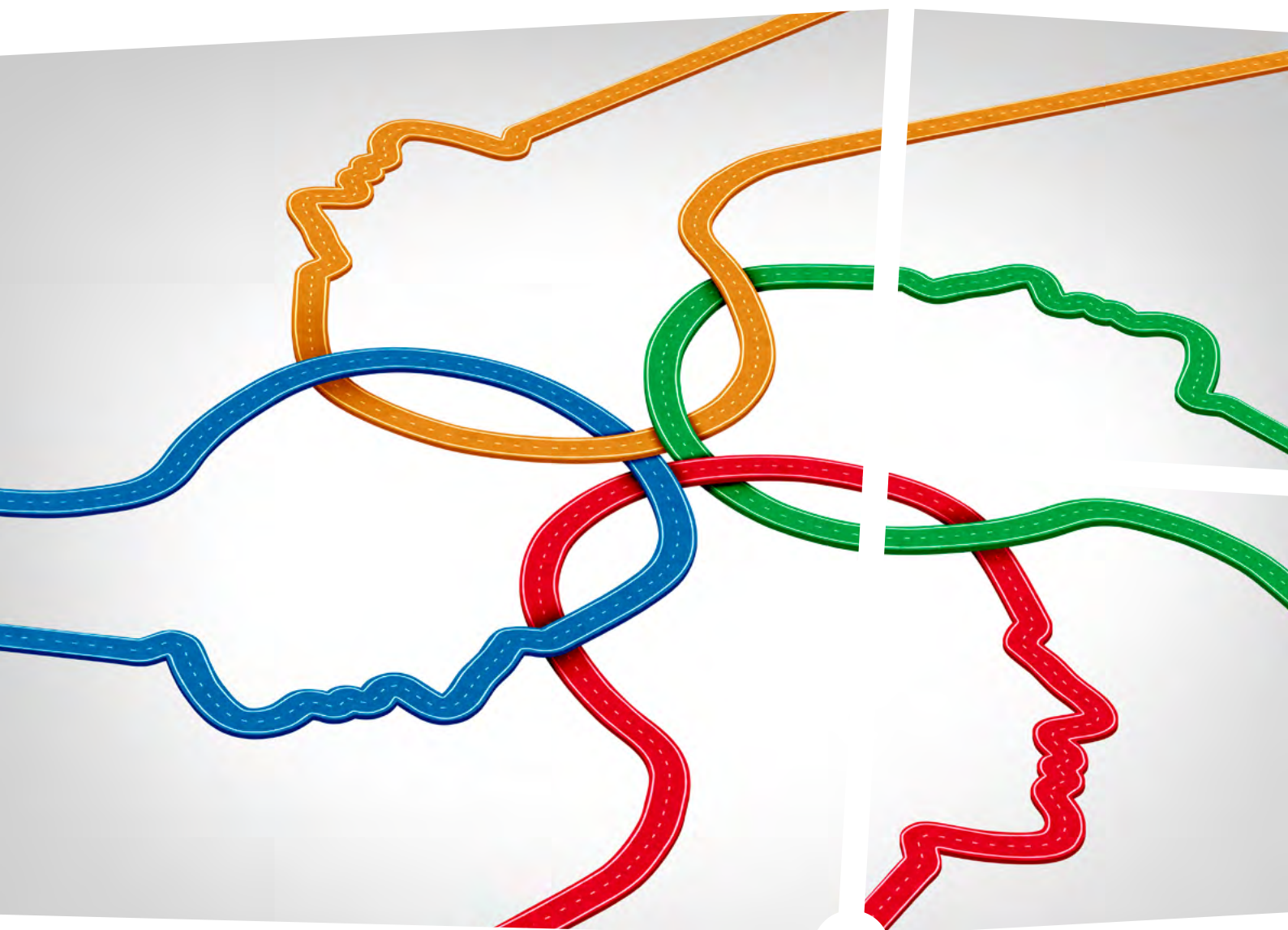


4*4 PitStop method for pop-up professional (learning) networks

Introduction & guide for facilitators



Max Aangenendt
Christian Wallner

let's change
YOU. US. THE WORLD.

Colofon

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CONTENT

What is a 4*4 PitStop?	4
What is the 4*4 PitStop method based on?	5
How does a 4*4 PitStop work?	6
How does a 4*4 PitStop initiative start?	7
Which 4*4 PitStops have been held?	8
What else is the 4*4 PitStop method used for?	9
How can you structure the 4*4 PitStop meetings?	10
Do you want to get started or do want to participate in research on pop-up networks?	16
Want to read more?	17



What is a 4*4 PitStop?

A 4*4 PitStop is a metaphor for the work method or format used for a pop-up professional network. The method is designed to allow work, innovation and learning to go hand in hand. This format is based on the goals and direction provided by the participating professionals themselves. With this guide, we are sharing the results with professionals who want to start their own 4*4 PitStop.

The method has been under development since 2017. We have collected the experiences of participants and facilitators to gradually better understand what happens, how “value creation” occurs in these networks, and what the role of a facilitator can be.

Each 4*4 PitStop has a specific content focus that connects, engages, fascinates and activates the participants. Within that content theme, each participant works on a professional issue, question, challenge or assignment of their own choosing. In this process, the professional meets colleagues from other organisations or teams who are also working on a professional issue. Depending on the nature of the individual issue, each participant develops and follows an individual design, research, implementation or learning process. Participants bring different goals & needs, experiences, insights, and knowledge & resources to the 4*4 PitStop. As a result, while working on their own professional issue, the participants are also inspired by each other and they collaborate and learn from each other.

If you have something to research, develop, design, invent or discover, then participating in a 4*4 PitStop could be right for you! A 4*4 PitStop is a mini-learning network of and for professionals; it's accessible, temporary and results-oriented. A 4*4 PitStop lasts for a limited period (12 to 16 weeks), includes 4 short meetings and takes 16 hours of your time. Meetings take place every 3 to 4 weeks.

What is the 4*4 PitStop method based on?

Working, learning and innovating increasingly take place in networks. However networks do not emerge all by themselves. They are consciously designed and are used to stimulate development, change and innovation. Many different networks are available now, such as learning networks, communities of practice, knowledge networks, professional learning communities, peer review networks and knowledge ecosystems. Networks arise within professional groups and organisations but also at the interface between organisations and companies originating from business & professional practice, education & research, and government. Depending on the objective(s), these network structures consist of a mix of professionals, managers & entrepreneurs, customers, clients & citizens, administrators & politicians, organisations, researchers, and lecturers & students.

Some examples include professional learning communities in education or within a university of applied sciences (Hanraets et al., 2011; Vangrieken et al., 2017; Detmar et al., 2021), communities of practice in companies and organisations (Akkerman et al., 2008; Borzillo et al., 2012), labs in healthcare (e.g., THUAS Labs for Health Innovation: Vervloed et al., 2019), (learning) networks in community nursing or in hospital (Wallner, 2018; Heemskerk & Wallner, 2021), knowledge and learning networks in youth care (for example, the Kennisnetwerk Jeugd Haaglanden, or Haaglanden Youth Knowledge Network, and Dauphin & Wallner, 2021), innovation networks in retail (Overdiek & Geerts, 2021), and many more learning communities in other leading economic sectors (Haak & van Endert, 2017; Top Sectors Roadmap Human Capital 2020-2023). Within that realm of possibilities, many kinds of approaches are being developed to start and develop networks and to enable them to flourish.

The 4*4 PitStop method is a way to start pop-up professional networks. The design principles are derived from research about how professionals work, learn and innovate together in networks. The method is based on the success factors of powerful learning & design environments, such as Learning Networks, Learning Communities, Knowledge Networks and



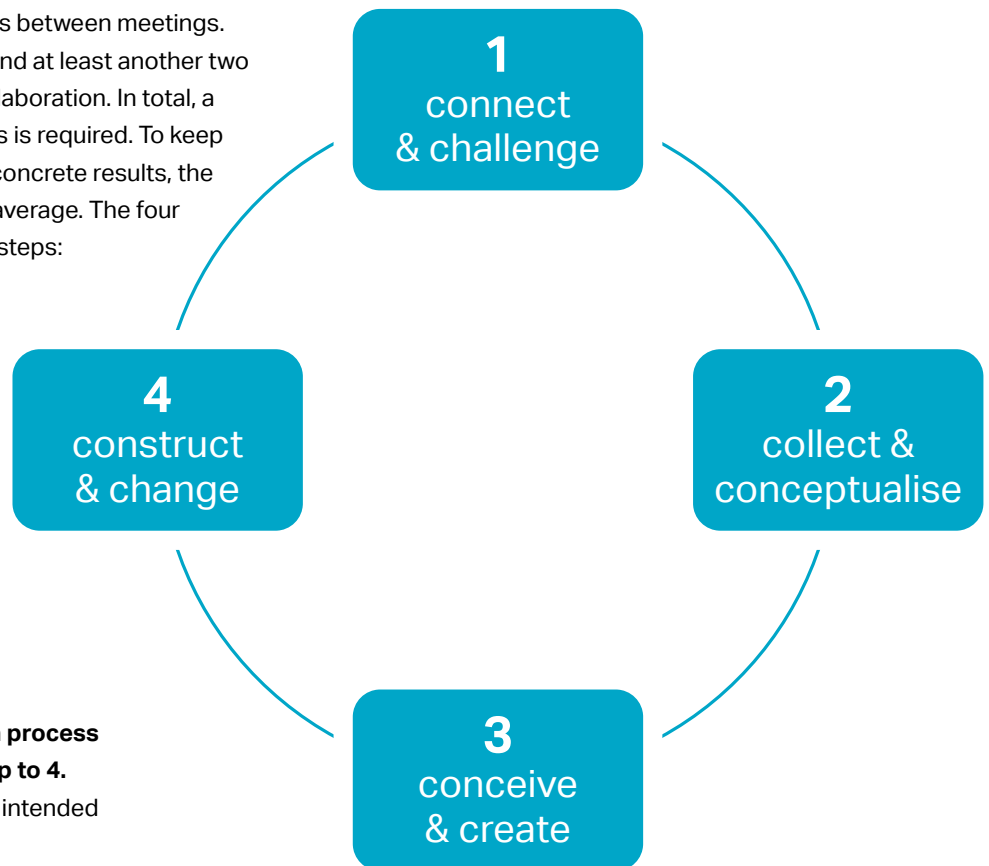
Communities of Practice. The method aims to create a pop-up work environment in which professionals are explicitly challenged from the bottom up about their own insights, responsibility and choices, and where learning, collaborating and innovating go hand in hand.

The starting principles of the 4*4 PitStop are: connecting to the intrinsic professional motivation of the individual (potential) participant; appealing to self-direction and agency; eliciting and pursuing the explication of concrete outcomes and results; formulating one's own value creation story on how to make this happen; creating a workplace atmosphere in which everyone can make progress towards their own intended result; and ensuring an open, safe, learning-oriented atmosphere as well as equality in the participant group.

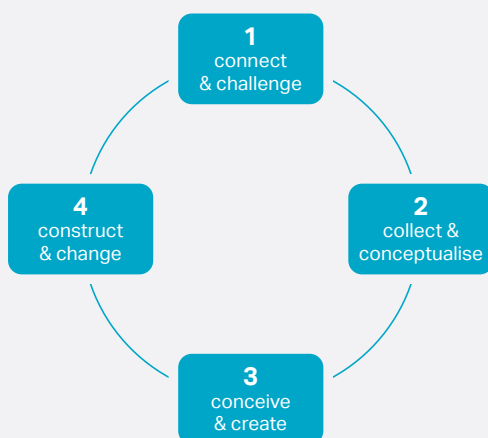
What makes the method unique compared to other methods is the combination of a bottom-up approach, results-based focus and the temporary nature of the network structure. A 4*4 PitStop essentially stems from the professionals' own needs because they want to build, develop or research something and are looking to meet with peers around a specific topic. Of course, sustainable forms of cooperation in more permanent networks or communities can emerge from a 4*4 PitStop, but that is not necessarily the initial focus or intention.

How does a 4*4 PitStop work?

A PitStop is structured like a series of ateliers. There are four meetings that last around two hours each, with an interval of two to three weeks between meetings. During this interval, you will spend at least another two hours on preparatory work or elaboration. In total, a commitment of at least 16 hours is required. To keep the pace and achieve fast and concrete results, the duration is short: 10 weeks, on average. The four meetings include the following steps:



Starting at 1, you go through a process of connecting & challenging up to 4. constructing and achieving the intended result in real life (change).



4*4 PitStop in a nutshell
Max Aangenendt & Chris Wallner (2019)

Connect and challenge

What exactly are your questions/challenges, what results do you want to realise? What are you going to address, build and do? What do you want to achieve together?

Collect and conceptualise

How to find, share and disseminate relevant knowledge, examples, tools & experiences?

Conceive and create

What is relevant to your situation & how can it be put to good use?

Construct and change

What product/plan will it provide for your practice, and what step or action will you undertake?

How does a 4*4 PitStop initiative start?

A pop-up network starts at the initiative of one or more professionals, who invite other interested parties to join with their own issues or questions. This is how a snowball is created in a short period of time. See the following examples of recruitment texts:

Are you facing the challenge of developing new education?

In the 4*4 PitStop Curriculum

Development, you take the time to look back at and work forward on a new unit of education. Create time and opportunity in a 4*4 PitStop to work and learn together with colleagues. Start the new academic year well prepared!

PitStop Education Development

Fascinated by investigative competencies? Is there something you want to develop, design, or learn more about didactic investigative competencies? Do you wonder how colleagues in other degree programmes do this? Do you want to improve in it? Bring your question and use the series of 4 short meetings with like-minded colleagues to move forward.

PitStop Didactics concerning Investigative Competencies

Are you looking for ways to connect education and real-life innovation? Do you want to learn, teach, research and innovate together? Are you curious about the possibilities offered by learning networks and communities of practice? Would you like to gain and share experience in starting learning networks from your role as a lecturer (or lecturer/researcher)? In this 4*4 PitStop, you can work on the start-up of Learning Communities together with professionals in the field.

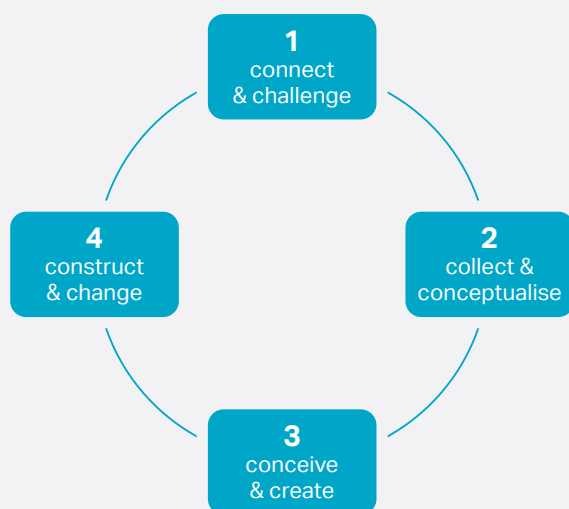
PitStop Learning Communities for Health Care

Which 4*4 PitStops have been held?

Over the past few years, a variety of PitStops have been held on topics such as:

1. Didactics concerning investigative competencies of students;
2. Curriculum development;
3. Strategic network development;
4. Tech4Health in multidisciplinary minors;
5. Methodologies for Health Innovation Labs;
6. Rules & regulations for researchers;
7. Learning network about learning networks;
8. Starting learning networks & communities;
9. Graduation projects in the Communication degree programme of The Hague University of Applied Sciences;
10. Design of learning communities in the HBO-V (Nursing) degree programme at the University of Applied Sciences Leiden.

Within these PitStops, participants worked towards different outcomes. For example, in the PitStop on investigative competencies, two participants jointly developed a learning pathway for a degree programme, another participant created a programme of requirements for a module, and a third one was looking for information on how the human investigative competency develops over the course of a lifetime. In the PitStop on learning networks, one participant wanted to know how to initiate and start a network while another wanted to expand the variety of stakeholders associated to an existing network and connect more and different organisations to the community. In yet another PitStop, the participants worked not only on their own outcomes but also cooperated with each other to develop a tool to make their joint portfolio of multidisciplinary minors transparent and accessible.



4*4 PitStop in a nutshell
Max Aangenendt & Chris Wallner (2019)



A learning network about a learning network is like a box within a box.

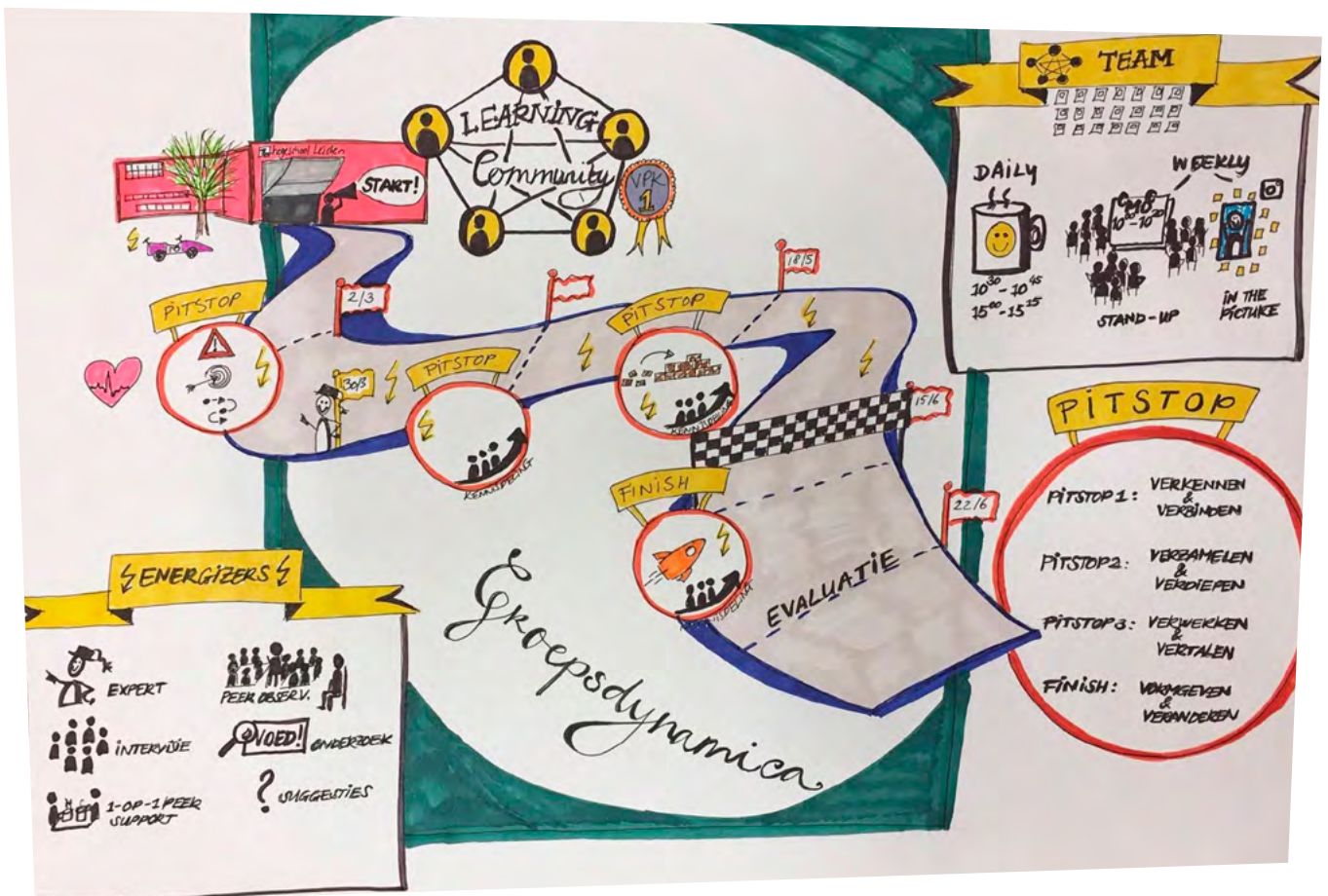
What else is the 4*4 PitStop method used for?

The method is now also being used to develop more sustainable learning communities. For example, you can recognise the method been used in the PitStop Learning Community Roadmap of the HBO-V (Nursing) degree programme of the University of Applied Sciences Leiden.

The approach has also been used for educational development, for instance in redesigning the graduation routes of the Communication degree programme at The Hague University of Applied Sciences. In the master's degree programme Physical Therapy and Community Movement Care at the University of Applied Sciences Leiden, where a learning community is used as an educational method, the lecturers worked together to organise a 4*4 PitStop to research and learn from each other what it means to design education in the context of a learning community.

Another example is the 4*4 PitStop on learning network facilitators. This involved a group of staff members from the University of Applied Sciences Leiden who, in any way, organise learning networks or play a role in promoting learning networks based on institutional policies.

If you choose to use a method such as the 4*4 PitStop, be aware that this method relies on the intrinsic motivation of each participant and is therefore less suitable as a general format for "bounded" communities. Bounded communities are networks whose purpose and outcomes have already been predetermined by a degree programme, an organisation or a network of organisations. Indeed, the 4*4 PitStop method can be used in any open/free spaces within such communities to enable bottom-up guidance.



4*4 PitStop: Learning Community Road Map of the HBO-V (Nursing) team, year 1, University of Applied Sciences Leiden
@Marijke Hoogendoorn

How can you structure the 4*4 PitStop meetings?

A 4*4 PitStop has an open character, with flexibility and an emphasis on ownership and input from the participants. At the same time, there is a very strong focus on results, the values that are created. As a facilitator, this means you have to provide an appropriate balance between an open programme on the one hand and, on the other hand, enough structure and challenge to create a powerful working environment for the participants.

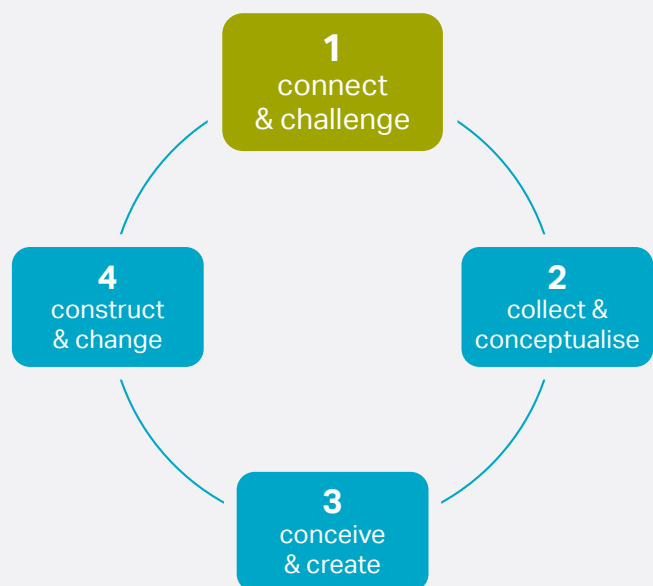
In this next part of the guide, we will discuss how you as a professional can facilitate each meeting of the 4*4 PitStop. How do you structure a meeting according to this format? How could you shape the agenda? What methods can you use? Here we share key experiences from the PitStops.

FIRST MEETING Connect and Challenge

Agenda items:

Organise a stand-up round of introductions; no stories, just 30 seconds to tell each other who you are and what brings you here.

- Explore & challenge = What brings you here?, What do you want to achieve, When is this PitStop a success for you? What is your goal? Which result do you want to achieve and what value(s) will that create for whom?
- Connect: You can already hear parallels between the value creation stories of participants in the introductory round. Continue to ask questions: How are you going to approach that? What could you do maybe together with another participant, and what is better to do alone? How can this programme support you?
- End with a bridge question: What step will you take for the next meeting? How will you look for relevant sources and experiences? What will you have already delivered by then?



Work methods:

We have gained experience with all kinds of inventory tools, including:

- Scrum techniques, such as collecting issues on Post-it notes: What is really urgent now and what is important for the medium term?
- Inviting participants to make an individual placemat to create a first sketch or mind map of the issues needed to work on.
- Working with the abbreviated version of the Learning Community Star on a flap with notes, going through these questions together and discuss them (see Wallner & Heemskerk, 2018).



Tips for the facilitator

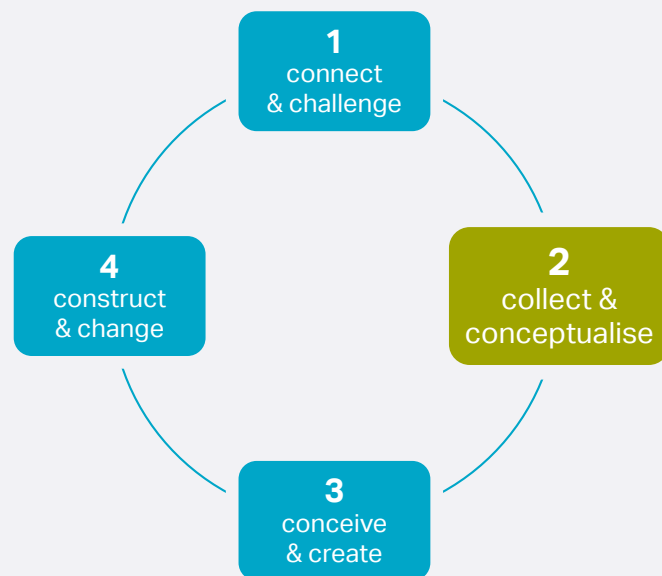
- Help each participant to commit to their own result by asking questions. Challenge each other to formulate a goal, product or result that needs to be ambitious. For example, use the dream question: 'Imagine that the four meetings are over; what have you achieved, what have you been able to do / what will you do with your result & what do other stakeholders notice of this, and what value does that bring them? And what else, and still more?
- Different intended outcomes will require different processes.
- Listen and explicitly state together which type of process suits each outcome best. Does the outcome suggest something of a development process, design process, research process, action research process, change process, organisational learning process — or all of the above?
- Suggest work methods that are perceived as "accelerating", as the metaphor of a PitStop suggests a workshop format: get to work quickly, make progress, don't sit but stand and walk instead, don't have meetings for discussion but be at work, do, create, etc.
- What to do with people who come to "listen"? You can support participants who don't yet know what their product could be. Try to make their uncertainty productive and transform it into the development of a first idea for a possible step; exploratory work is also work. By asking questions, such an idea can be transformed into an intermediate result with an open character. Examples include: conducting an exploratory or problem analysis, listing trends options and developing scenarios, creating a plan or a business case, building a first prototype, or just thinking of something and trying it out.
- Expectation management for agency and self-direction of participants is key.... If potential participants don't have their own issues or goals to tackle and actually expect a story from an expert instead, the PitStop method is not right for them at this time. Try to communicate this to potential participants before the start.
- More about expectation management: Participants who would like to philosophise & reflect without linking this mental work to the start of an action and an intermediate result are better off doing this elsewhere, in another work format. In this workshop, their questions may get in the way of those who are already engaged. You also communicate this guiding principle in advance.
- It may be useful to create a temporary digital environment for the participants, such as a WhatsApp group or a Jamboard, MS Teams / SharePoint or Blackboard environment. This allows participants to keep in touch with each other and also share documents, tools and experiences.
- Facilitate the design/research/learning process of the participant. Start each meeting with the question "What did you do?" and end with "What are you going to do for the next session?" (bridge question). Also ask if they need anything in the meantime to create space and time for this. Don't start talking about homework; it's about stimulating the participants to work on their own. They will figure out what they want to do, depending on their self-imposed task.

SECOND MEETING

Collect and Conceptualise

Agenda questions:

- Go back to the previous meeting to activate the results-based guidance: What were you going to deliver and which result did you want to achieve?
- How are things now? What have you done with your question between the two meetings? What has changed in the question and what has remained the same?
- Collect: Which information have you already collected? What sources are you using and what others are there? What do you still need?
- Conceptualise: What insight does this give you? What else do you need?



Work methods:

We have gained experience with all sorts of tools; here are some suggestions:

- Start an active work method with 5-minute pitches about what you already know and have collected.
- Ask each other what the intended result was at the beginning and how you would formulate it now in the second meeting.
- In 60 seconds, give each other feedback, suggestions and routes that may be useful.
- Finish with a reflection on the meeting and let the participants look ahead to the next meeting..... Which steps you are going to take as a participant until the next meeting so you can work well together again, and how are we going to organise the next meeting (work method)?

Tips for the facilitator

- Together with the group, you facilitate the design/ research/learning process of each participant individually and of the group as a whole. Start each meeting with the question: "What did you do?" and explore how this meeting should be structured to give it momentum. End with the question of what everyone will do in the run-up to the next session (bridge question). Check if they need anything in the meantime to make space and time for this.
- Alignment is about finding a balance. This second step, Collect and Conceptualise, entices us to take a broad perspective, which could present many different angles. This requires an open mind and

collective space to formulate the possibilities. At the same time, the focus on achieving results requires that you don't dwell too long on the discussion of a specific theme. Instead, you focus the process of the participants on the selection of a concrete result and you accelerate that achievement process.

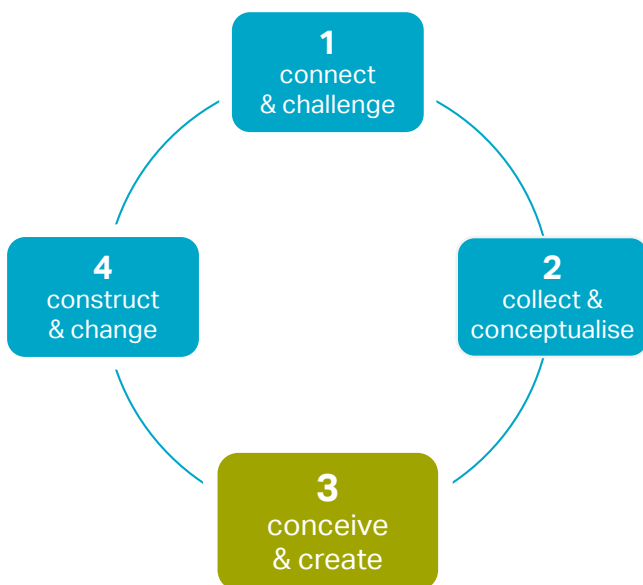
- There are four pitfalls that can take up time without contributing to any results: 1) dwelling on issues of definition that cannot be resolved within the time frame of a PitStop meeting; 2) giving space to differences in individual preferences and allergies to certain words for which no consensus is needed; 3) giving free rein to the evangelising urge to convince others of one's own deeply entrenched views; and 4) remaining stuck in the experience of dependency that seems to stand in the way of one's own autonomy (they need to go first, otherwise I can't.....). Recognise and name these pitfalls respectfully and directly. This was helpful for participants to create space to continue the work with a focus on results.
- Also make a conscious reference to the time and opportunities between meetings. There is so much interesting stuff to share and discuss that there is never enough time in a 90 or 120-minute session. Of course, participants can also meet each other outside the sessions. All kinds of opportunities, a meeting "lay-by" if you will, can be found where two participants or subgroups can return to specific discussion items, explore these further, and exchange more information.

THIRD MEETING

Conceive and Create

During the first (two) meetings, you as a facilitator are mainly in charge of creating an open atmosphere and constructive learning dynamics and to help participants to formulate a dot on the horizon. In the third and fourth meetings, the facilitator mainly guides the participants to the outcome as envisioned by the participants in their “value creation story”. How do they produce the intended result and how do they maximise the effect of the application of that result in your practice?

As the PitStop progresses (meetings 3 and 4), the structure of the meetings is less predictable, as the dynamics of the participants’ own learning & work processes tend to take over. It’s a continuous effort of fine-tuning to the different phases in which the participants find themselves and suggesting the appropriate work methods. This is also reflected in the description below, which is shorter for the last two meetings.



How you start the third meeting depends on the agreements made at the end of the second meeting. In this third meeting, as an individual participant and as a group, you transition from forming ideas to translating them into possible products that lead to the intended outcomes. Some examples of real meetings help to illustrate the nature of third meeting. For example, in the PitStop on network development, participants agreed at the end of the second meeting that everyone would make a SWOT analysis and share this in the third meeting for discussion. In another PitStop, participants gave mini presentations and discussed these. In yet another

meeting, prototypes were built and shared. A children’s book was discussed in another third meeting. An organisational model and business case were developed in yet another meeting.

Tips for the facilitator

- Here you help participants to tailor the activities to their own value creation story. What is the concrete outcome and where do you want the application of it to lead? What useful product contributes to that outcome and what do you have to do to incorporate the jointly collected sources and insights?
- In this phase, you challenge each other to look beyond the obvious. What is the outcome you want to achieve? Is it a design, or also a test and application of the design? Is it a document or also a conversation about it? Is it a proposal or also an assessment of the proposal? Is it a product or also an application by the product’s users? Is it an analysis or also a proposal, a recommendation or also a series of possibilities? Is it an experiment or also..... and so on.
- Remain aware and be clear that the dynamics of the design/research/learning process differ for each participant. Discuss which step and work method is appropriate for each participant. For example, the standard programming of presentations for all participants without prior coordination is not a good fit here.
- Some PitStops have lost participants at this stage. The main pitfall in this phase turns out to be the work pressure. Under pressure, jobs sometimes take on a different priority and “must-have products” become “nice to have”, temporarily or otherwise. The participant’s own voluntary value creation story remains a non-committal one in that case. Products that are contracted with more stakeholders and/or conducted in subgroups or with the entire group seem to be less vulnerable to this.
- The metaphor of a PitStop suggests a shop floor approach: get down to business, keep standing and get moving. That is why we recommend to also choose work methods in this phase that will be perceived as accelerating. This has a motivating effect and helps participants create the space to work on the result they have in mind.
- A few participants wanted to continue alone, partly due to differences in process dynamics. We have noticed how important it is to experience the common ground and to give each other an explicit role in the processes, no matter how diverse.

FOURTH MEETING

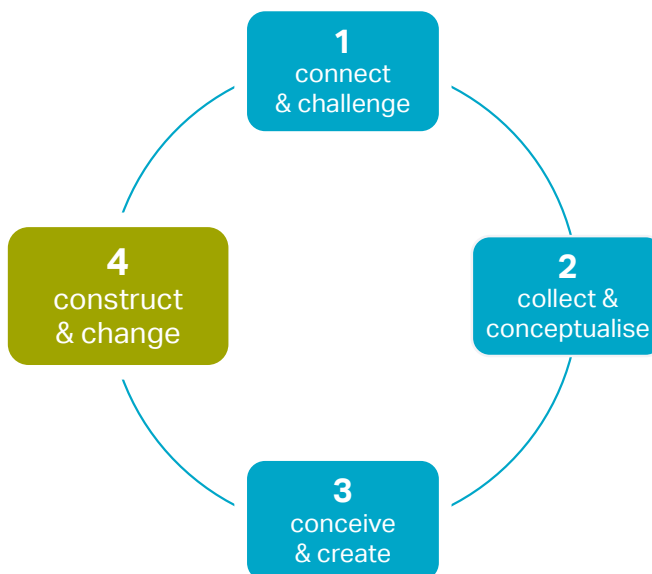
Construct and Change

In the fourth and final meeting, the focus is on realising the value creation story of each participant. How do you deliver your product? What movement does your product/plan/intervention enable in your practice? What do you still need to achieve that intended effect? What are you going to do to enable that, what step are you going to take, and who do you need to get it done? In this phase, everyone's value creation story is completed together.

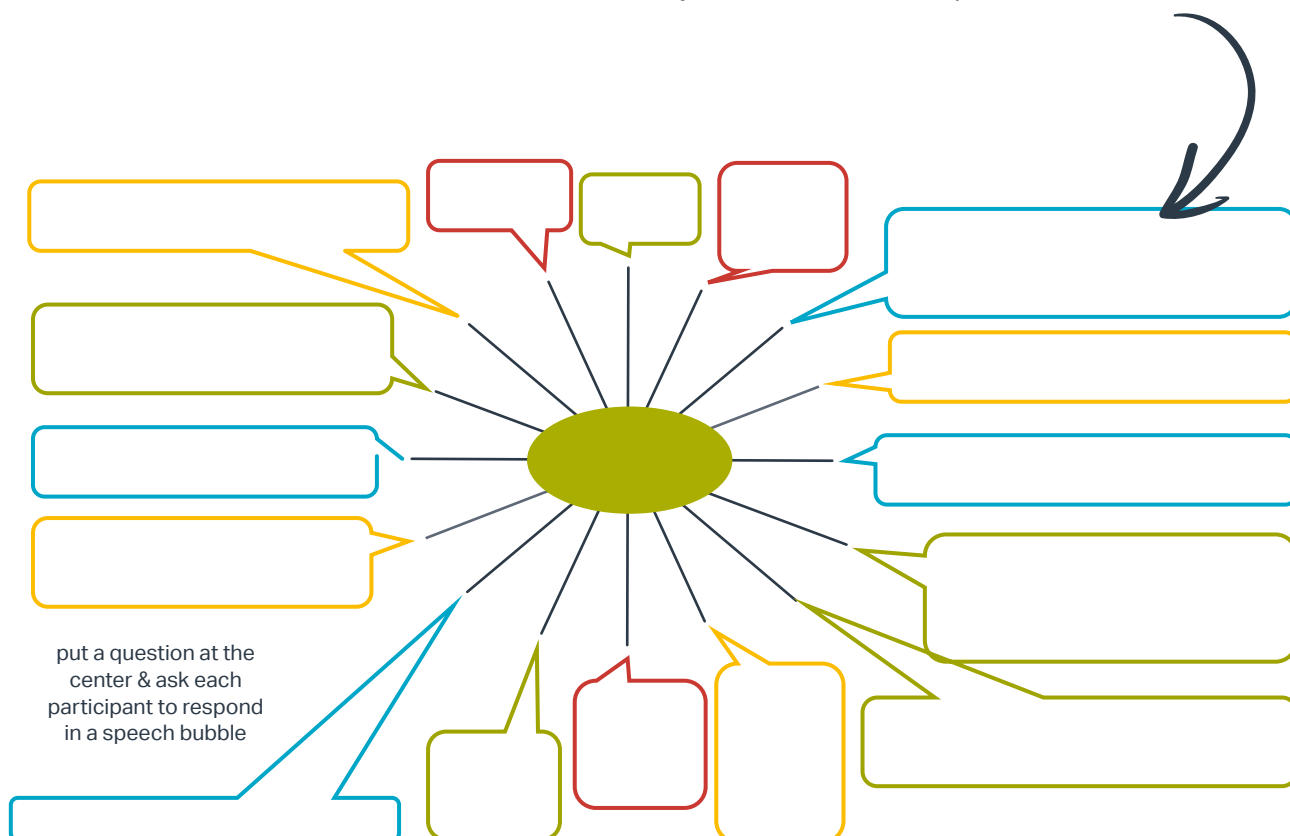
The original question of the intended outcome is addressed again: "What expectations did you have of the PitStop? And how did you fulfil these expectations?" It's also relevant to look ahead. How will you now move forward (whether alone or in your team) with this result? What do you need and how will you organise it?

Finally, it's useful to evaluate the 4*4 PitStop, both on an individual and on a group level. All kinds of questions are helpful here, such as:

How did we structure this pop-up network together?
How did this pop-up network actually work? What are the outcomes achieved? Do we want to move to a more sustainable network? Should we expand it to a broader mix of stakeholders? Is it worthwhile to also embed that



network in an organisational form? What could we have done differently or better? What added value did the facilitator provide? It can also be inspiring to ask the individual participants to come up with their own theme for another PitStop — and to ask them if they would like to facilitate such a PitStop. This also includes the question: What would you need to facilitate a PitStop yourself? We have used speech bubbles as a tool.



Do you want to get started or do you want to participate in research on pop-up networks?

Pop-up networking means just doing it and trying it out!

To further develop the work method, we would like to collect the experiences (value creation stories) of both facilitators and participants of pop-up networks. Would you like to get started with this work method or would you like to consider taking part in follow-up research? If so, please contact us.

Finally, thanks to all the initiators, participants and facilitators of the 4*4 PitStops. We also would like to thank the colleagues who have contributed to this method and/or worked with it: Mirabai Vosteen, Yvonne Boender, Ellen Sjoer, Laura Detmar, Tim Hoppen, Froukje Jellema, Jacob Nouta and Frowine den Oudendammer.

Many thanks for that!

Max Aangenendt & Chris Wallner

Want to read more?

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