

# Workshop: SPICE 4 Psychological Safety – First ideas and challenges

Why not evaluate and improve our culture?

Version of 2024-07-01

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# 1 SPICE 4 Psychological Safety

You can see this as a kind of (late) follow up workshop to the VDA SYS “Teals needs trust” workshop in 2018. The situation has even intensified in the last years. The relevance of collaboration, trust, and dealing with the complexity of organizations has significantly increased.

It is also a key factor in the war for talents. The current generations have high expectations towards the culture and the soft attributes of organizations, and psychological safety.

The problem: How can we know, evaluate, compare, and systematically improve the soft topics? How can we get rid of all the fuzziness?

Humans are messy. Humans are complex. Humans are no gear wheels, even if we like to see and manage them this way. And there will be always some fuzziness. This is the nature of all complex systems. We can't predict what happens next, but they can work very effective towards a defined goal.

As in soccer. Few players, few rules, and a very clear goal. No prediction possible, but everyone is involved and working hard towards the goal (the purpose). And soccer has an internal validation included. I check and ensure all the time that the system is in a valid state.

Therefore, we need to accept some fuzziness and complexity when we deal with human nature. We need to deal with people in a human way. That's the core of psychological safety. Or the “fearless organization”. We give people a safe space to develop their capabilities, creativity, and talents. Can't be controlled and managed, but as the publications of the last years ((Google2014)(Duhigg2016)(Schneider 2017)(Edmondson2018)(Clark2020)) show, it's worthwhile in the sense of performance.

We can not build psychological safety directly. But we can create environments and cultures, that psychological safety can grow and develop.

Based on personal experience, literature survey, involvement of 1000 of person years in expert experience, and relying on 45 years of SPICE, it seemed like a good idea to bring all this together.

- ▶ How can we identify the *collaboration quality* in a team, which is an indicator of psychological safety?
- ▶ What do we need to create an environment for a high level of psychological safety in an organization?
- ▶ How can we rate, compare, and improve the levels of psychological safety?

The purpose of the workshop is to get the participants in touch with the idea of a systematical improvement of psychological safety in organizations. And it is a chance to challenge and check the approach.

The workshop is designed as half day introduction workshop (3h). Most of the practices will be done in groups of 8 people. Therefore, the number of participants should be between 8 to 80 people (1 to ten groups). This is based on the experience from the last time, where we had a high demand. Every group needs some space and a meta plan or whiteboard. An open room without tables is needed.

Additional material: projector to show some slides; every participant needs cards (preferable stick-its in 3 colors) and a marker.

### Material

- ▶ wall or meta-plan per group (groups of 5) + marker (black) per person
- ▶ Post-its (medium) for scale + questions + Post-it (small) for every person (3) (start & end)
- ▶ Post-its (big, green) for every person/group for the DAD (5 questions)
- ▶ Post-its (big, red) for 1-2-4-all (2x)
- ▶ Post-its (big, yellow) for 5 Whys; groups of two
- ▶ Flipchart per group for Level 1 Definition (CCM topics or use their own)
- ▶ Slides + USB C auf HDMI-Adapter

## 2 Workshop agenda

### 2.1 Basic notion

Goal of the workshop: Understand the concept of psychological safety and un-safety. Understand how safety/un-safety impacts productivity, quality, and health. Share experience.

The SPICE approach should allow us to get a grip on the soft topics. To allow a conscious and systematic approach to these topics. It is also a check for the approach: Which blind spots do we still have? Do we address the needs from practice? Do we support a variety of cultures, or do we make (implicit, unconscious) cultural assumptions?

The workshop is divided in three major parts and is an alternation between short theory chunks with small practices. Focus is the firsthand experience.

### 2.2 Step 1: Understanding psychological safety ... starting from common ground (~1 hour)

Guiding question: What is psychological safety? How would we recognize it?

*We will have a variety of concepts, models, and experiences in the audience. We need some common understanding and starting point. Also, it's kind of a baseline to capture the understanding.*

*For an assessment we would have the same situation: where do we need to start to explain what psychological safety is?*

#### Tool: Knowledge chart [10 min]

*Questions on a wall and stickers. Scale 1..10 (10 always best/most)*

- ▶ How familiar is the term "psychological safety" for me? (Am I able to give a solid definition)
- ▶ How would I rate my personal experience of psychological safety in the last 6 month?
- ▶ What level of psychological safety would I like to have (realistically)?

#### Tool: Slides + Questions [15 min]

*Short presentation to the history and definition. There will be a minor overlap to the talk.*

#### Tool: modified Discovery & Action Dialogue (DAD) [30 min]

*This captures the current (first vision) the participants have. It's the second baseline. The results might also include valuable hints for improvement. What are currently our blind spots? What are the needs?*

*Based on the questions below we walk the groups through the different topics. Already add here "what are good experiences?" and "what can I do?"*

- ▶ What would the perfectly safe organization look like? Why is it "perfect"?
  - ▷ This should include a realistic perspective on the "messiness of being a human"
- ▶ What are building blocks (ingredients) of that "perfect" organization?
- ▶ How would you recognize safety (as employee, manager, visitor)? (Patterns?) How would relationships/interactions look like in this type of organization? Inside teams? Between teams/org units?
- ▶ Which examples do you have for these "patterns"?
- ▶ What can you do now (without anyone else) to follow these examples? (your 15%)

#### Break [7 min]

### 2.3 Step 2: The status quo (~1 hour)

Guiding question: What is killing psychological safety?

In this section of the workshop, we need to find out what is hindering us, to reach what is realistically possible. The assumption is that everyone (employees and management) wants it, but it's nothing you can create. It happens more by accident. Or is tied to specific persons.

This section should open the mind for the possibility of doing it in a systematic way. The possibility to create an environment where psychological safety can grow and bloom, in a very professional and conscious manner.

#### **Tool: 1-2-4-all [30 (2\*15) min]**

*Collect problems, actions, patterns, beliefs, and mindsets that kill psychological safety. (Red cards)*

*One round for Manager, and the second for Employees.*

*Time: 2 – 4 – 4; should lead to several cards (red Stick Its)*

- ▶ What are problems, actions, patterns, beliefs, and mindsets that kill psychological safety you've seen/experienced from **employees** perspective (in yourself, your team, your organization)? Examples are welcome.
- ▶ What are problems, actions, patterns, beliefs, and mindsets that kill psychological safety you've seen/experienced from **manager** perspective (in yourself, your team, your organization)? Examples are welcome.

*Stress here that we always must check for the worst case in a given time frame. Average has no meaning in soft topics! The average for a serial killer is very fine 😊*

*We need these results to check if we really address all the known problems in the community.*

#### **Tool: 5 Whys [15 min]**

*Practice the 5 Whys. Ask 5 or more times "Why did this happen?" in a row to your examples. Build groups of 2, to cover many of the examples/problems.*

*Use different color of cards. (Yellow cards)*

- ▶ identify different sources and find out where they come from

#### **Tool: Slides of the Collaboration Capability Model [15 min]**

*This is a small break for the participants. Gives some input, and based on the current examples and analysis, they find it hopefully complete and sensible.*

*Additional chance to challenge the model.*

#### **Break [7 min]**

### 2.4 Step 3: Measure, manage, and improve in a systematic way (~1 hour)

Guiding question: How can we make the soft topics tangible and manageable?

Moving from the check to the guidance.

How do we define purpose, outcomes, and base practices for the seven “processes groups”. Here we can reuse the material from the first section “what do we want?” and “how can we get it?”. And the second one “what is deadly and need to be avoided?” and “what elements does our internal validator has to spot?”.

Which leads us to the question what an internal validator can be and what are the rules to ensure the effect?

*We will cover only Level 1 here. The basic notion for the following level should be mentioned. Or referred to the talk.*

#### **Tool: Give first some time for organization, discussion, and planning [5 min]**

*Each group should take some time to understand what to focus on.*

*Every group should select one process group.*

#### **Tool: Sketch the content of a Process Group [40 min]**

*Goal here is to provide some more information and connect this information with experiences (“yes, I have seen this” “happened also to me” “I’ve done this already”).*

Topics of discussion ...

- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Outcomes
  - ▷ should describe the environment or measures to build a desired environment/or avoid an undesired environment
  - ▷ include the validator already here
- ▶ Best Practices
  - ▷ ideas how to actively create the desired outcomes/avoid or identify undesired
  - ▷ wish is always a stable self-validating/self-regulating system; think always about soccer as an example

#### **Tool: Compare your ideas against the draft proposal [~10 min]**

*Every one comes with a different story and experiences. Therefore, we expect different results. One goal of the workshop is to challenge the current content and learn from the participant and their stories.*

#### **Tool: Feedback chart [10 min]**

*Questions on a wall and stickers. Scale 1..10 (10 always best/most)*

- ▶ How satisfied are you with the workshop?
- ▶ How worthwhile do you see a systematic approach to psychological safety?
- ▶ How realistic do you see a systematic approach to psychological safety? Is there a market?
- ▶ Do you believe there is a chance to really affect culture with a systematic approach, or will it just be another “nice on paper”?

### 2.5 Our “result”

- ▶ Humans are no machines. They work differently, so we should treat them differently. Everybody knows this, but in the reality of business, we are not yet open to the implications of this thought. Planning and control is still the usual practice, and quite delusional. (“Wherever there is fear, there will be wrong figures.” W E Deming, The New Economics)
- ▶ We need an assessment on how seriously a company wants to implement this change. It shouldn’t be another marketing hoax. If they are “certified” Level 2, this really has to match the internal experience.
- ▶ All participants shall have a clear(er) picture on how to deal with the soft topics systematically
- ▶ We get feedback where our blind spots are. What do we need to take out, and what to add.

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