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Group coaching

## Box process

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### **Purpose**

This strategy has been developed from work done over the past 50 years by members of Vistage International (formerly TEC International). Vistage is the leading world-wide membership organization for managing directors and chief executives.

The strategy has been successfully transferred from the SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) sector into group coaching for senior executive teams including boards and middle management teams in both national and multi-national organizations and corporations. (Suggested time: 45 minutes.)

The exercise enables larger groups of people to process, simultaneously, a greater number of issues than would normally be possible within standard time frames. Total time: up to 40–60 minutes depending on group size. (*Based on a format devised by Vistage USA Resource Speaker, Larry Wilson.*)

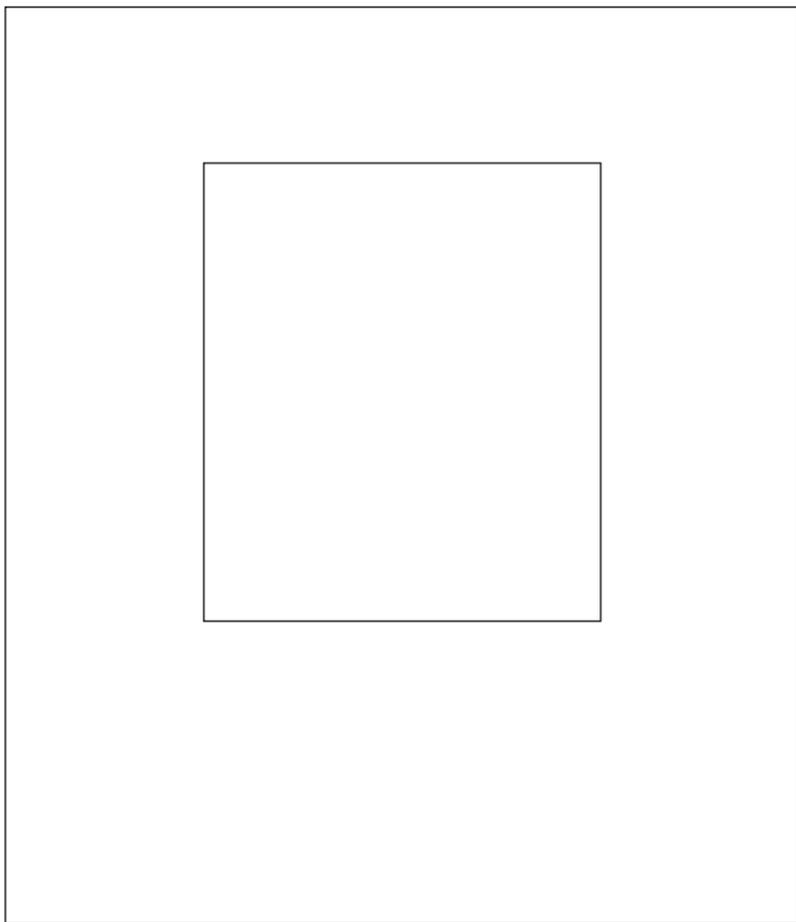
### **Description**

This exercise provides the ability to process a considerable number of issues with a larger group in a relatively short time.

### **Process**

- 1 Have each participant select the **Strategic Initiative** where they are making the least progress or simply their most burning key issue.

- (a) Have everyone take a clean sheet of paper and draw a large box – 4" × 6" to 5" × 7" in the middle of the paper (see Figure 7).
- (b) Have them take **2 minutes** to write their story in the box in bullet form:
  - beliefs about it;
  - limitations they face;
  - expectations they have;



**Figure 7** Box process exercise

- challenges;
  - their opinions;
  - their reasons;
  - their judgements – about others, themselves, the situation;
  - etc.
- 2 Break the participants into groups of three or four, depending on total group size.
- (a) Set the chairs so that they are close together, facing each other.
  - (b) They will need something hard to write on like a pad or notebook.
- 3 Process
- (a) Have each group pick an 'A'.
  - (b) Have the person to A's left go first.
  - (c) Have that person share their story with the others – **2 minutes**.
  - (d) *STOP* (the facilitator will have to be pushy about stopping . . .).
  - (e) Have the person who just shared, turn his/her chair around – back to the others.
  - (f) Have the two or three others brainstorm the topic as if the person with their back turned is not there. Talk with each other, not to the person – **4 minutes**.
  - (g) The person with their back turned does not speak, simply listens for new ideas, approaches, etc. and writes them on their paper outside the box.
  - (h) *STOP*.
  - (i) Have the person turn their chair back around and share what they just heard or learned – **1 minute**.
  - (j) *STOP*.
  - (k) Acknowledge each other (this is a vital part of the process).
  - (l) Repeat the process until everyone has had a turn – **21–28 minutes**.
- 4 Debrief
- (a) Bring everyone back together.

- (b) Ask the participants to share what it was like to have their back turned and just to listen:
  - How did it feel?
  - What did they notice about themselves?
  - Etc.
- (c) Ask the participants to share what it was like to be talking about the topic ‘behind the person’s back’.
- (d) Work with the group on what they learned about communication, how long it takes to present and work an issue, what cherished beliefs they had about communication that were blown away by their experience, etc.
- (e) Complete – capture learnings – **15–20 minutes**.

### **Pitfalls**

Careful and skilled facilitation is required.