build better communication within a selected community. The team learned and documented 13 core ideas (patterns) from Fuji Xerox's reaching out to the community in Tohoku [Mizutani 2015].

In 2015, the Contact-Activity communication process was tried and tested in two additional places in Japan. We have found that co-facilitating dialogue workshops play an important role in the first two steps of the Contact-Activity communication process, namely, building relationships and finding an "issue in common." Four core ideas were shared and practiced many times between members of Fuji Xerox and the local community during the facilitation of the dialog workshop. This paper outlines these four core ideas (patterns), which extend our previous work on patterns aimed at co-facilitating dialogue workshop to facilitate Contact-Activity communication. The four patterns presented in this paper are "Learn from the Field," "Involve Everyone," "Wear the Participants' Shoes," and "Be Content with Remaining a Stagehand."

In dialogue workshops, we use methods for the whole system approach, such as World Café, Open Space Technology, and Future Search. The whole system approach is a practical method for all participants to make decisions and take actions collectively for achieving profound changes. Studies in organization development have indicated that the whole system approach enables all participants to consider and solve complex issues. A case study on World Café indicated that the more active the quantitative dialogue process is, the more positively the participants feel about the quality of the dialogue process and the more actions the participants take [Takahashi 2014]. Thus, to approach social issues that are complex and involve both community and company members, we have applied and prototyped dialogue sessions referring to the whole system approach.

This paper will present an overview and the details of all four patterns of a co-facilitating dialogue workshop process. We follow the pattern-writing format of the Fearless Change Patterns [Manns 2015], which is typically applied to descriptions of creative human action.

2. OVERVIEW OF CO-FACILITATING DIALOGUE WORKSHOP PROCESS PATTERNS

We designed the Co-Facilitating Dialogue Workshop patterns based on our experience of the communication process. These patterns are based on actual experiences and cases. As such, our outcomes target company employees.

Figure 1 is a pattern map outlining our four patterns along with our process for co-facilitating dialogue workshops with local community members. Our process consists of four phases. Each pattern is the core idea that helps a company employee assigned to co-facilitate a dialogue session at each phase.

Co-facilitating dialogue workshop			
Phase 1 Going in	**Phase 2** Co-Design	**Phase 3** Co-Make	**Phase 4** Co-Host
Learn from the Field	Involve Everyone	Wear the Participants' Shoes	Be Content with Remaining a Stagehand
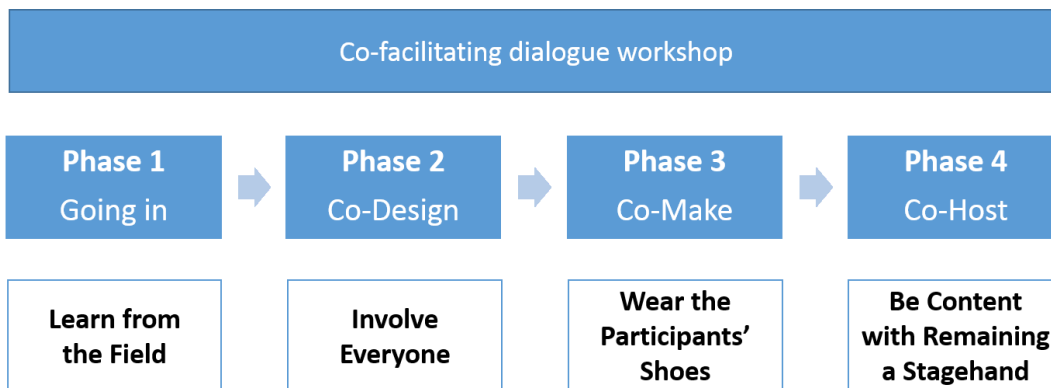
Figure 1: 4 Phases for co-facilitating dialogue workshop and their corresponding patterns

Phase 1 is "Going in," which describes a company member taking the first step into a local place. This phase is typically scheduled at least four weeks before Phase 4, or the co-hosting of the dialogue workshop. Phase 2 is "Co-Design"; here, a company member facilitates the dialogue workshop design process, including setting the agenda and preparing to-do lists. Phase 3 is "Co-Make," in which a company member prepares for the dialogue workshop in collaboration with local community members. For example, members from both sides prepare advertisements for the workshop. Phase 4 is "Co-Host," which refers to the day of the workshop.

Table 1 is a list of patlets for the four patterns. A patlet is a brief description of a pattern, usually one to two sentences in length, outlining the context, problem, and/or solution.

Table 1: Pattern Patlets

Patlet Name	Description
No. 1 **Learn from the Field**	Set your expectations aside and learn from the field.
No. 2 **Involve Everyone**	Nobody knows the "correct answer," so respect all participants and listen to each person carefully.
No. 3 **Wear the Participants' Shoes**	Imagine the atmosphere of the workshop as one of the participants. Be aware of the details. It is always the "small things" that realize good hospitality.
No. 4 **Be Content with Remaining a Stagehand**	On the day of the workshop, let go of all expectations, and offer thoughtful support as one of the participants.

3.   CO-FACILITATING DIALOGUE WORKSHOP PROCESS PATTERNS

No. 1 Learn from the Field

Learning Example: This local dumpling's filling is very loose and spills easily.

For this pattern, the foremost lesson is to set expectations aside and learn from the field.

As a company employee, you are trying to engage in collaboration with local community members. You are unfamiliar with the local place, but you are familiar with solution packages that worked successfully in different local areas.

You are applying the solution package to the local community but are having difficulty in initiating the collaboration. Your relationship with local community members is not a partnership but is that between a customer and a solution provider.

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Fear of failure. You believe that as long as you apply the successful solution packages from former cases, then you have accomplished a goal, even if the project does not work well. You believe that if the project does not work well, it is not your fault; it is the fault of the solution generators.

You blindly believe that plans should come first, and that the plans should be provided as solution packages from the company. Plans help you know clearly what your steps are and what you need to commit to in order to get the job done. Meanwhile, when you need to involve people from outside your organization, it is difficult to work according to plan because you are not in the position to give orders to them and control their jobs.

It is easy to believe that solution packages provide the best possible answers. However, solution packages are usually generated based on former cases done in different places, not the specific local place you are working in. The local culture and people's behavior differ from where the solution package worked successfully. Therefore, you need to take into consideration cultural differences and customize the solution package.

You feel that going out in the field and experiencing the plan implementation firsthand are not as important as looking back at past successful cases. Past successful cases that are implemented as solution packages can be easy to use, but cultural details may not fit your case. To make your case successful, it can be good to experience it firsthand and customize the case based on cultural details from the local people, thereby determining your value as indispensable.

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Travel to the local area. Go, see and feel how it is like to be a part of the local area.

Set aside your expectations. Look around with fresh eyes. For example, go and see the place where you can facilitate workshops. Looking at the map in your office is not enough.

Actions that can help are as follows:
1. Go and have small conversations with the local people.
2. Travel around the local area with local people. Ask them for advice. Go and see all the possible places where dialogue workshop could take place. Take plenty of time for this process.
3. Prepare the agenda for the dialogue workshop. Do this at the place you plan to facilitate the workshop. Imagine how the day of the workshop will proceed. Do this in collaboration with the local people.
4. Create posters to promote the workshop. Explore the local place and take pictures at places that move you.
5. People who were originally from places outside the community are often helpful, as they can be your bridge to local people.

As you take these actions, you start to understand how the atmosphere at the workshop should be to realize a comfortable event for both local and non-local participants, along with where the best place is to facilitate the dialogue workshop in a particular local area. Further, you will start to recognize the agenda that would work best for the dialogue workshop, as well as the best design for posters promoting the workshop.

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Context Context Context from the Contact-Activity patterns and *Sincere Appreciation* from the Fearless Change patterns can help you start to **Learn from the Field**. You can create an *Elevator Pitch* that includes stories on your plans for co-facilitating a workshop and starting small conversations with local people. This can lead you to *Plant the Seeds* for future collaborations [Mizutani 2015, Manns 2015].

No. 2 Involve Everyone

A company employee's role is like that of a stagehand. At this stage, however, you do not need to set back too much.

Nobody knows the "correct answers." Respect all participants and listen to each person carefully.

You are trying to organize a co-hosted dialogue workshop program for a particular local community. You are only working with company employees in a meeting room far away from the local area involved.

The workshop program does not involve local cultures and talents.

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You strongly believe that the company should provide plans and solutions. However, it is rude or inappropriate not to involve local members in the preparation process, such as preparing the agenda of the workshop. Local people will also have valuable input to improve the conduct of the workshop.

You think that you need to have complete project plans before you start interacting with the local people. Plans that you first make will help you know what your steps are and what you need to commit to in order to get

the job done. Meanwhile, you might not know everything that you will need to do, especially with others from outside your organization.

Being too assertive on your official roles may keep others away from openly discussing ideas with you or even trusting you during small conversations on local topics. The local people may feel as if they are your subordinates, and that it will be rude if they challenge you. They will feel wary and possibly consider it dangerous to challenge those in official roles.

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Involve Everyone. Members of the local community are the experts of that local area. Thus, ask them to participate in the meeting where workshop programs are discussed. Ask them what the most successful workshop would look like. Who should be invited?

Listen carefully to each person. Local community members may hesitate to present their ideas at first. Traveling to the local area and facilitating the meeting in their familiar place will help you show your respect for the local people.

Actions that can help are as follows:
1. Hold meetings with local members at places familiar to them. Try to encourage the attendance of the same number of participants from both the local people and the company.
2. Interview local people who show interest in co-facilitating workshops even if they cannot attend co-designing meetings, they may have useful ideas or thoughts.
3. Share the to-do list for the co-hosting of the dialogue workshop. Ask community members to handle a number of the tasks.
4. Ask one local community member to be the main facilitator of the workshop.
5. Ask if there are special ways to greet people at the workshop; that is, learn local customs or ways to welcome the participants.

As you take these actions, you start to grasp the culture and talents of the local community. The company employees and local community members will then start to share the image of how the co-hosted workshop day will proceed successfully.

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There are various patterns from Fearless Change and Contact-Activity that can help you **Involve Everyone**. For example, you can do *Building Trust* and *Mikoshi Together* before the first meeting. Then, you will be able to meet *Connectors* at local festivals, which can help you get *Gurus on your side*; getting connected with a Guru of the community is often difficult in everyday context. As you share "Mikoshi" at local regular festivals, you will build new relationships, and it will become easier to get to know and talk with the local Gurus starting from casual conversations. After you are connected with the key members, namely, the gurus, you can start to *Involve Everyone.*

No. 3 Wear the Participants' Shoes

To be a good stagehand, share your detailed vision with local members. Do we need to prepare something to wipe our hands with if we are going to serve local dumplings?

Imagine the atmosphere of the workshop as if you are one of the participants. Be aware of the details. It is always the "small things" that realize good hospitality.

You are trying to prepare for the co-hosted dialogue session with the local community. You have shared the to-do list and assigned person(s) to each task.

The big picture seems to be a mismatch with your vision; the atmosphere of the co-hosted dialogue workshop turns out to be uncomfortable.

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Once the dialogue workshop program is fixed, and the project is broken down to small tasks, the efficient approach is to concentrate on each task, and not to care too much about the entire project.

It is easy to ignore the details and think that you can worry about them later. Meanwhile, certain details are the key factors for a successful workshop, such as the room temperature. For example, if the room is too cold or too hot on the day of the workshop, the participants will feel uncomfortable and will not be able to participate in the workshop in good condition.

As you are from outside the community, you may not be familiar with local places' names or dialect, and you take these conditions as normal and small things. However, if you cannot comprehend places' names or dialect, you will not be able to listen to local people carefully and deeply. Therefore, learn as much as you can about local context so that you can engage in smoother communication with local people.

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Be aware of the details. Put yourself in the workshop participants' shoes and imagine how a comfortable dialogue workshop should be like.

As much as possible, design the details with the local people until you can be confident that even if you were not present on the day of the workshop, the workshop will be held successfully.

Actions that can help are as follows:
1. Learn about local knowledge, geographic settings, and languages that the local culture builds on, so that you can understand more what local people are talking about.
2. Go and meet the "connectors" of the community, or previous non-local people, and ask them to attend the co-hosted workshop.
3. Hold rehearsals with the local members.

4. Rehearse with the designated main facilitator of the workshop. Discuss how to manage possible delays during the workshop.
5. Are all the announcements that the main facilitator makes appropriate or comprehensible for the participants? Compose scripts for the facilitator's announcements and read them aloud with the main facilitator.
6. Go to the workshop and run through the agenda, trying to put yourself in the participants' shoes. Are all the tables and chairs set in a comfortable manner? If not, fix it.
7. Ask the local people for recommended local sweets and drinks. These small items will help improve the atmosphere for the workshop.

As you take these actions, you start to have a clear image of how the workshop day would proceed, and be confident about running the workshop.

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There are various patterns from Fearless Change and Contact-Activity that can help you **Wear the Participants' Shoes**. For example, you can rely on *Connectors* to find good members. Then, you can use *Common Connection* to make everyone work together as a team. When you find someone with negative comments, you can ask him/her to be a *Champion Skeptic* so the team can enhance the ideas or plans for the workshop. Although there will be those who may resist the plan, be *fearless* and ask for help from them. *Do Food* can help you when you want to ask for advice in a casual atmosphere.

No. 4 Be Content with Remaining a Stagehand

Be a stagehand who is wearing a thoughtful participant's shoes. For example, sit next to a non-local participant trying a local dumpling with a tissue box or sit next to an inexperienced facilitator, ready to offer help.

On the day of the workshop, let go of all expectations, and offer thoughtful support as one of the participants.

You are trying to co-facilitate a dialogue workshop with local community members. You want to make it successful. You have attended many successful co-facilitated dialogue workshops, so you know how it should be conducted.

The local community members are not fully involved. The company still holds ownership of the workshop, which means that the workshop is NOT co-hosted.

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You have experienced many successful workshops. Thus, you think you know how the workshop should be conducted. You start to want to give orders when you see inconsistencies with your experience from successful cases.

You want to open up to help local members feel comfortable sharing with you. Meanwhile, your company might not be that interested in how local members share with you. Corporate culture might focus on being more efficient and taking control over the workshop to make sure it follows past successful cases. However, these cases might not work as well in the local environment, and by taking over control of the workshop, you could scare the local people away or make them feel like they are not part of the process.

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Support by being content with remaining a stagehand and be a thoughtful participant.

Put aside your image of "the successful workshop" shaped by your memory of past cases. Put aside the blind belief that if the day proceeded as you designed it, then it is the most successful case.

For example, the main facilitator of the day may be a high school student from the local community. It may be his or her first try to be a facilitator. He/she may not be articulate. This may be at odds with your image of a successful event, but your primary objective is to involve the local people.

Actions that can help are as follows:
1. Be there as a thoughtful participant instead of as manager or organizer of the workshop.
2. Try not to give orders to the local people who are participating and are performing tasks.
3. Try to give just enough help, not too much, to participants and the facilitator to create a comfortable atmosphere for everyone.
4. Thank everyone for making the workshop happen.

As you take these actions, you start to feel that you are also the part of the community.

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The *Let it go* from the Contact-Activity patterns and *Involve Everyone* and *Sincere Appreciation* from the Fearless Change patterns can help **Be Content with Remaining a Stagehand**. After the workshop, make sure to share *Time for Reflection* with all members involved. This can give you time to show *Sincere Appreciation* and lead you to future collaborations.

4. SUMMARY

We have introduced here additional ideas to help the Contact-Activity communication process proceed smoothly. These supplements can be used by a company to collaborate with its local community on social issues in a positive way driven by inner motivation. The four patterns that we found through the co-facilitating dialogue workshop(s) were shared and repeated among 10 members of Fuji Xerox during the past year as we demonstrated the Contact-Activity communication process in local areas in Japan.

We plan to continue sharing the co-facilitating dialogue workshops and expand our learning and ideas on the Contact-Activity communication process. By expressing our experience in patterns, and by sharing and rewriting these through workshops, we intend to promote an optimal way to communicate and openly share important concepts.

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APPENDIX

Previous papers on Contact-Activity Communication Process have been published; they describe the core patterns we found while working with local communities on social issues for the past five years [Mizutani 2015]. We briefly introduce the core patterns in patlet form in Table 2. A patlet is a one- or two-sentence description of the gist of a pattern.

Core Patterns

Table 2: Pattern Patlets

Patlet Name	Description
No. 0 **Start From Yourself**	It is important to be aware of what you really value when dealing with an emerging future, imaging things you have never considered before. Prioritize and focus your time with those values that are most important to you.
No. 1 **Just Imagine**	Something has arisen in oneself and you want to present it to others. Think about whom you want to present the idea to and imagine they are in front of you, and just try.
No. 2 **Listen to Your Inner Voice**	When you are too focused on your hypothesis and plans, there is less room to accept other peoples' opinions or feelings. This can lead to you being isolated. Set aside your plans to become aware of the small voices that come from inside of you.
No. 3 **Reason to Attend**	If you have an uncomfortable feeling about being in a meeting or a workshop, reflect on the reason why you have chosen to attend. Consider an emotional tension that might have taken you there.
No. 4 **Power of Words**	When it is difficult to put words to your inner passion, express your idea the best you can and present to others without being afraid of what others will think about your idea.
No. 5 **Propose Your Idea**	You are worried about what other people might think of an idea you have. Just present your idea to people you trust and ask for feedback and impressions.
No. 6 **Personal Connection**	During conversations, be sure to include your personal impressions as well as the official ones. Build closer personal relationships by sharing feelings.
No. 7 **Building Trust**	When you are new to a community, it is often hard for your ideas to be accepted. Communicate with skeptics to build trust, which can be a good start to connect more deeply with the community.
No. 8 **Mikoshi Together**	There are borders that are difficult to cross when you are dressed and seen as a company person with job titles. Attend local events and travel privately to build trust and relationships.
No. 9 **Common Connection**	When working on issues with two or more stakeholders, it can be difficult to see the big picture affecting all stakeholders. Find common issues among multiple stakeholders to connect them.
No. 10 **Context Context Context**	You want to get connected with the community and be involved as an individual independent from the company. Make small connections with community members by sharing local context.
No. 11 **Just Do It**	When you have new ideas and are not sure how to get started, prototype your ideas and improve them through feedback.
No. 12 **Let it Go**	Your project requires more than you can handle? Don't think of managing the project all by yourself. Collaborate with others and let others help you.

Other Contact-Activity Communication Process Patterns

We have started to identify 32 other ideas that may contribute to good Contact-Activity Communication Process. Exploring these ideas is now under progress within our company.