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# The village in crisis

Story for workshop, keynote or meetings



# Purpose of the story

1. Illustrate the difference between ABCD and traditional models.
2. In ABCD we come with the questions not the answers.
3. Sometimes the biggest thing that we can do is get out of the way.
4. If we think we're bringing the wisdom into the village, then we're part of the problem.

# The story

- This is a story about a village in crisis.
- As was the tradition, the village elders came together to discuss what they might do. They decided they didn't know. But they had recently heard about a wise woman in another village who they felt sure would be able to sort everything out.
- They invited the wise woman to their village and she sat with the elders as they described the crises.
- When they had finished the wise woman asked: "is this problem peculiar to older men with grey hair – like you – or is it effecting everyone?"
- "Oh, everyone", they exclaimed, it was reaching right across the village.
- "Well then", she said, "why are you the only ones telling me about the crisis?"
- In all her years of experience, the wise woman had discovered that whoever defines the problem can help to define the solution.
- The wise woman challenged the village elders to lead by bringing everyone together, including all those people at the fringes of the village whose challenges had caused them to be ostracised, so that she could hear from everyone.
- The village elders did as she asked and once everyone had been convened, the wise woman said: "before I hear all of your stories, I need to tell you something. I am an outside, and as an outside I am not going to tell you anything you don't already know... Now," she said looking around at everyone, "do you know what it is I'm going to tell you?"
- Confused, the village began to shake their heads and shrug their shoulders.
- "Well", said the wise woman, "if you don't know what you know, I can't tell you!" And with that she left.

# The story

- The village elders were shocked and cross. They turned to the villagers “she asked you one question and you managed to get it wrong!” They told the village that they were going to invite the wise woman back and this time, they had better give her the right answer.
- So the village elders invited the wise woman back and, as she did the first time, she spoke to the village I am an outside, and as an outside I am not going to tell you anything you don’t already know... Now, do you know what it is I’m going to tell you?”
- This time, the village, remembering that their last answer was clearly wrong, began nodding their heads enthusiastically.
- “Great” the wise woman said, “you don’t need me then!” And with that she left.
- By this point the elders were furious. Twice they had brought the wise woman to their village and twice they had given her the wrong answer. They clearly couldn’t be trusted.
- So the elders huddled back together and came up with a plan. They would invite the wise woman back a third time, but would tell the villagers what they had to do.
- So they invited the wise woman back and, as she had done both times previously, she stood amongst the villagers and said, “I’m an outside, and as an outsider I’m not going to tell you anything you don’t already know. Now, do you know what it is I’m going to tell you?”
- Duly coached, half of the villagers nodded while the other half shook their heads.
- “Well” the wise woman said, “I suggest the half that nodded speaks to the half that shook their heads”; and with that she left.



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