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MEETINGS MODERATED

Guideline for more efficiency in group working and learning situation

Herbert Namokel

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What can go wrong in Meetings?

Together or against each other in meetings

The meeting, conference, different names for working together, sometimes more against each other, When you read the word meeting in the following pages, a group of people is meant, not less than five and not more than 12, who work together for an hour or longer.

Useful both in public and private matters as well as for business

The meetings at work are especially meant which takes place and more often with different occupational groups and hierachy levels with clear or not so clear tasks and targets. The following examples of moderated meetings have the same weight for the director´s meeting in the local sports club or the teachers conference in the school. Whether the first or second instance both are connected with the communication process between human beings, which have relevant as well as emotional components.

The target of these working techniques and methods is to better the continuity of the meetings, clear results and a greater identification of those taking part with the outcome.

The problem list as shown is a compilation from many of such sorts of lists, which were worked out by groups, as these groups tackle the problem of better meetings. The presented order says something about the strength of the problem or the success or failure of the meeting.

The listed problems can be summerized as follows:

Targets

- The target and also the results are not clear and not satisfactory.

Disciplin

- The guidance in dicussion is poor and the disciplin of the partici pants, too.

Organistion

- The organisation could be better i. e. room, material.
- The pre-information, invitation, timeplan, agenda, documentation and following up work too, are not what they could be.

Human relationship

- The personal relationship of the participants to each other out weights the relevant points by far.

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No.	Problem	Dots	Rank
1	extended monologues		8
2	aims not defined		7
3	fruitless long discussions		2
4	different information level		10
5	participants unprepared		11
6	deviation from topics		3
7	dominant (some are more equal)		9
8	frequently interrupting each other		6
9	personal attacks		5
10	unskilled chairperson		4
11	no concrete results		1
12	insufficient cooperation		12

Figure 1
Problem List

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Sympathy, antipathy, hierachical relationship with each other and competition have a negative effect.

The meeting as a central communication instrument devours a lot of time in businesses and organisations. Experiments and surveys have shown, that managing personal in the German economy spend up to 70% of their working time with meetings. The trend is increasing. The tasks to be fulfilled are becoming complexer and demand a greater co-ordination span. On the other hand employees are becoming more and more specialized, and while their area of work is becoming smaller and smaller, it gets deeper.

Human relationship

These employees must arrive at a functioning working group, in order to achieve the complex task in a reasonable amount of time. The meeting is an essential instrument of leadership and control more than ever. In dealing with co-operative leadership style moderated meetings are in addition an excellent intrument of employee guidance to greater motivation and identification.

Preparation of moderated Meetings

Preparation saves time

Most meetings suffer from bad preparation. The reason is most often because of lack of time. When you never have enough time to prepare meetings it´s time to put this book down now and carry on as you have been. If you would like to save time however for yourself and also time for the other participants in a meeting, then read on.

30 minutes well invested

In order to prepare a meeting you need to plan about 15 to 30 minutes. You will save a lot of time in the meeting – for everyone.

The checklist is an approved help to complete the preparation quickly and not to forget anything. When you are taking the chair yourself the list is for your own preparation. If the meeting is moderated by someone else it acts as a guideline, you may try and contact him and do the preparation together.

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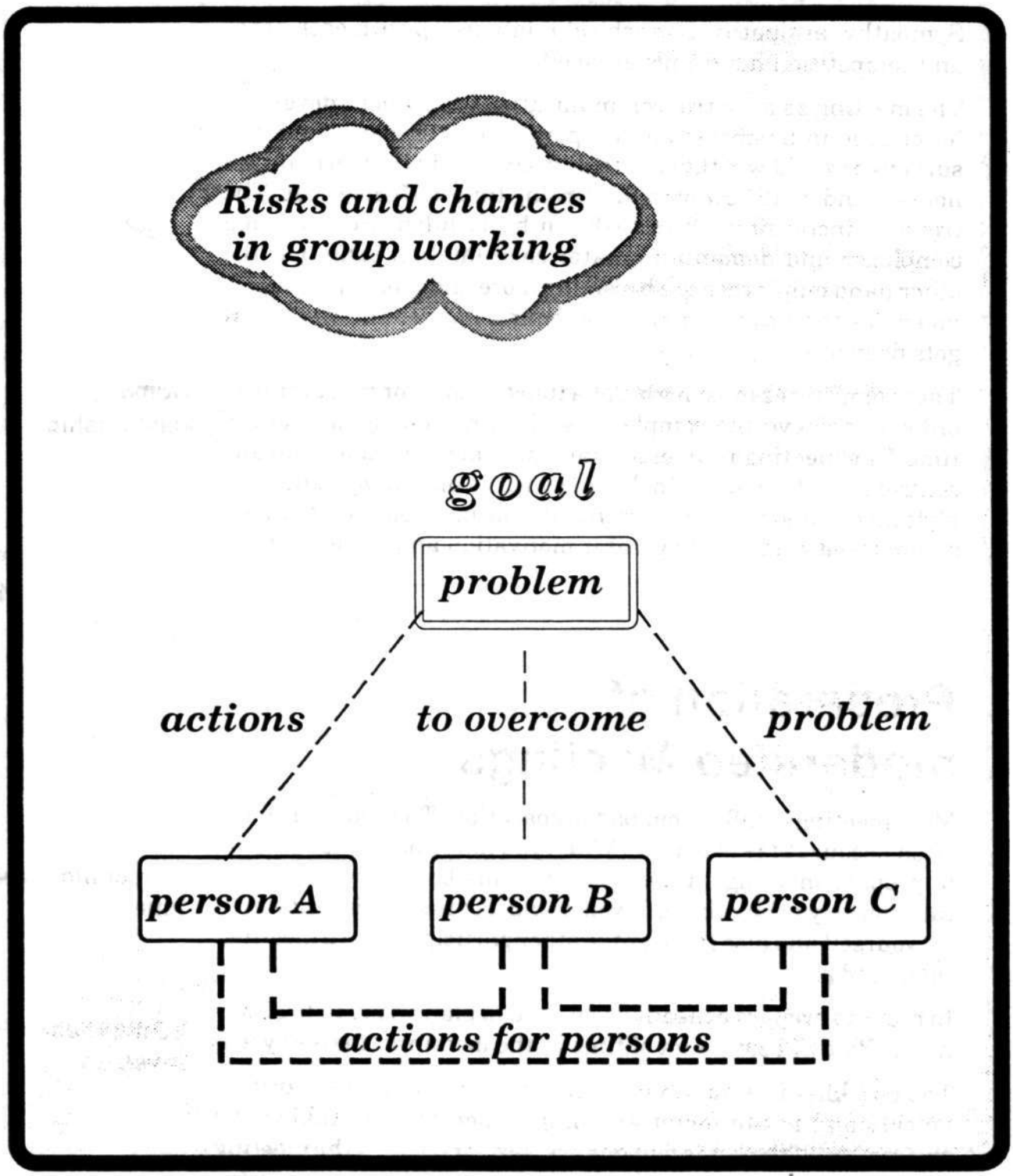

Figure 2
Risks and chances in working groups

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On the back of the checklist you will find a form for exact planning of the meeting itself. The list of events is filled out by the one who is going to lead the discussions, that is you or the moderator – maybe you could complete the work together, as well.

1. Topic and Target

What do you want to achieve?

Make sure you know exactly what topic or topics are going to be discussed and fomulate the expected outcome or results.

Be careful not to present results in advance which are meant to be worked out together in the meeting, later on.

If you want a common decision by your group, prepare alternatives and let the participants become members in decision making. The result is known as »decision taking«.

If the decision is already taken by yourself or someone else, don´t pretend there is still room for change and the participants can influence the outcome further. Be honest and give all information on the decision and prepare the group for consequent actions.

Type of results

The result is kwown as » agreeing upon actions.

If you have more than one point on the agenda, do not forget to write all the topics on a large piece of paper. Leave sufficient space for addition by other participants.

A typical example is shown in figure 3.

2. The Participants

10 participants maximum

Decide who should take part in the meeting. Too many people in a meeting hamper progress and lead to ineffectiveness. If possible do not invite more than 10 particpants.

For the selection of suitable participants some additional questions concerning each person will be helpful.

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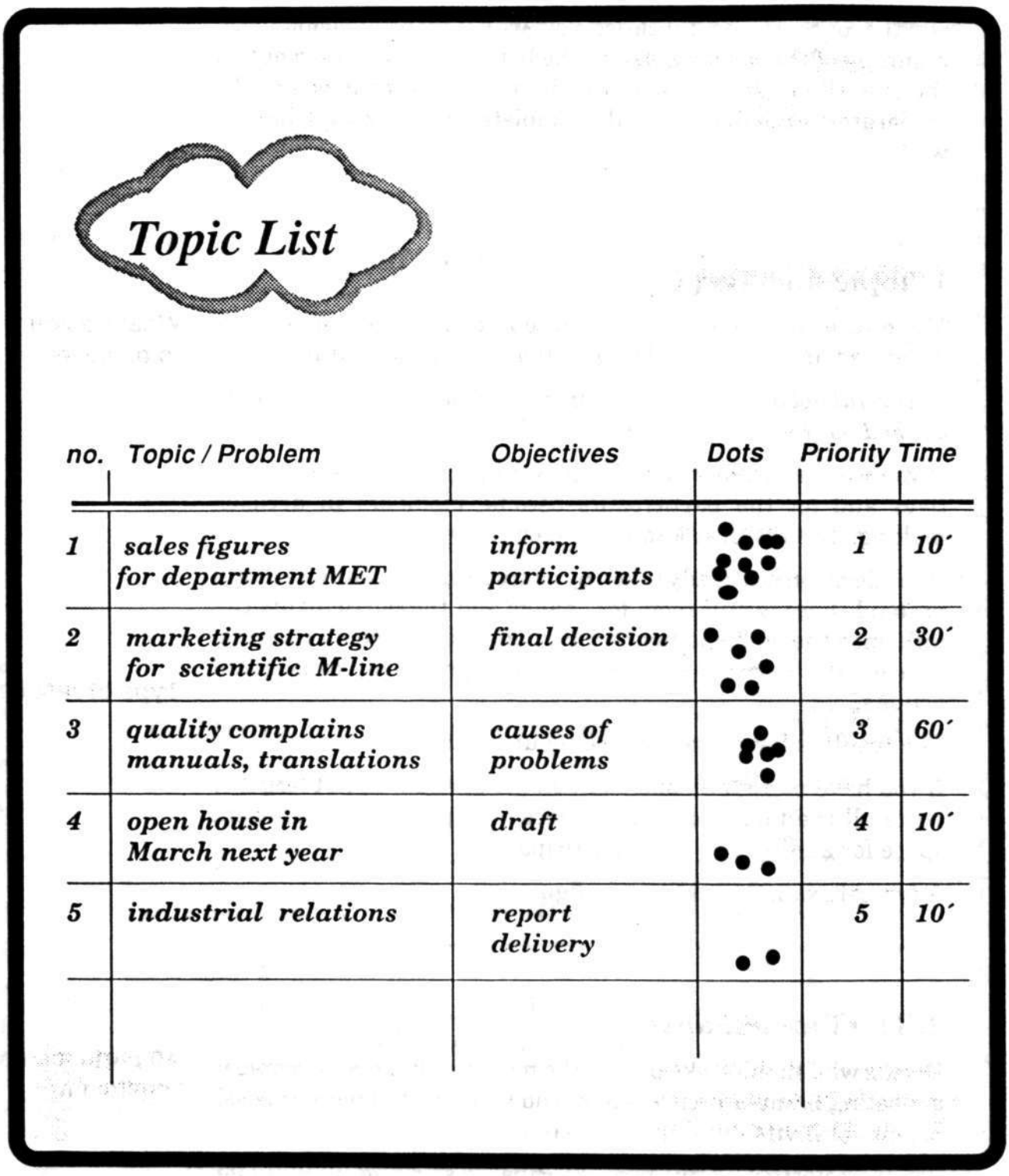

Figure 3
Top Item List

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• The relation to the topics:

How far is the person directly involved in the specific task, in the problem of decision?

Recruting the adequate people

• How intensive is his or her personal involvment in the topic?

• How competent is the person for the task?

• Should this person attend the meeting, if so: all the time?

• Is the person familiar with the method » Meetings moderated« as described here? Does he or she know about the rule and techniques for group working?

• Is there something special about this person, which might be helpful for the moderator or myself to know?

3. The Moderator/s

Who is the moderator?

Here the question is asked who moderates this meeting. Can and do you want to as the one inviting take over this task or would it not be better to appoint a neutral moderator?

In order to reach a decision you should answer the following question:

• Where is my position within the hierachy, in relation to the other participants? Are you or do you have the highest position?

If so you should not attempt to be the moderator. The danger, that you could dominate the complete group with your opinion is too great. Any possible form of teamwork would be affected.

Involvement causes blindness

• How involved am I emotionally with the points of discussion?

If you are personally involved you should not be the moderator. You can not remain neutral and there ist a great danger that you would criticize the other participants. Thereby losing the necessary objectiveness.

• How much energy will you devote to finding an outcome?

If you want to be involved in the group work you should not be the moderator. It is not possible to do everything, to moderate, to participate, and remain neutral with other participants contributions. As moderator in this situation you would tend to force your own ideas. That is why when moderating you should not get involved in content.

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Checklist for moderated Meetings

Date	from	to	Place	Room	Telefon

Topics	Type of Solution

Participants	knows themes	knows methods	Remarks

Moderator/s

Preinformation	who	to whom	date

Equipment

.....Overhead projector	.....Flip chart	.....Pin wall	Supplement
.....Overhead sheet	.....Flipchart paper type A	.....Pin wall paper	.....
.....Overhead sheet role	.....Flipchart paper type B	.....Modarator´s Case	.....
.....Marker			

Layout / Seeting	Food	Beverage

Figure 4
Checklist

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Agreeing upon Targets

Clear goals are the basis for successful business. This principle also applies for the meeting as an instrument of communication and working together in a business. Most meetings can be prepared as has already been discussed in chapter 2.

Check targets

Moreover the targets were made clear, although only from the view of those preparing and those invited. Between preparation and invitation there is usually a timespan of a few days. During this time new aspects can come to light, which can be taken intoaccount in the meeting.

Be always open for amendments

A prepared agenda should be left open for amendments.

Before it gets underway

Whenever people come together in a group they must get used to the group situation. This situation is very different for the participants, depending on if they know each other or not, how well they know each other and with what expectations they come to the group. If the participants know each other, the introductory phase can be very short and does not need very special preparation. If the participants are not acquainted with each other or only a few people are acquainted with each other, the arrival phase should be used to break the ice. There are a number of instruments or possibilities which will enable the participants to come together.

Get in touch activly

The Participants List

Prepare a list, whereby the participants enter their own name. Do not just ask for names. Additional information which could be

Let each other know who is who

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Schedule
for moderated Meetings

no.	Action	who	together with	Duration	total

Figure 5
Checklist

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useful or interesting for the other participants can also be asked

e.g.
- Department at work
- Expectation at the meeting
- Apprehensions
- Special targets or wishes

The participants don´t arrive at the meeting all together. Allow each one to enter their information without hurrying and let then study what is already there. The expectations and apprehensions are often initial conversation topics.

The Dot Rating

Create awareness

Introduce the topic by asking

The participants often have something else in mind when they come into the meeting. To get prepared and start dot rating is a good opening form for a session. Related to the topic one may ask questions like: »As ... in our company I would feel...«

Evaluate the outcome

After the dotting is completed, ask all about their feelings and ideas of the outcome and add their statement to the chart.The mood barometer is a very general way of asking and provides information on the current mood for all; everyone can contribute not only those who are dominant all the time.

Use scale for mood in the beginning and at the end

It is useful to do it again at the end of the meeting. The degree of satisfaction with outcome of the meeting will be visualized quite easily.

The moderator introduces the topic list, talks of targets and the estimated time needed. Are there topics that must be dealt with, should the moderator label these as 'must' topics.Have all topics referred to by the moderator he should see that all topics and targets have been understood.

The topic list is always open for new suggestions

In the next step the moderator asks if the topic list is complete and includes additional suggestions, not forgetting the targets.

Priority and involvement expressed by dotting

When the list is completed, priorities are allocated.The multi-dot system is one of the best methods to use. The moderator asks the question: »What topics are important in today´s meeting?« This question is asked both in the verbal and the visual form.

Each participant receives a sticky-back dot which they use to stick beside an important topic. The dots are entered in a space headed »evaluation.«

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List of Participants

	given Name / Name	from	Expectations	Fears
1	Martine Steinbeck	GD-II	ever lasting	no decission
2	Bob Swope	VR	better terms	no facilities
3	Harry Cobbet	Repco	new car	none
4	Olga Tolhurst	GB-III	proper info	soft soap
5	Morten Daamgaard	MET	don't know now	unprepared collegues
6	Mea Morrison	GKN		

•
•
•

Figure 6
List of participants

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Each participant receives half as many dots as there are topics on the list. Per topic only one dot so that no doninance can be exercised by an individual. When all the dots have been stuck on the list, the moderator counts the dots per topic and writes the a list with the topic that received the most dots per topic in the first position.

Must Topics are excluded from rating

If there are 'must' topics« these are taken out of the list as they are going to be included, anyway.

The length of the meeting is calculated before hand, the time needed per topic and the priority of each. From this it can be seen which topics can be included and which cannot because of time. Because all priorities have not been included it is possible that an amount of resignation could come from the group at the stage.

The moderator has prepared a »catalogue of measures to be taken« which would be used here for the first time. Topics which are not included are saved for a later meeting or worked on as homework.

The next chapter deals with what needs to be considered in the compilation of such a catalogue.

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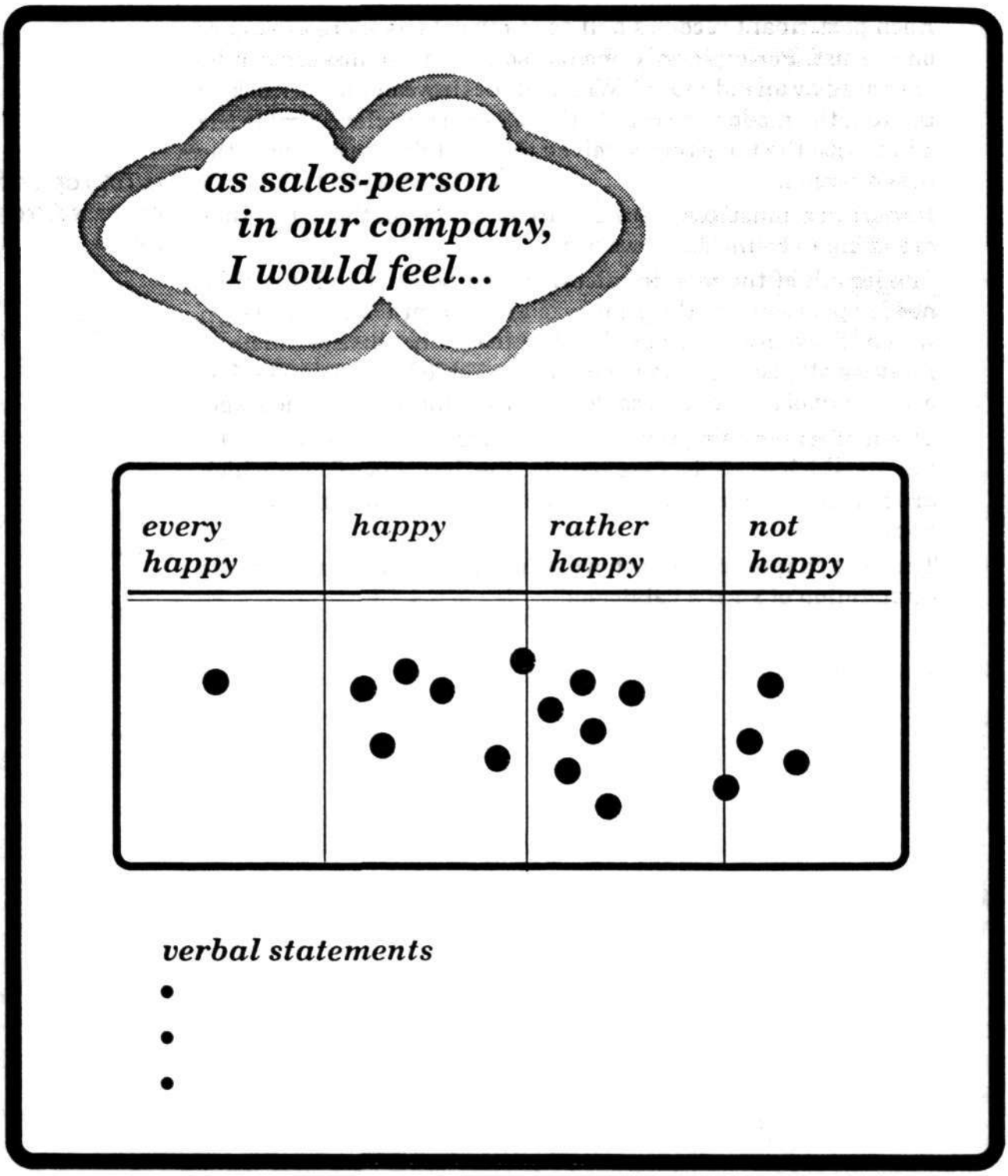

Figure 7
One-point rating

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Catalogue of Measures to be taken

Results should appear openly

Meeting participants have often complained that the time at a meeting in comparison to the results is much too long. In other words, too few solid results. And when results have been targeted no one feels any longer obliged to work further. The ideal instrument to avoid this frustration is the catalogue of measures.

All compiled resolutions are entered in the catalogue by the moderator. All decisions are converted into concrete measures to be taken, so that they become workable. a decision is not worth anything so long, as nothing is said as to who is to do what. When put down in the list it becomes more an obligation and a duty for the participants.

Fix final goals

How should the moderator act in order to fill the catalogue? Currently, every measure will get a number. This is helpful in cross reference, as well as later in the summery. Each action agreed apon in the meeting will be writen in the column *'measure'*. The moderator is not allowed to put down his own opinion but what is agreed in the group. He should however insist on clear and precise descriptions. Sometimes the proper definition come immediately, when the question is put forward: »What do we expect from this measure? What is the goal?«

Only present applicants are included

The section *'who'* must be filled out, with names of persons who are present at the meeting. Departments or titles are immaterial. Nobody feels obliged to be active when only the department is enterred. If the name in the section »who« is written of someone not present at the meeting that person will not feel very obliged to comply with the instructions.

How would you feel if you read your name at a meeting you were not involved in and expected to take an amount of work which you were not consulted of? You were not even present. What has to bedone, when someone not present has to do something? As a moderator one has to be careful how this is to be formulated.

Example: Mr X is to authorize a budget for advertisment which

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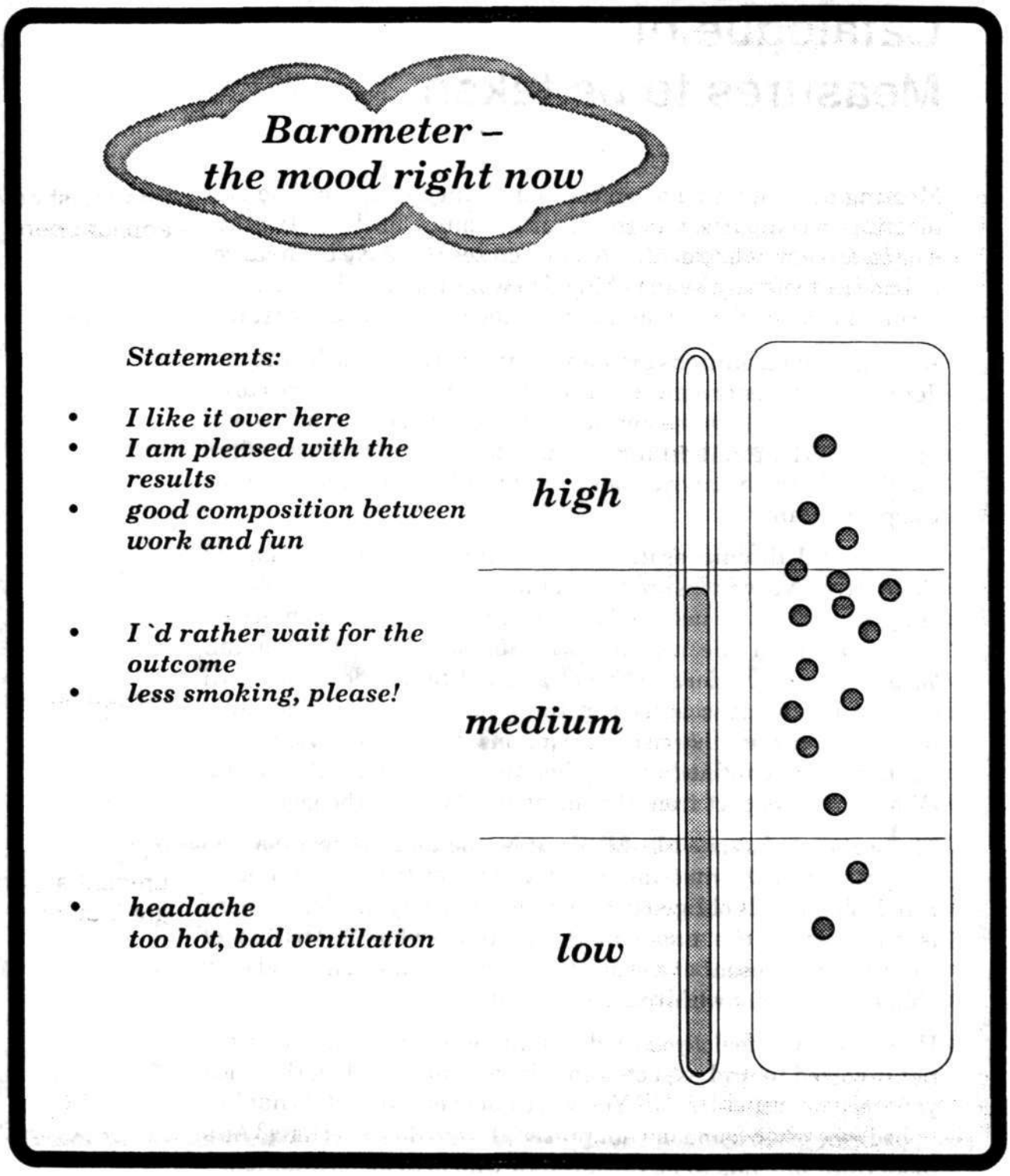

Figure 8
Mood Barometer

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had not been planned up to now and was not present at the meeting. The measure mist be written as follows: Mr Y who was present at the meeting speaks to Mr X and convinces him of the necessity for sales promotion. The title might be: »To reach a decision on special sales drive.«

Rule: In the *'Measures to be taken catalogue'* in the section *who'* are only to be filled in those present at the meeting. In the section*'with who'* names are enterred of those either present or not who need to be included in order to reach a target.

Be realistic in time to be given

Example: Mr A has been alotted to form a work circle, which has the task to work on a advertising campaign for the next two years. This should be carried out with five other collegues and on completion presented to a decision committee. The measure reads as follows: » To form a work circle whose task is to develop an advertising campaign for the next two years. The aim is called »Decision preparation.« In the column »With who« are the names of the persons B, C, D and E.

Determine the date of completion exactly

A further column of the catalogue of measures is headed »Completion date.« Here the moderator arranges with the person from column »Who« a time frame for completion. It is recommended to take a calendar and enter a completion date. Entries like »End of May«, »Immediately«, »As quick as possible« are not clear and therefore not binding. Do not forget to enter the date and the year. It is always best to be on the safe side.

Documentation

When the meeting is positive and the participants have taken an active part in the discussion, the moderator will have little or no problems with the columns *'who / with who and by.'* The stronger the participation within the group is the higher the identification with the group outcome and the overall willingness to accept the result.

Concentration

Sometimes it is necessary to »brake« the participant and remind them that they also have something else to do at the firm. The catalogue of measures accomplishes a number of tasks, when used as we advised:

- **It documents clearly the results of the meeting so far, for all to see.**

Supervision

- It gives the moderator the possibility to keep to the topic and related points which do not belong.

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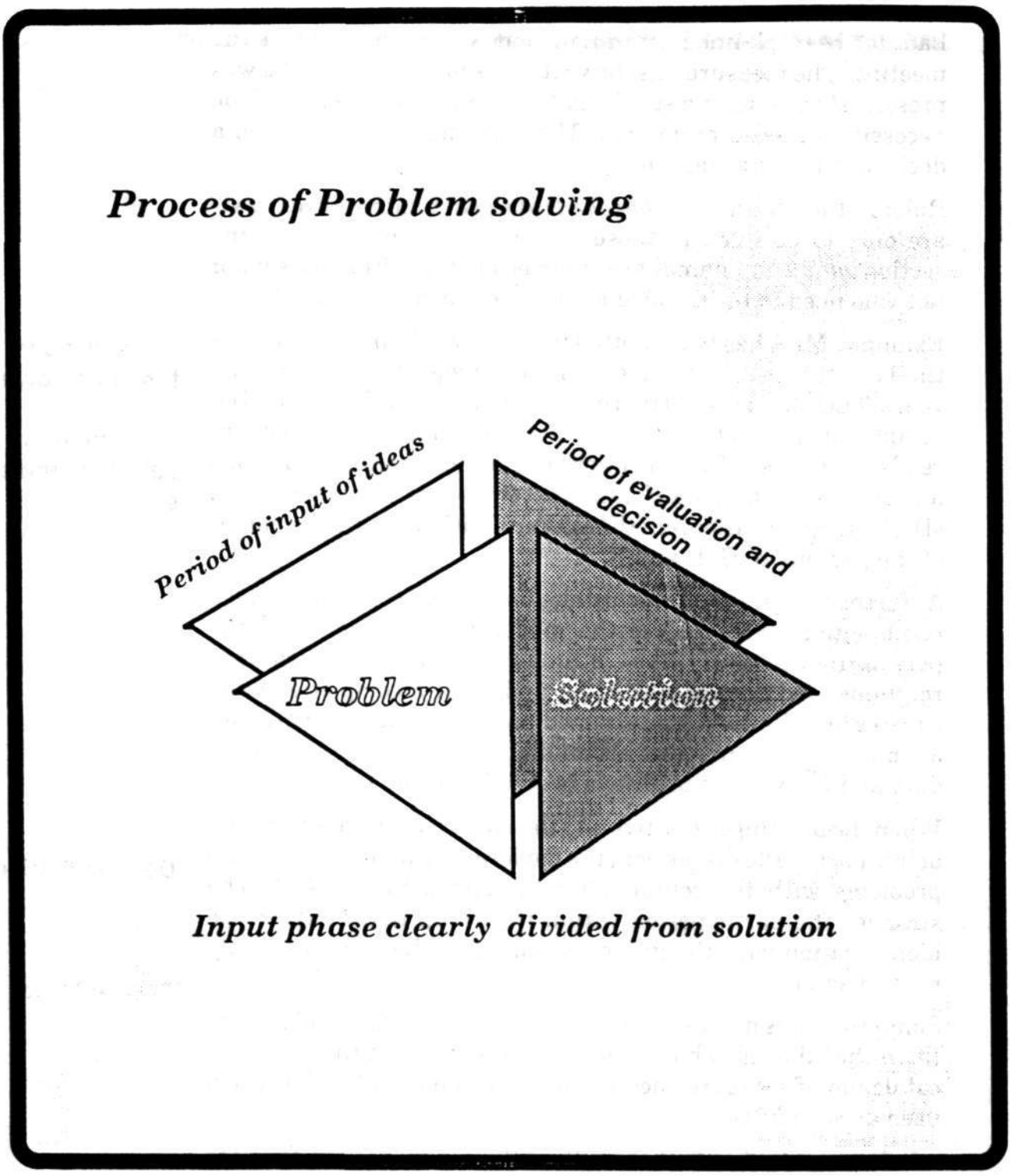

Figure 11
Problem solving Process

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•It avoids misunderstanding on agreed points, those involved and appointments, as each participant can read the measures to be taken.

• It helps to motivate the participants as they can see what they have already achieved.

• It gives concentrated protocol, which acts as a monitor. It is clear to see from all participants who kept to the agreements and who did not, as this will appear on the wall, in the next meeting, at the latest.

The role of the Expert

Clearly described by the experts

With topics that are discussed in a meeting, there is usually one who knows very much. Sometimes it is the boss, sometimes it is an employee, who is confronted with the topic during his daily work or who has already dealt with this item. This expert plays an important role in the group, but he can also cause problems.

Before measures or problem solutions can be thought about or discussed, the expert must give an exact account. This can be verbal or with the help of visual aids, plans or facts. If the description is purely verbal, the moderator must visualize what is said continually.

Avoid premature judging

During the presentation by the expert questions on understanding are allowed, not however critizism on his methods or contents. The goal is the understanding by all participants for the present situation.

Instruct the expert how to act in the various stages

This phase of problem solving is accomplished , when everyone has understood, what the meeting is about. If you are the moderator you will notice a smooth transition by the questioning of the expert as to suggestions. You can tell these ideas as they are formed as questions e.g. »Can we make our customers this offer?« As moderator make sure that all ideas have been written down,

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as referred to in the next chapter. However be sure everything is clear.

Separete finding Ideas from rating

Together with this important role of the expert, to inform others, at a later point the role of rating ideas and suggestions. Here lies a problem for both the expert and the participants: A separation between finding ideas and rating.

Put yourself in the place of an expert. You are an expert on that topic. You understand more than all those present. This you notice by the type of questions. You need some time to solve the problems. How can the other participants help you with » Your problem?« Is it not wasted time, to discuss this problem at all with lay people? Have you experienced this? Now the ideas and suggestions from the participants are uttered. Ideas you have had yourself and discarded for good reasons. Thoughts on a possible solution as you imagine it to be. This does not work. This has been tried in the past without success. Is your expertise to be questioned?

Offer the expert to retreat during the creative phase

If the expert can take the criticism, new ideas will occur. He / she has to take one step backwards at this stage in order to avoid the breaking down of idea finding. Ideas and associations can only flow in a climate of non-criticism.

At this point the moderator must stay diciplined with the help of the play rules. In order to solve a problem it may be necessary to exclude the expert from the work group for a time.

After the problem has been presented the expert can leave the group and is not present during the creative session. When all the ideas have been collected, he or she can enter the group again in order to include the expertise during the rating. This solution is only advisable during longer problem solving sessions of an innovative character. The expert should be consulted on this arrangement beforehand, so that no interpersonal problems crop up.

The expert informs and includes his own expertise. In the phase of idea finding criticism has to be avoided and all suggestions treated as precious input. When the suggestions are rated she or he becomes active again.

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Handling the Topic

Tools and techniques are determind by the final goal

How do you handle the topics in a meeting? To answer this question you must first decide what target you wish to achieve. Do you only want to inform the participants? Do you want to find out the causes of a problem? Do you want to work on solution alternatives for a problem? Do you want to reach a decision on a common bases? When you know what form of action you wish to achieve you can decide on the particular work technique to use.

Give visual support

You should inform the participants. Prepare all information so that it can be visualized. All participants receive visual help as well as the spoken word. Please do not use A4 paper, but enter the information on a pin-board or flip-chart. Complex associations should be explained so that all are on the same information level. Avoid individual interpretations and misunderstanding. When questions occur later you can refer qickly to the point and add further information.

Use cards for questions and answers

The charts can be done before the meeting, in essence or completely. When the theme is visually prepared it is used as the guideline in the session and helps the moderator streamlining following conversation.

When the content is not visualized, this is completed parallel to the verbal utterances of those to be informed. However the presentation of the chart must be completed before discussion starts.

As the moderator you should try and get the participants to write all contributions on cards, so that no idea gets lost. You collect the cards without remarks or commentary. At the same time you avoid jumping to conclusion and premature findings. Otherwise going away from the topic can be experienced.

You want to find the reason for the problem. As a working method you can use card questioning. The mderator writes the question on a pin-board and reads it aloud. He gets the group to write the ideas on cards. The number of cards is not limited, but

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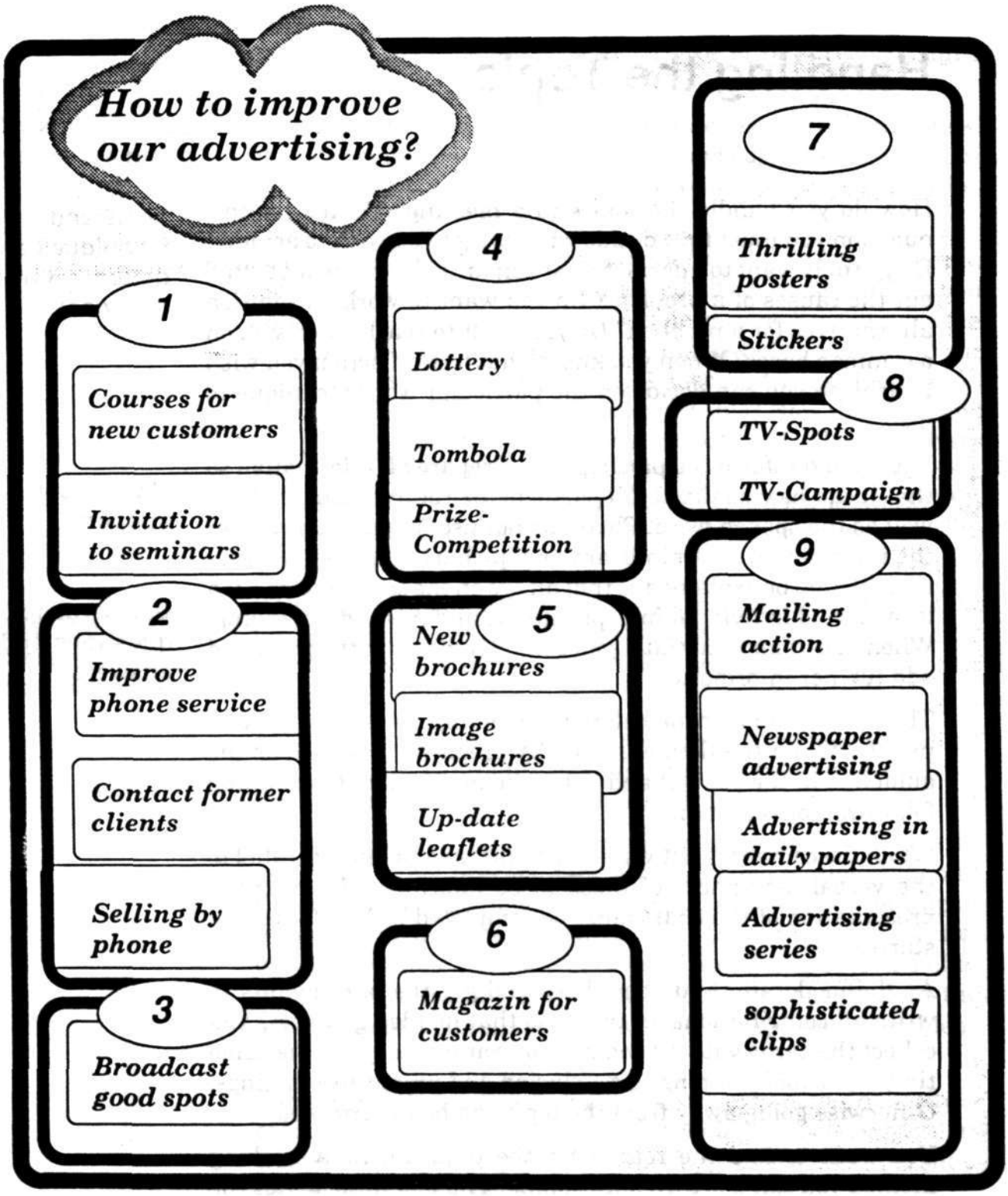

Figure 12
Structure of individual contributions

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each idea should be written as heading on a separate card; not more than 3 lines per card. Do not use capital letters, for they are difficult to identify from afar.

Right questions evoke suitable answers

The questions the same as the answers. The formulation decides the type of answers you will get and how many. If you ask for example: »What are the reasons for the decline in contracts?« you will receive not only the already known reasons but also assumptions. But if you ask: »Who is responsible for the decrease in contracts?« Names of persons, departments or groups will be given. It is therefore important to structure the question so that the answers fit the need.

After every participant has stopped writing and the collection of cards by the moderator has come to an end, structuring on the pin-board starts.

The Structuring of Cards (Clustering)

Structured according to the understanding of the group

The clustering is there to introduce a structure to the multitude of suggestions from the participants. As moderator it is not up to you to give instructions nor force the cards in a structure of your own. Your opinion, which problems are linked and where the cards should go, is not asked. The written statement or remark is arranged by theauthor´s instruction, that is by the person who wrote it, because he alone knows what he means.

Fundamental rule when clustering: *Ask instead of Telling!*

How to proceed in details?

- The question is written on en empty chart and sufficient pin needles are provided (ap. 40).
- Take the first card and read aloud while showing it to the group. The author of the card can recognize his / her contribution and add further statements. Fix the card to the board and take

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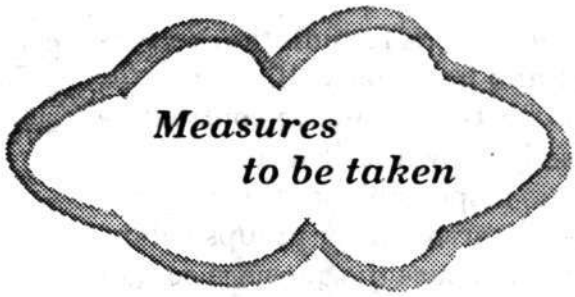

No.	Measures to be taken	who	together with ...	by	Goal
1	investigation in demand for future education	Bob	Gussie	31.3.	facts + figures
2	description of target group	Liz	Mark, Tim	14.4.	new sheet
3	timetable for sales promotion	Tom	Karyn, Ebbe	26.4.	no over-time
4	budget for special advertisment	Mea	Rick	24.4.	decision
5	recruite software people	Eve	Claus	1.5.	5 pers. more
6	train for AQL systems approach	Fritz	Ebbe	1.5.	guide-lines

Figure 13
Catalogue of Measures to be taken

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the following one. Is this card close to the content of the previous one or does it open a new category? This is the way to tackle all the cards and then allow the participants the structures. There will be larger and smaller clusters even one card may form a separate contribution.

With bigger groups and complexe questions you should always have a second pin-board at the ready.

Try to follow the advice:

Rules for good clustering of cards

❶ Accept all cards and cluster them

❷ Do not drop cards, if they repeat what is already on the pinboard, but add the following ones directly to the first contribution (this is also an indication how many partici pants feel the same).

❸ When there are differences of opinion within the group as where a specific card should be placed, the author of the card has the last say. Be careful, if no one takes responsibility for the card, do not insist in tracing the person; he may prefer not be identified for reasons you might not recognize at the time. Allow anonymity! With unusual or funny cards this can often be the case.

❹ When a card could belong in two groups get the person to write a second one and deposite then in both clusters.

❺ Reframe from any sort of comment whether positive or negative.

❻ Accept cards any time! Even after everything seems finished, a precious contribution will arise inspired by the display.

❼ Be careful that single cluster do not contain too many cards (rule of the thumb: 10 card per cluster).

When the group is exceptionally large and / or many cards have been written, choose an assistant from the group to support you in reading and pinning.

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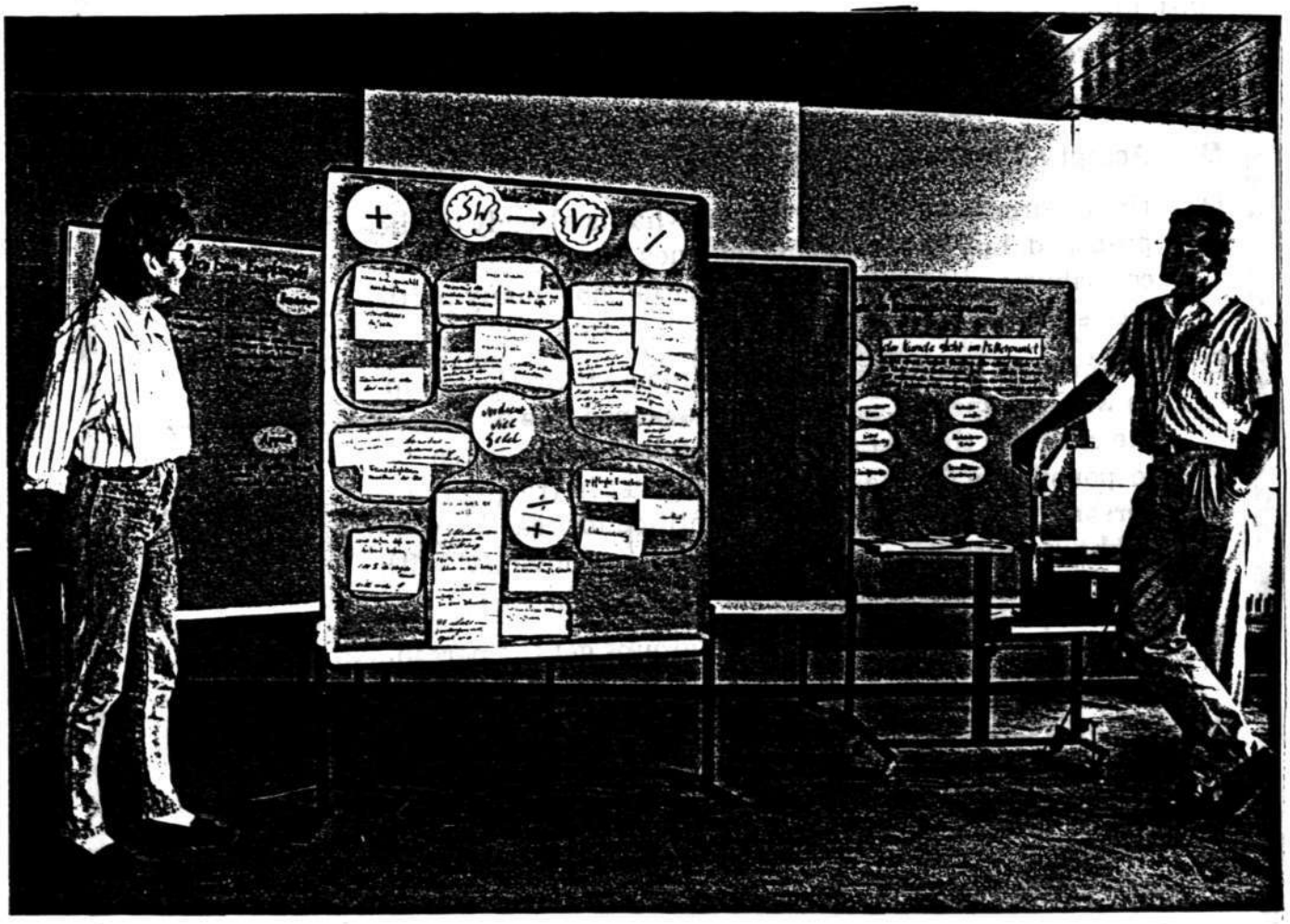

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Constructing the List

Saving

Neutralizing

The idea of the list is to store and neutralize the clusters. It is easier to work with a list as a store and less problematical toeasier to work with a list as a store and less problematical to store especially when the content is to be used at more than one session.

To neutralize means, clusters with more cards to give the same power as single card clusters. This is important in the rating of the list. During the discussion period it is advisable to switch directly but smoothly to constructing the list. That means that the raw list must be prepared before the meeting. It is also good to have a second list prepared in case there are many headings.

Group´s active part in finding headings

The moderator starts with any cluster and reads all cards one by one. Then he asks the group: »How can we contain all these cards in one heading?« The construction of the heading should come from the group and not from the moderator.

When the group is agreed on the construction it is enterred in the list and followed by the next cluster. Frame the cluster and number it. In doing so you will always have the connection of the heading in the list and the cluster originated from.

Every cluster has to be treated

It can also occur that in searching for heading that a cluster must be split because it has been acknowledged that two aspects have been included.

Encourage addition any time

The opposite is also possible that a single card belongs to a cluster. Single cards should be transferred directly onto the list and not changed. When in doubt, do not force cards into existing clusters but open new ones. When the list is finished, you have a good overall viev of the topics. At this point the moderator asks the group if there is anything missing. Allow changes to take place.

Change the setting when new ideas flock in

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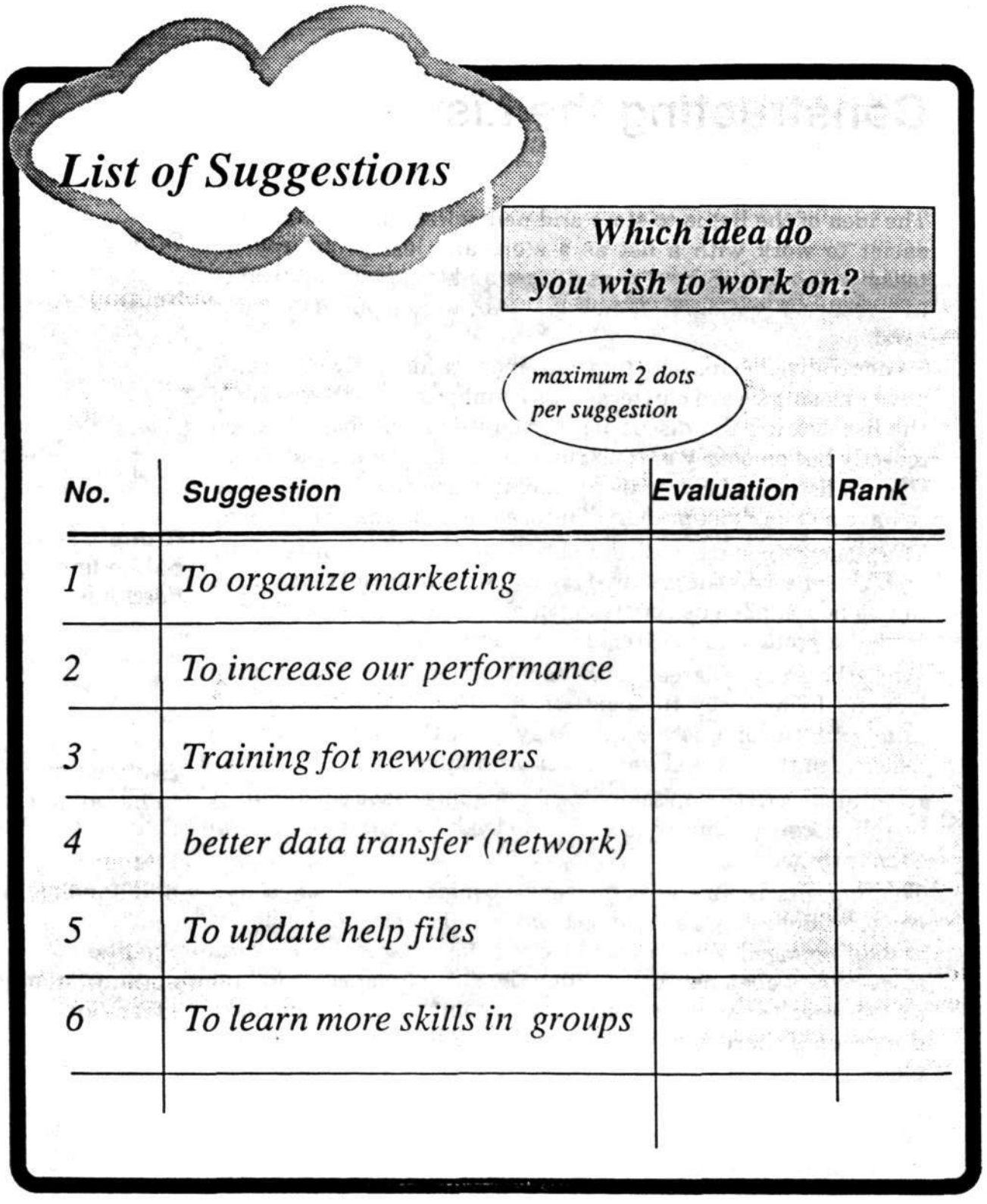

No.	Suggestion	Evaluation	Rank
1	To organize marketing		
2	To increase our performance		
3	Training fot newcomers		
4	better data transfer (network)		
5	To update help files		
6	To learn more skills in groups		

Figure 14
List with question and rule for dotting

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Multi-Dot-Question

The ideas and solution suggestion on the list are not all suitable to solve the problem. The purpose of the multi-dot-question is to allocate priorities.

Visualize the priority question

First formulate and visualize the question, orientated by priorities. This question must be visual to all participants at the top of the list. Depending on what sort of question you are going to ask will determine the priorities. If you ask for example: »Which solution do I like most?« This will induce personal choice from the participants. If, however you ask: »Which solution is easier to realize?« the assessment will of course be different.

Maximun two dots per solution or suggestion

Before you distribute the sticky back dots, you should inform the participants of the rules of allocation. Nothing will be achieved if you allow participants to stick as many dots as they like where ever they like. Maximum two dots per suggestion. If this rule is not adhered to, the solution will be of little use. On the other hand if you only allow one dot per suggestion then you probably will not have any priorities. The dotting rule should also be shown at the top of the list, so that no misunderstanding occurs. If you distribute half the amount of dots as suggestions on the list, priorities will be set.

The formular is:

$$\frac{\text{Number of ideas on the list}}{2} = \text{Number of dots for each participants}$$

How many dots per participant?

And another tip when distributing the dots. Do not give the boss, department leader or the expert the dots first. In this way you will avoid any manipulation by the hierarchy.

Count dots and allocate priorities

When all dots have been stuck, count the dots per solution and write the amount in the column »Rank«. The solution with the same amount of dots are given the same position. The multi-dot-question is a method of decision, which can be carried out quickly, when compared with discussion, and very important that all members of the group are involved under the same circumstances.

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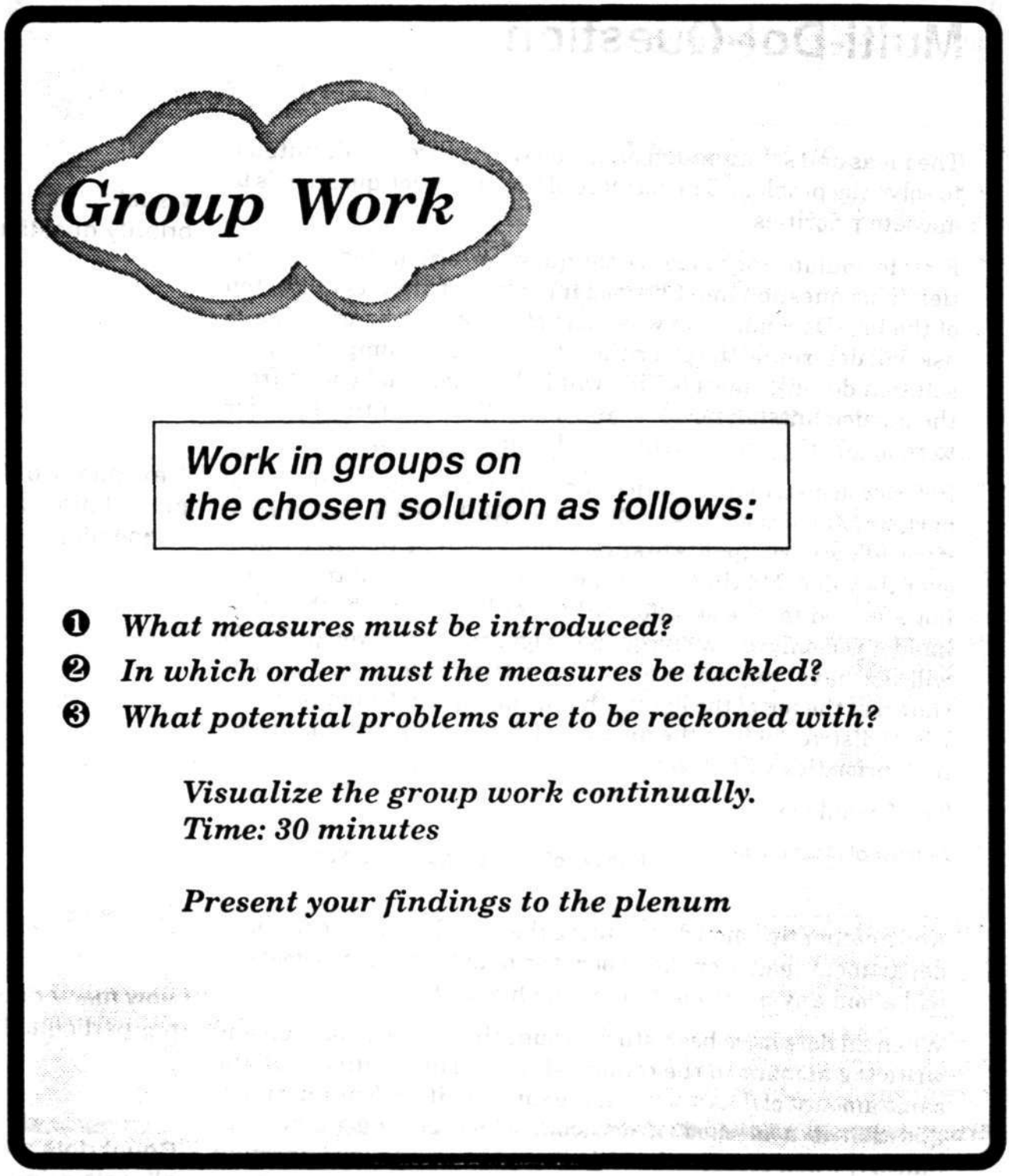

Figure 15
Verbal Group instructions

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Working in small Groups

Small groups are more effektive

The problem dealt with is to be alloted a solution as the next step. With bigger groups – five or more – move work in small groups is possible. By dealing with more solutions parallel the effectiveness of the group is inceased. The personal competence, experience and inclination of the individual can be more strongly taken into account.

Clear groupwork instructions

In group and plenum, work the following procedure can be used, without forming smaller groups. The task for the group must be clear and precise. Here the principle of visualization is again important. Write the steps for the groups point for point on the pin-board. Make sure visualization is carried out continually. Allocate an amount of time and inform the participants, that the results are going to be presented before the plenum.

Structure for groupwork must be prepared

The group instructions can be visualized by the moderator before the beginning of the meeting. You will not lose any time if this is done as before the meeting you should allow yourself enough time. As an alternative to verbal instructions for the work groups you can advise a structure in which they work within.

Depending on the target of the meeting other structures are possible. During the last steps of the meeting you collected problems, wrote a problem list, gave priorities, and now you want to work or deal with different problems in small groups. Fig 16 will help you with this structure.

Exact groupwork instructions makes sure, that the solutions reached can be utilized further. With the same task for more groups the results are comparable and can be combined without problems. By doing this the groups loose no time with long discussions, on how the task is to be achieved. Good instructions increase the effectivity of the groups.

Who works in which group?

Be careful: Do not set narrow limitations. There must be enough room for creativity and experience.

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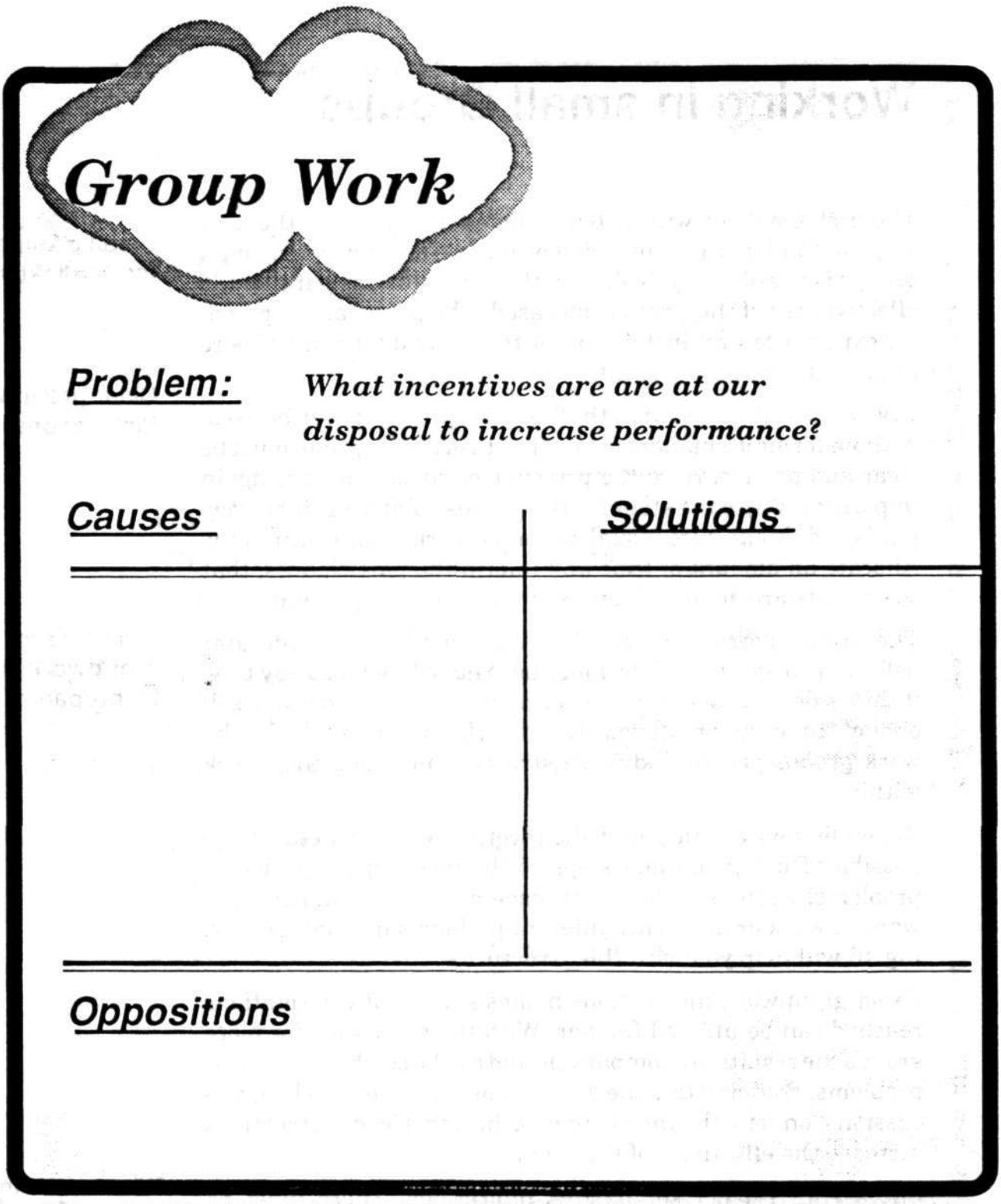

Figure 16
Structured groupwork instructions

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Voluntary basis for assignment

In the preparation phase of the moderated meeting you should decide, how the conference participants are to be assigned into small groups. A possibility is on a voluntary basis. Give each participant a small round card, which he should write his name on. Then ask all participants, to place those cards beside the solution they wish to work on. If a name is the only one beside a solution then you should ask the other members of the group if anyone is prepared to change their mind. Try to protect the minority thinker. If nobody can be found to participate ask the other way round. »Do you think you could interest yourself in another topic?« Try to avoid single person groups.

Task oriented assignment

Group assignment on a voluntary basis brings together those who have the greatest interest in this topic. Disinterested or reluctant participants are avoided when this method is applied. Involvement of the group members is certain. If the topic involves different areas of the business, you can use a system of assignment which brings together all those who are contained in this area.

Assigning by random

You achieve by this process the task from a department specific view. Homogeneous groups can however be inclined to go under and tend to elate themselves.

Group assingning on a random basic is a third possibility. Take the three solutions with the highest priorities from the point of view of the group and count them. This system leads to a heterogeneous group form. Such groups develop a creative climate much easier and the interchange of very varied ideas and experience is demanded. There is the danger, of course, that the agreement principle in the group is very high, or that individual members of the group show little interest in the task.

Whichever form you choose, depends on the task and the target of the small group. How the small groups are constructed, should be decided during the preparation before the meeting.

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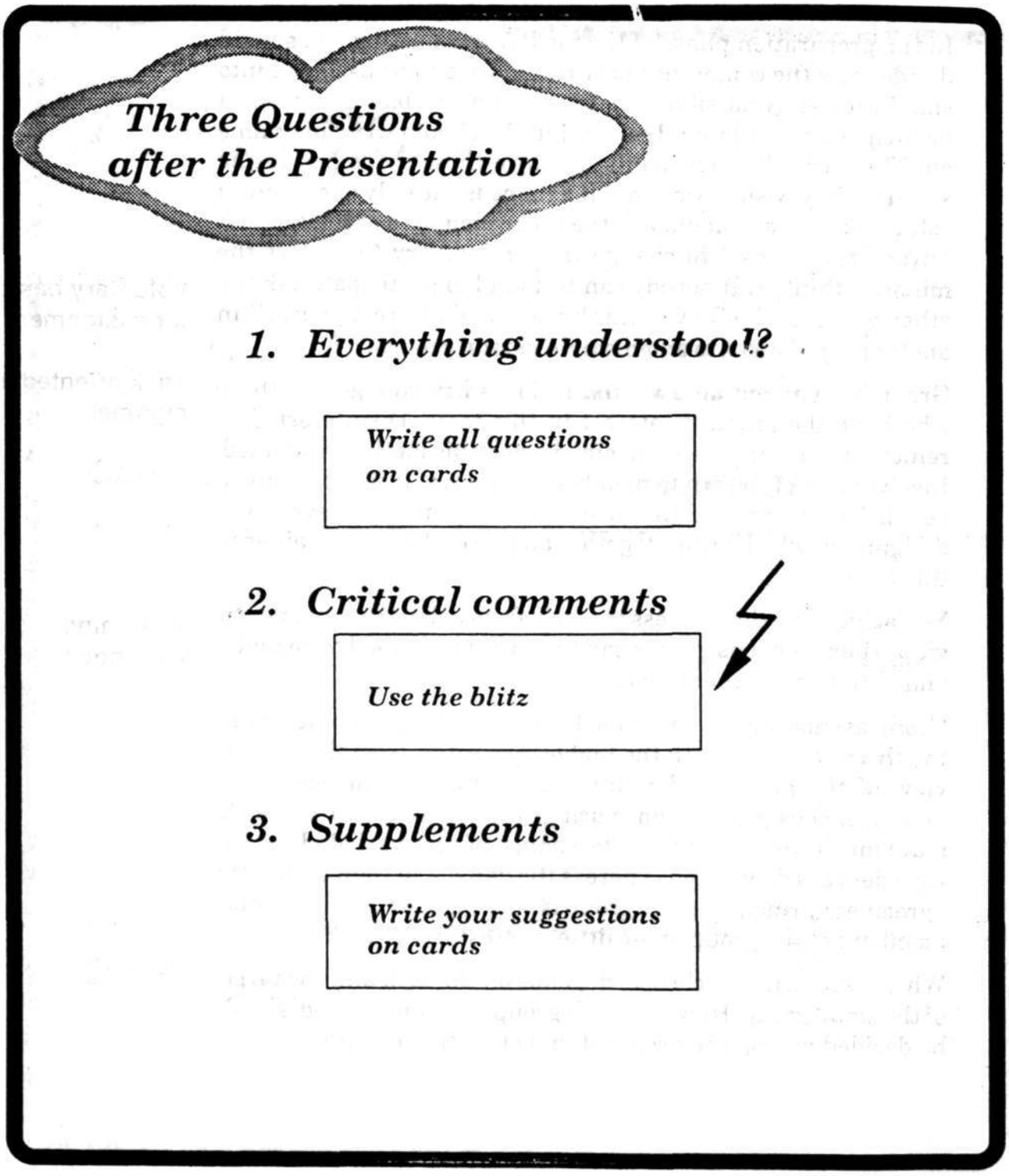

Figure 17
Three Questions after the Presentation

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Presentation of Results

Present all results, allways!

Small group work without presentation! When you introduce group work, you must allow the results to be presented. During the work in a group an identification is developed with the result and a certain amount of pride with the individual performance. The group need this positive experience of presenting in order to motivate them for future work.

Additions and questions only after the presentation

The continous visualization during the group work is the prerequisite for a workable presentation. This means you should not forget, in the group instructions to demand continuous visualization. After the group work all groups return with their pin-boards to the plenum and present their findings one after the other. The pin-boards which are not being used at the moment should be put behind the ones that are so that the concentration of the group is not distracted.

Before the moderator asks for the presentation introduce the following steps.

1. No interruption of the presentation

2. Questions of having understood, critical comments and supplements are to be uttered after the presentation.

3. All group members are asked, to write on cards, all comments and supllements during the presentation. These cards are then pinned in the group findings and are dealt with one by one by the moderator, after the presentation. As the moderator you should visualize the three questions after the presentation.

The small group thinks ahead

Explain the sense and reason of the group work, in connection with the three questions. Group work makes possible the principle of work or job sharing. Numerous solutions of the problem can be worked on parallel and time will be saved. The individual groups should, when presenting their findings not consider the results as their own personal property. This piece of advice is important to be given by the moderator, otherwise this can lead to unfruitful discussion after the presentation. The group members do not want any form of critical comments and supple-

Supplements possible

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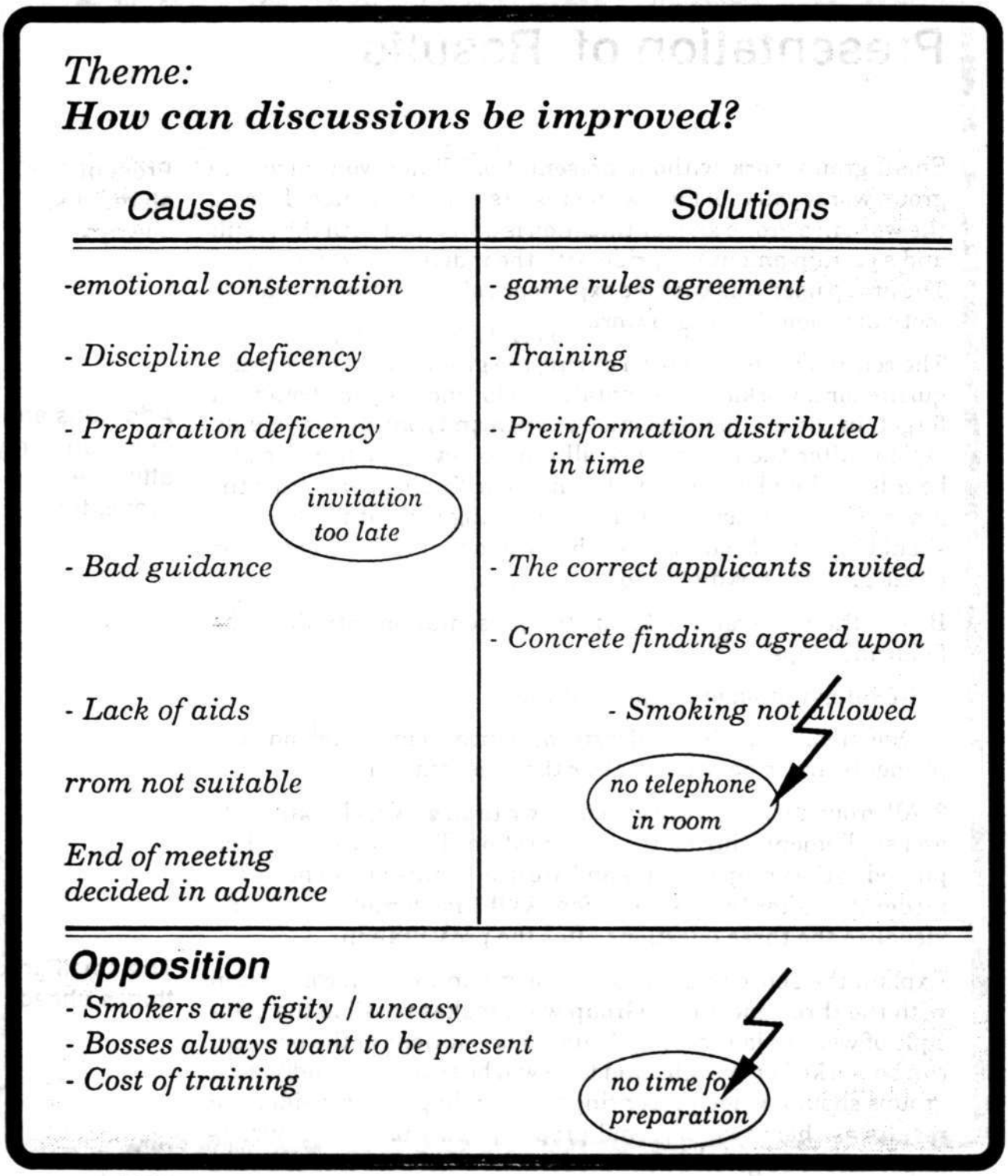

Fig. 18
Group work findings after the presentation

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ments to be utered without defending their position. Make clear that the group work results can take longer than 30 minutes and are still presentable, even when they are not finished. You achieve two things:

- the group stays open for supplements after the presentation
- the groups do not ask for more time to finish

With presentations it is quite possible, to introduce three important game rules and to practise them:

1. Written Discussion

Written discussions

All questions and supplements are written on cards and visualized in the presentation of the group work findings. The thoughts and ideas of all group members are tackled and can be discussed card for card after the presentation.

2. Conflict arrow (Blitz)

Mark conflicts and disagreement with a blitz

When differences of opinion occur the controversal points are marked with a blitz or conflict arrow. This documents that no concensus of opinion exists. Criticism is taken into consideration, avoiding the unnecessary and time consuming discussion.

3. Avoid killer phrases

Avoid destructive utterances

Killer phrases are destructive comments, e.g. »we have never done it that way before«, or »this idea can only come from a layman«. You are not helping the group to advance in fact only »killing« ideas and suggestions. The consequences of such utterances is an emotional reaction of the participants, without any use to the findings. As moderator you have to make it clear to the critic, how useless his part is, when you ask him, how his involvement in the presentation findings is positive.

To differentiate supplements of the group from original presented findings, ask the participants, to write their supplements on oval cards so as to follow how the total findings were achieved.

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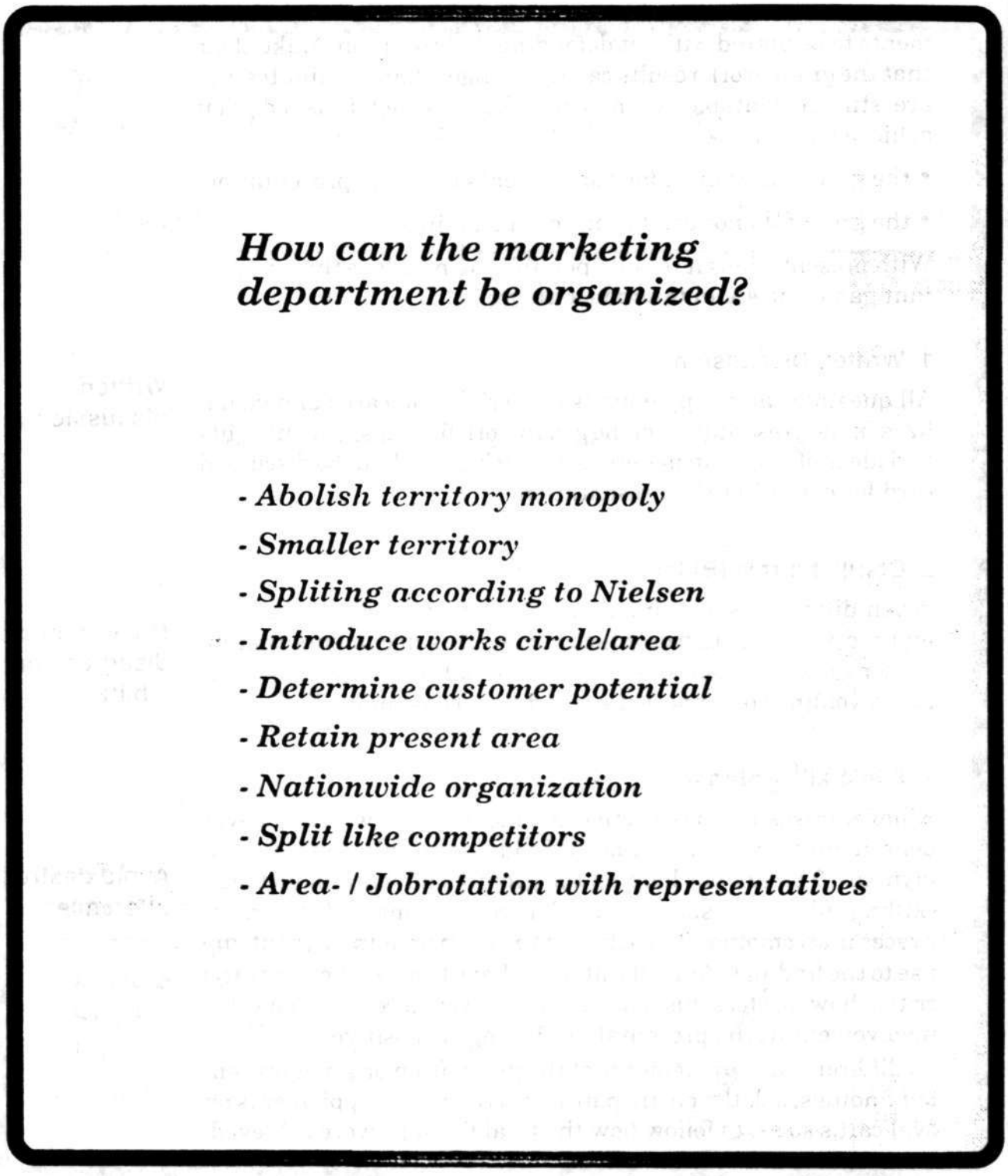

Figure 19
Open Questions

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Open Questioning

As an alternative to card questioning, which has been written about in chapter 7, the system of open questioning is also available or possible. A question to the group is asked and visualized, about a problem or cause constructed.

Visualize extracts from verbal statements

The participants are now asked to give suggestions verbally. The moderator writes these suggestions on the pin-board. Before you write the individual opinions you should give the group feedback on what you have understood and what you should write. It is often necessary to filter out the exact formulation from a number of suggestions before you write anything. Misunderstandings and wrongly formulated points could occur. Make sure that the points made are written exactly as the participant wishes them to be. reframe from interpretation and supplementation of points which could be looked upon by the group members as manipulation.

Avoid dominance by a few

Make sure that each participant says something, in contrast to card questioning a dominant member of the group can monopolize this working technique. Give everyone, where possible, the chance to submit something. Make clear that each point made will be handled the same as the others and not discussed.

No criticism while searching for ideas

When you are collecting ideas, on how a problem is to be solved, criticism can easily occur on suggested points and a discussion erupts. Avoid any form of discussion while collecting ideas. The phase of finding ideas should be seperated from the phase of evaluation and decision. Criticism kills creativity at once, narrows the flow of ideas and promotes unnecessary and fruitless discussion.

Brainstorming as a creative method of finding ideas is the ideal application area for open questioning. Verbal utterances induce association from the other participants and encourages new ideas much stronger than the card form, where no verbal form is used.

In the beginning phase of idea finding or searching you will probably encounter difficulties, bringing the ideas to paper,

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especially when you are dealing with a larger group. If you find you cannot write as fast as the ideas are coming then ask a group member to help you.

Special creative idea searching rules can be used, which should be agreed upon by the group:

Rules for the group

- No criticism of ideas, whether verbal or nonverbal
- All ideas, especially the unusual ones are allowed
- All ideas visualize
- Allow fun as an element of creativity
- Idea searching not to be stopped too quickly, because the first ideas are usually the known or »normal« ones whereas the new ones often take longer.

Rules for the moderator

The following rules apply to the moderator when idea searching is taking place:

❶ No personal ideas

❷ No idea is to be given preferential treatment or on the other hand no idea is not be accepted.

❸ The problem to be solved as How-question to be formulated which promotes ideas.

When and where should the open questioning technique be introduced?

– *When brainstorming*
– *When you only expect to become a few ideas from the group.*
– *As a form of dicipline element with group discussion.*

It is your task as moderator, to visualize all discussion points. If you want to achieve this task, you must interrupt the talkative person, to ask for a summary and then to write it down exactly. With smaller groups of up to seven persons the open question technique is a splendid alternative to card questioning.

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The Four Game Rules

Agree on rules – do not force

The interpersonal communication in groups does not always occur according to a set pattern. As the moderator you should suggest game rules to the group which will help them and the group to increase the effectiveness. Offer the rules to the group and ask for them to be supplemented by the group. As far as the group is concerned rules which they have made themselves are far readily acceptable as rules which are enforced by someone else. The following game rules have been found to be of value.

1. Short comments

In discussion the participant has only a certain amount of time. As a thumb rule not longer than thirty seconds at a time.

30 seconds

Interrupt without hurting

As the moderator you should prevent any form of interruption which is contrary to the rules. So that the interrupted person does not feel offended try to introduce the interruption as follows: »Your idea is interesting. Please, summarize what you have said so that I can write it on the pin-board, otherwise the importance will be lost.«

This form is useful when used in connection with the next rule.

2. Visualize all central statements

Visualization is the greatest percentage of your work as the moderator. In a meeting, which lasts for more than a few hours nobody can contain everything in their head which has been said. So that you are able to achieve what is expected of you by the group you have to make sure that rule 1 is always adhered to. Only then are you in the position to write in short form or heading form.

Feedback provided by the moderator

Introduce, as a form of guidance or control the »reverse gear« in motion. Repeat approximately the comment and write it on the pin-boeard when the author agrees. Formulations like «have I understood you correctly...» or «can I write your idea as follows...« have always been useful statements or questions. A further advantage of the reverse gear, you avoid misunderstandings .

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The moderator always stays neutral

Be careful! Avoid your own interpretation of a point or part thereof. Stay neutral as the moderator.

Ask the group for assistance

If you cannot keep up with writing the suggestions of the participants because so many points are being uttered together ask a member of the group to help you with the writing. You can then concentrate fully on the guidance of the discussion and the exact formulation of the individual points while your co-moderator visualizes. The continual visualization acts as a point to point manuscript for the protocol.

3. Written Discussion

The topic is controversial, the participants are motivated, everyone has something to say ...

All ideas to be written on cards

Your job as moderator is difficult, to keep to the theme and at the same time to keep the discussion in check. In such situations the rule of written discussion is especially helpful.

All cards to be tackled

Each group member is asked to write his points of view on cards and place them on the pin-board himself. They can all work parallel and let off steam. No card, no idea, no argument gets lost. When all cards have been pinned, talk each card through to keep the thread of the discussion.

Game Rules

- ***Short discussion points***
- ***All central statements to be visualized***
- ***Written discussion***
- ***Conflict arrow when differences***

Figure 20
Game Rules

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Aids

In order to achieve a no problem continuous sequence many aids are necessary. In order to fill in your check list during your preparation here are some hints.

Type	item per participant
Pin board	0,5
Pin board paper	2
Clouds 47x 26 cm	1
Title or heading stripes	5
Cards assorted colours	
10 x 21 cm	30
11x19 cm oval	20
10 cm Ø	10
14 cm Ø	10
20 cm Ø	10
Marking dots 20mm Ø	40
Felt tip pens Edding Nr. 1 or Pelikan 417M red/black)	2
Edding 800	1
Marking pins 4x15	1 box per pin-board

The amount given correspond to a meeting of 2-3 hours.

Independent of the group size the following should also be available: *Scissors - Paper knife - Glue stick - Crepe tape.*

In the standard moderator case all the necessary aids are available, with the exception of pos. 1-4,

As an addition to these visual aids a flip chart and a board can be used.In choosing your conference room remember that there needs to be enough room to move around. A room of approx. 5 m^2 per participant is ideal.

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During presentations you should get the participants to indulge in written discussion. The presentation continuous without interruption and afterwards the written discussion offers are pinned up and tackled.

4. Conflict Arrow

Controversial opinions to be marked by blitz

Controversial opinions during a discussion are quite normal. In dealing with differences of opinion, experience, and ideas usually leads to long drawn out discussions of a lengthy character with little effectivity. The conflict arrow, also know as »Blitz« is employed here, to mark points which have not all been agreed upon by the participants. Ask the group members not to compromise but to keep their difference of opinion and mark a controversial point or comment with a blitz or conflict arrow. The possibility of being able to air ones opinion visually often takes the bite out of a discussion. Concensus would be appreciated, but it is not always reachable, and majority decisions are easier to accept by a minority when the possibility is given to differ and to document this.

A pin-board or a flip chart with the visual rules should be visible at all times during the meeting. As the moderator you can always refer to these rules. Do not however »punish« anyone if they do not stick to these rules, but make a point that these rules where ever possible should be adhered to.

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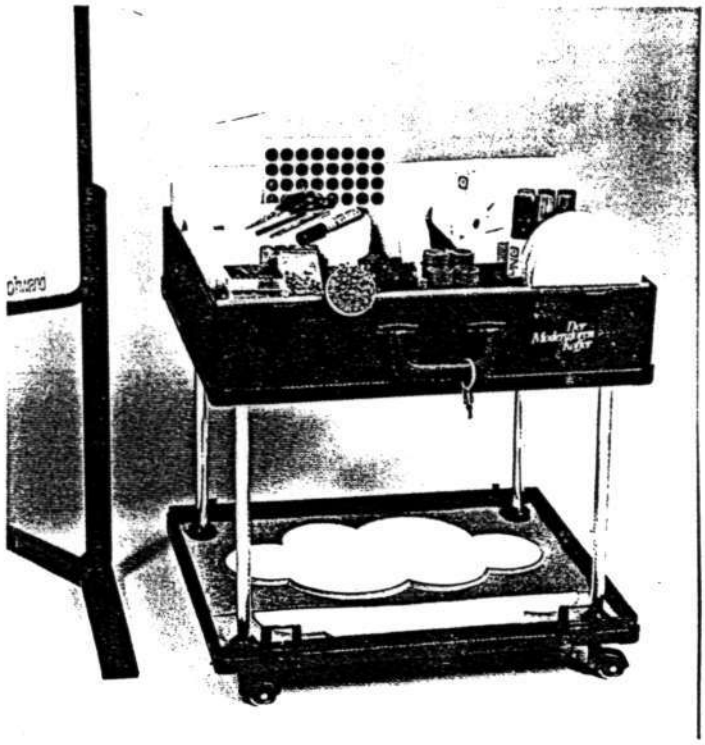

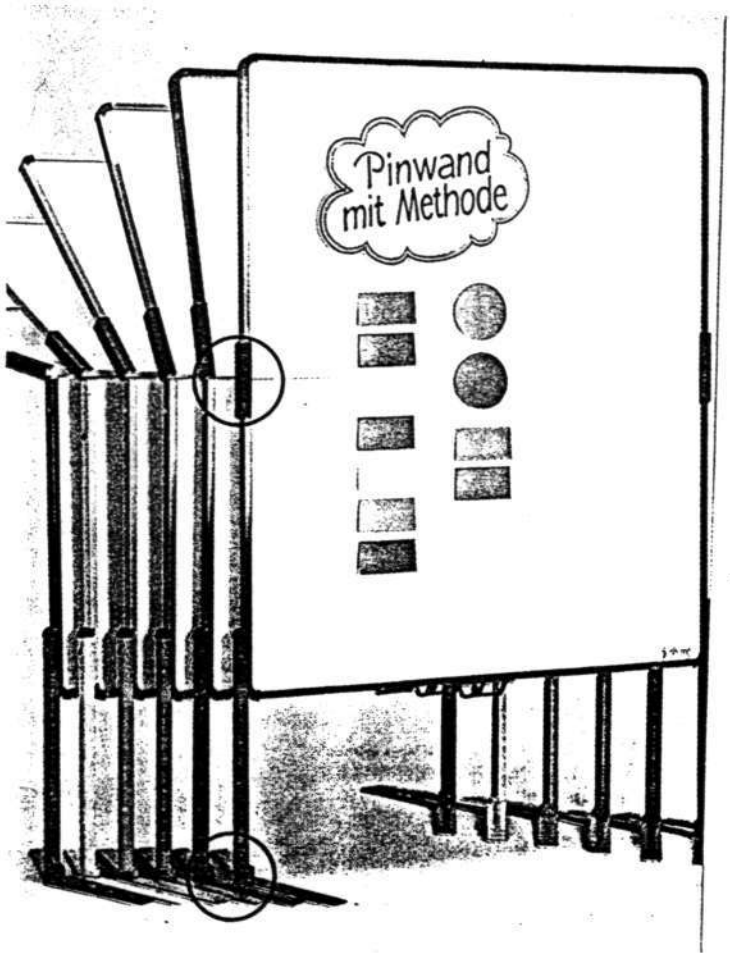

Fig. 21 Moderation Material
Fig. 22 Moderator's Case