

# More/less/stop<sup>1</sup>

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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-sized enterprises) sector into group coaching for senior executive teams including boards and middle management teams in both national and multi-national organizations and corporations.

It is a group exercise aimed at leading to more clarity for the individual members of the group and to greater understanding of each other. The exercise may be used as a precursor to both individual and group goal-setting.

## **Description**

This exercise is a very effective process for clarifying individuals' needs within and without the group/team context and can be adapted for use as a one-to-one process. Where members of a team know each other reasonably well, each identifies for the other team members the following:

- what they should do more of;
- what they should do less of;
- what they should STOP doing.

Average time for the exercise – depending on group size – is

60 minutes. Where group members have insufficient information about each other and/or use the strategy as a team building exercise, the following process can be followed (this is particularly valid as a year-end/year-beginning exercise but does not have to be restricted in timing).

## Process

- 1 Group members are asked to write a brief description of *who* they are (sentences, bullet points and short paragraphs). There is one condition: *nouns are not to be used*. This will give rise to much agonizing as individuals work past ‘what’ they are to ‘who’ and ‘how’ they are. The group then shares its findings.
- 2 Next, based on the description they wrote, group members are asked to write the answers to three questions:
  - What do I plan to *stop* doing in the new year?
  - What do I plan to do *more* of in the new year?
  - What do I plan to do *less* of in the new year?

These thoughts are then shared around the group.

- 3 Each member is then granted *eight free hours* during the working week and asked to write down what they would do with those eight free hours (Note: these are not new or extra hours; eight of their hours are magically freed up during the week). These thoughts are then shared around the group.
- 4 The group is then told that those free hours are rescinded and that they must still do the things they just created and shared. The group members are then asked to write down what eight hours worth of activities they will give up during the working week to make room for the new stuff they came up with in step 3. This is a hard task. The thoughts are then shared with the group.
- 5 Finally, it is suggested to the group that none of them will be successful with the ‘STOP doing’ stuff. They will look puzzled. They are reminded that the stuff on their STOP list has been there for several years, and why would anyone believe they will stop now? Then it is suggested that if they really want results with their STOP list, they must

convert it to a START list . . . we give up things when we have something else (hopefully better) with which to replace the vanquished activity. They then write, and share, the added START items.

6 These should be codified as SMART goals, if appropriate.

### **Pitfalls**

There are no pitfalls as long as the group takes the exercise seriously and follows up after the session.

### **Note**

- 1 Based on a concept from Vistage US Chairs, Larry Cassidy, Don Riddell, Vistage US Resource Speaker Bob Thomson et al.