

Awaydays - a way to explore, resolve and plan

Summary of presentation

The concept of 'the learning school' is now well established. Adrian Underhill, a long-time proponent, describes it as an organisation that gets its work done through the learning of its people.

This talk describes one neglected whole staff activity - the Awayday, particularly through the Decision Game format, which sits well with other approaches to building a strong feedback culture, steeped in knowledge sharing and openness.

We'll learn how your managers and entire teams, through Awaydays, can make better collaboration-based decisions, exposed together to meaningful, ideally real life, relevant experience to improve their ability to make good judgments and decisions

Awaydays - a way to explore, resolve and plan

5th ELT Ireland Annual Conference

16 + 17 February 2019



HERE ARE YOUR TAKEAWAYS!



- SPEND MORE TIME 'ON THE BUSINESS' RATHER THAN 'IN THE BUSINESS'

a process for more effective thinking, communication and problem-solving

- A way to help morale a bit - help people feel a little more appreciated and included

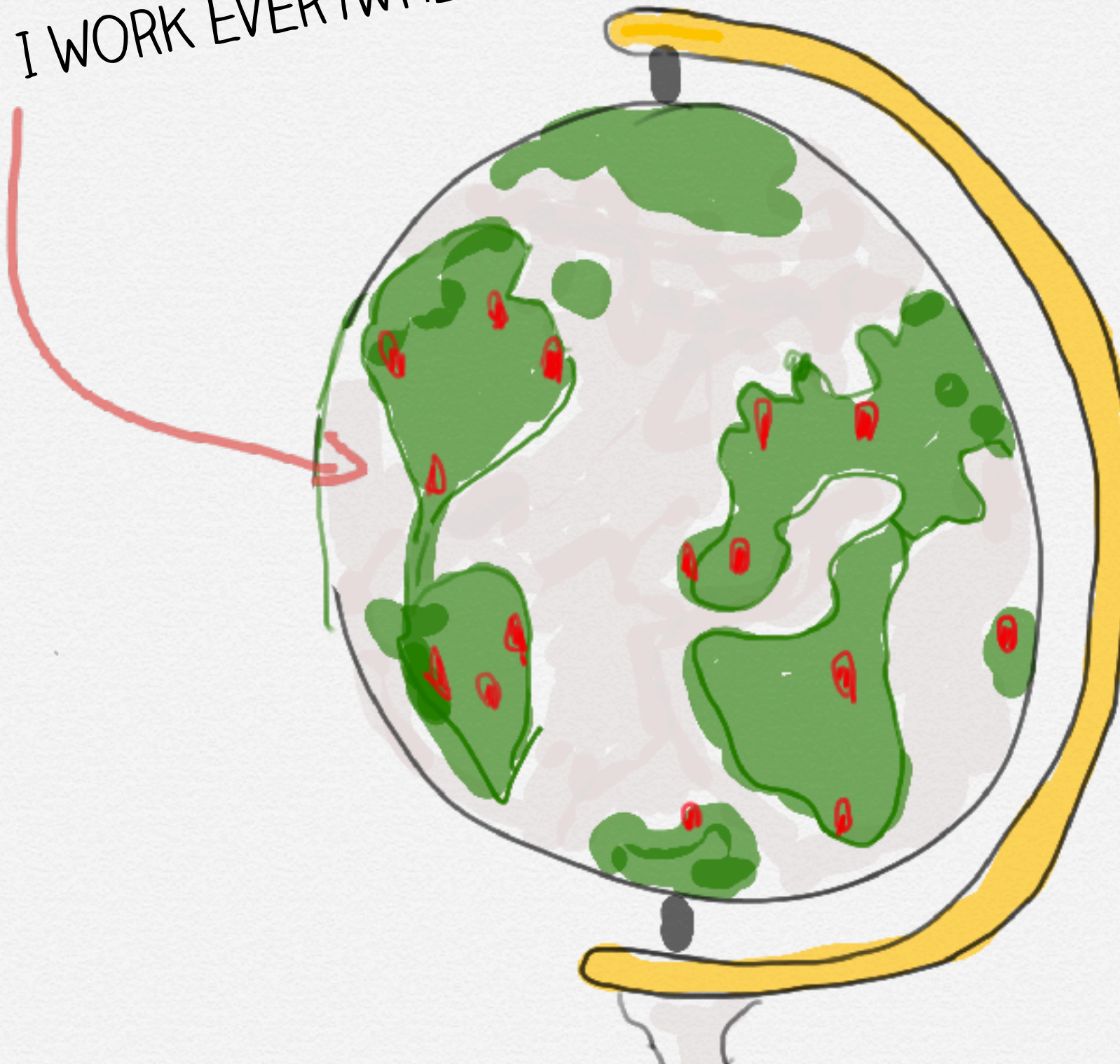
- A way to focus on your goals and solve some specific on-going work problems.

- A way to know each other a bit better and build a better team



ABOUT ME

I WORK EVERYWHERE!



I AM LIAM BROWN.

I have been 'in' learning and development in ELT all my working life. It's been my world for four decades.

I know this world as an experienced teacher, manager, trainer, speaker, writer and consultant working on achieving excellence at work – in communication, collaborative learning and decision making and people-friendly people management. **There is always a better way!**

**AWAYDAYS
WORKSHOPS
SPEAKING**

THE STORY
BEGINS... ..

WHY DON'T WE HAVE
AWAYDAYS?



LIAM BROWN
TRAINING

THIS WAS SUGGESTED



AND THIS!



LIAM BROWN
TRAINING

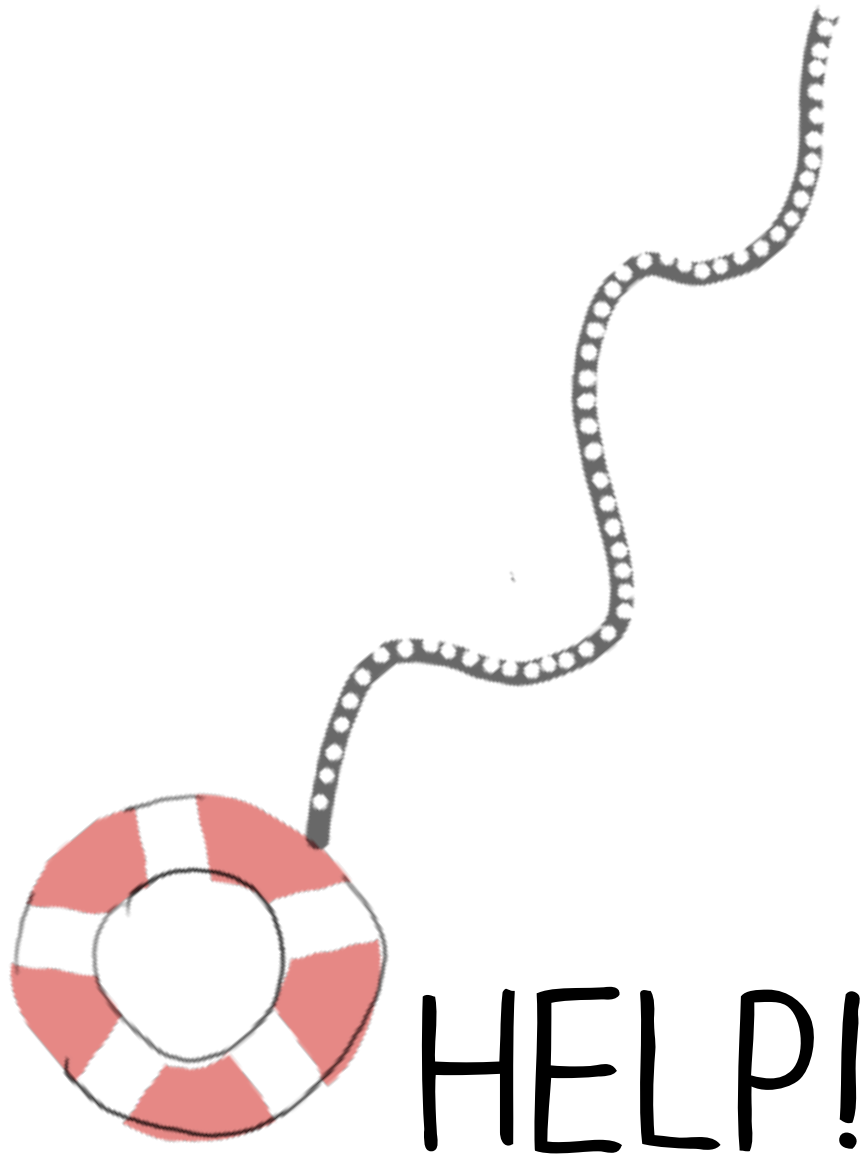
THE STORY
UNFOLDS... ..

WHY DON'T WE HAVE
BETTER AWAYDAYS?



LIAM BROWN
TRAINING

RESEARCH + LOTS OF DISCUSSION



WHAT KIND OF AWAY DAY WOULD WORK?



Not the *let's-build-a-boat/bridge-with-straws-and-sticky-tape-and-cross-the-river* kind.



Better like: *“a day that a group of workers spend together away from their usual place of work in order to **explore, share, learn, resolve and plan.**”*



EXPLORE
SHARE
LEARN
RESOLVE
PLAN

- Bring people together
- Challenge perceptions of what is, what could be
- Encourage creative thinking
- Drive commitment to learn, to change



EXPLORE
SHARE
LEARN
RESOLVE
PLAN

WHAT KIND OF QUALITIES WOULD THEY HAVE?



EXPLORE
SHARE
LEARN
RESOLVE
PLAN

COLLABORATION

- TEAM SETS THE AGENDA
- EVERYONE HAS A ROLE AND A JOB TO DO
- THE PURPOSE IS SHARED

EXPLORE
SHARE
LEARN
RESOLVE
PLAN

HONESTY

● GIVE THEM THE BOOKS!

PRAGMATISM

- TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES
TO USE AFTERWARDS
- COMMIT TO AND CARRY OUT
ACTION AFTERWARDS - CHANGE!
- STICK TO REAL STUFF, FACTS,
THINGS WE DEAL WITH EVERYDAY



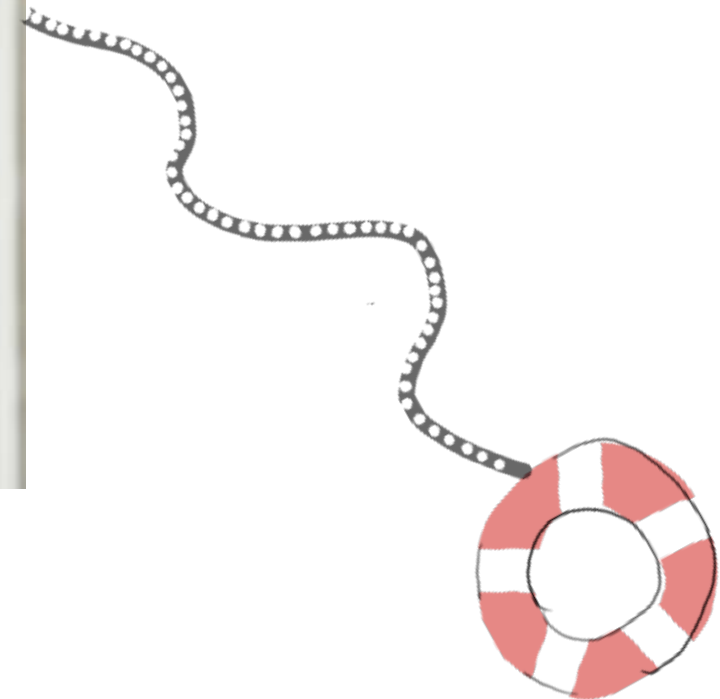
Straits Knowledge
Redefining corporate knowledge

EXPLORE
SHARE
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RESOLVE
PLAN

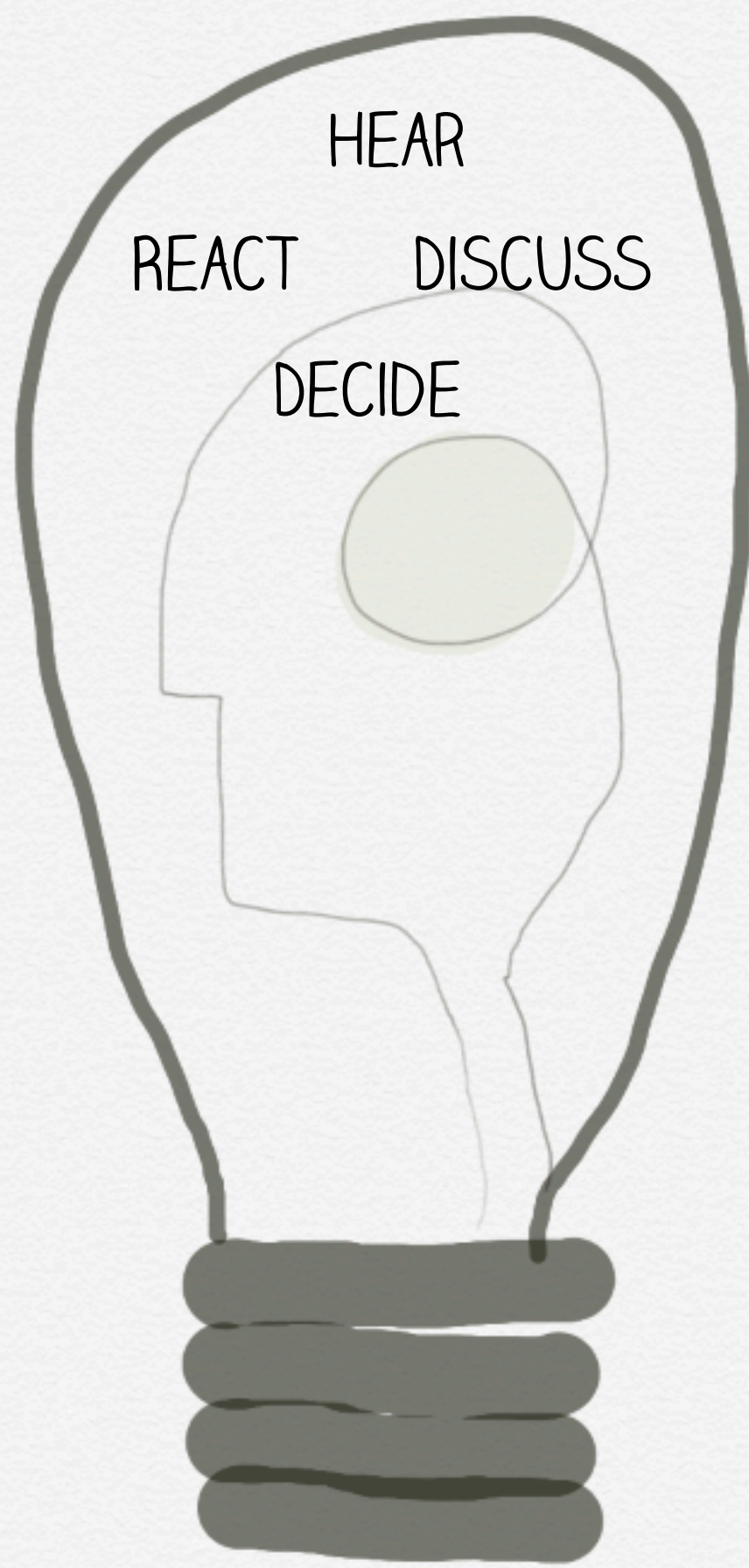


Patrick Lambe

THE DECISION GAME



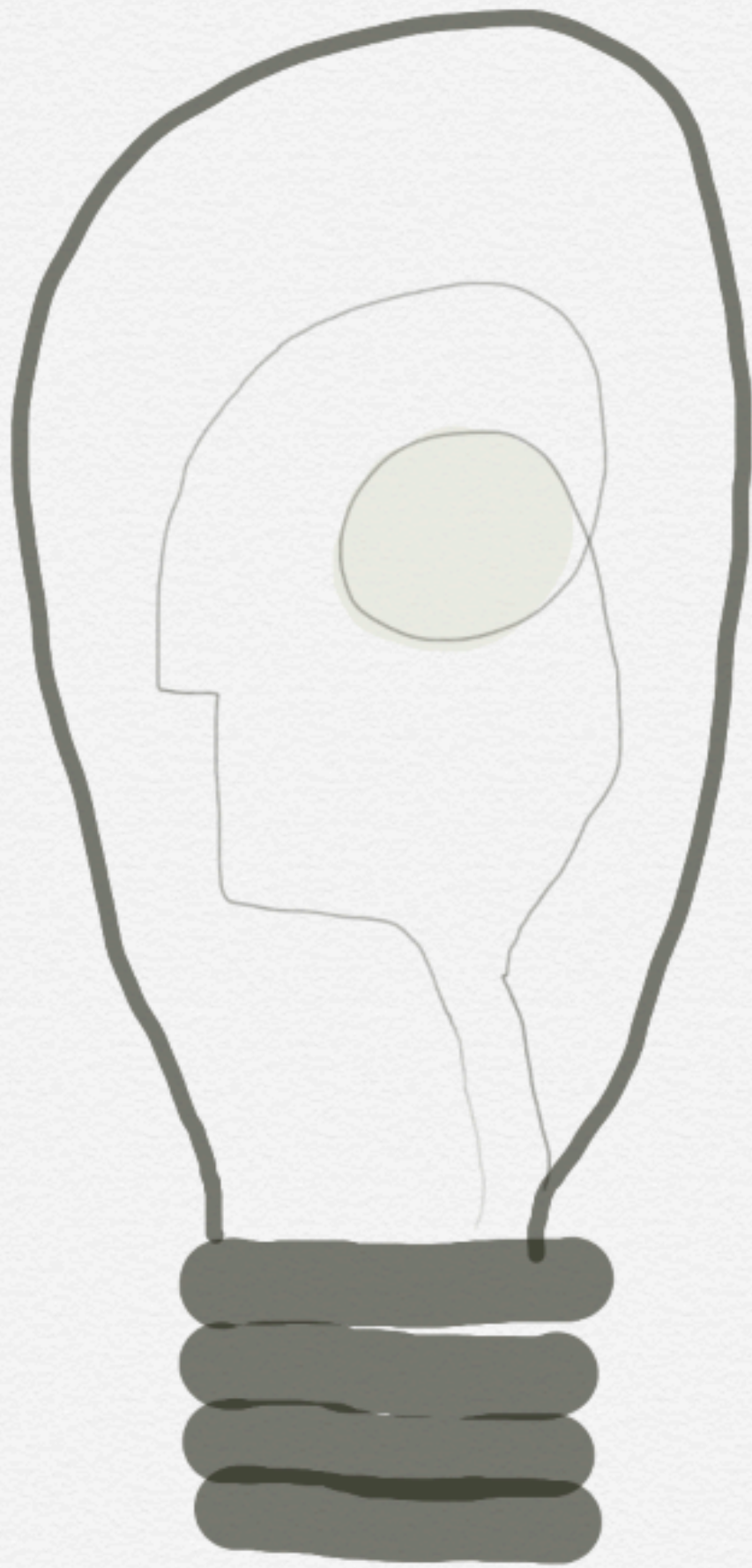
OUR LIFELINE!



THE DECISION GAME

WHAT IS IT?

“Decision Games are a high-impact training method to improve the decision-making and sensemaking capabilities of teams, especially in areas involving tacit knowledge that is highly subjective, ambiguous, uncertain or ill-structured.”

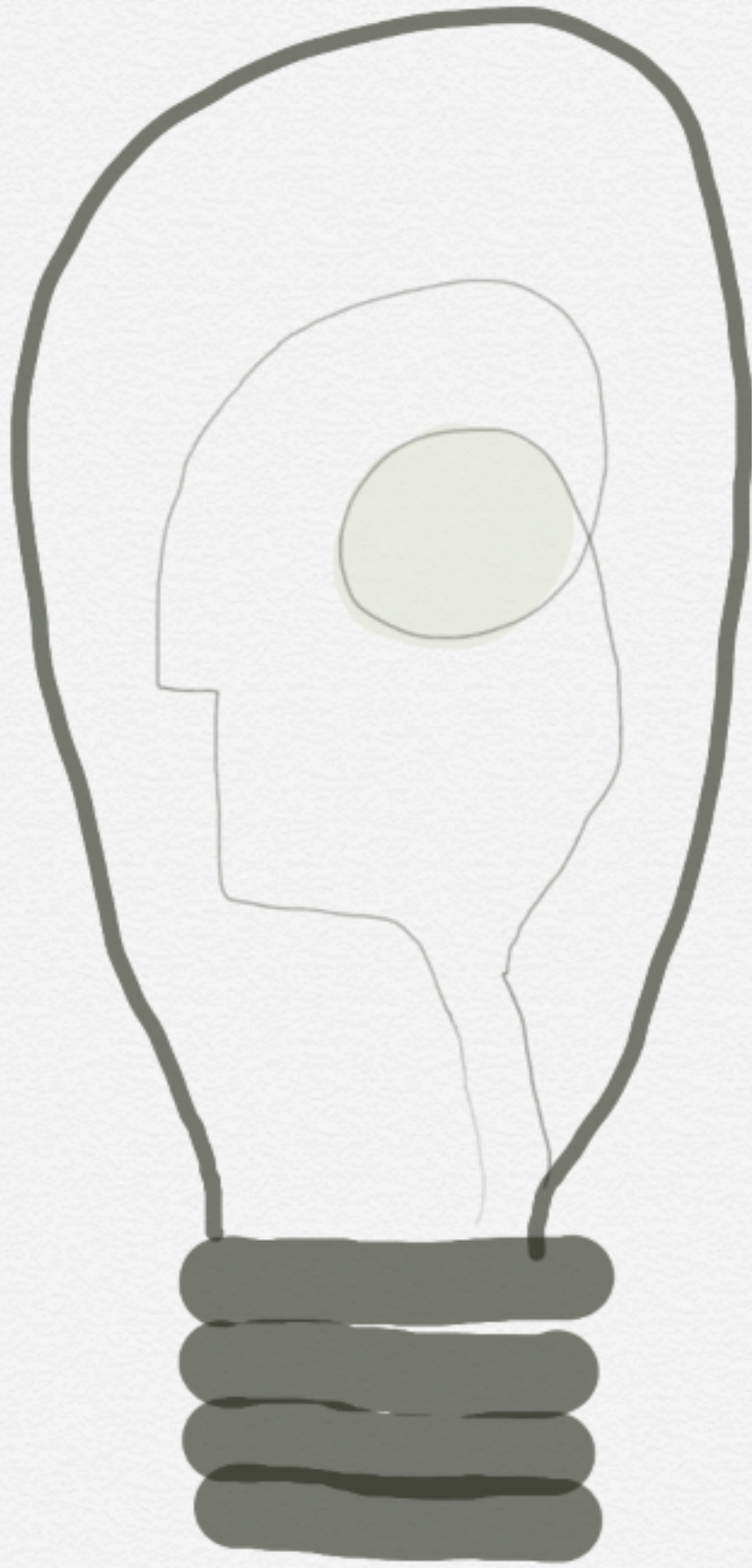


THE DECISION GAME

WHEN TO USE IT?

- Different levels of experience and knowledge are evident: recent arrival in-region, new appointments, or where there is on-going change in the business environment.
- Getting-to-know-each-other-better
- Consensus and action setting





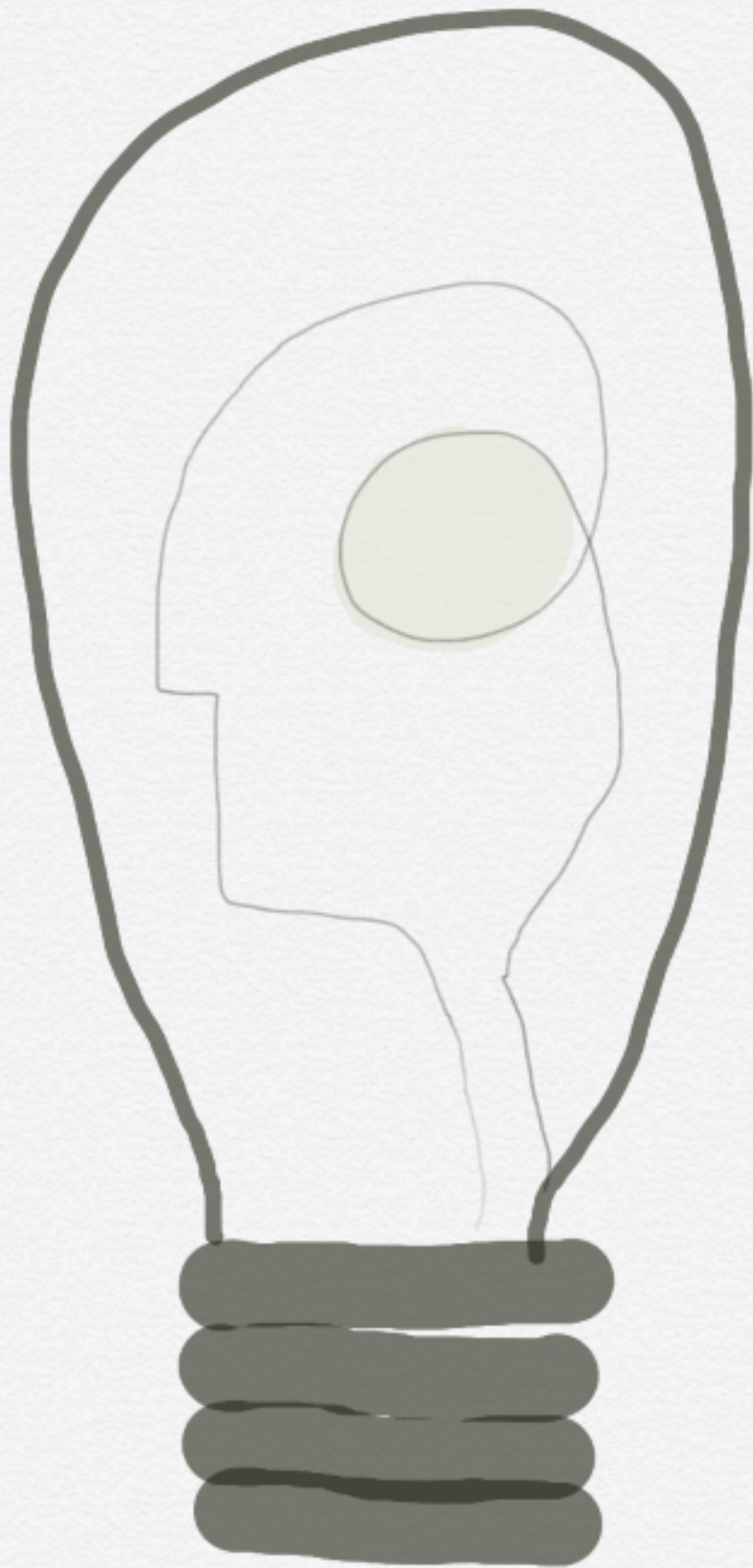
THE DECISION GAME

HOW DOES IT WORK?

It's a **case study**: a well-defined initial context, events which you cannot yourself modify, and a central dilemma to reflect on.

It's a **simulation**: unfolding sequentially and invite response and interpretations as you proceed through them.





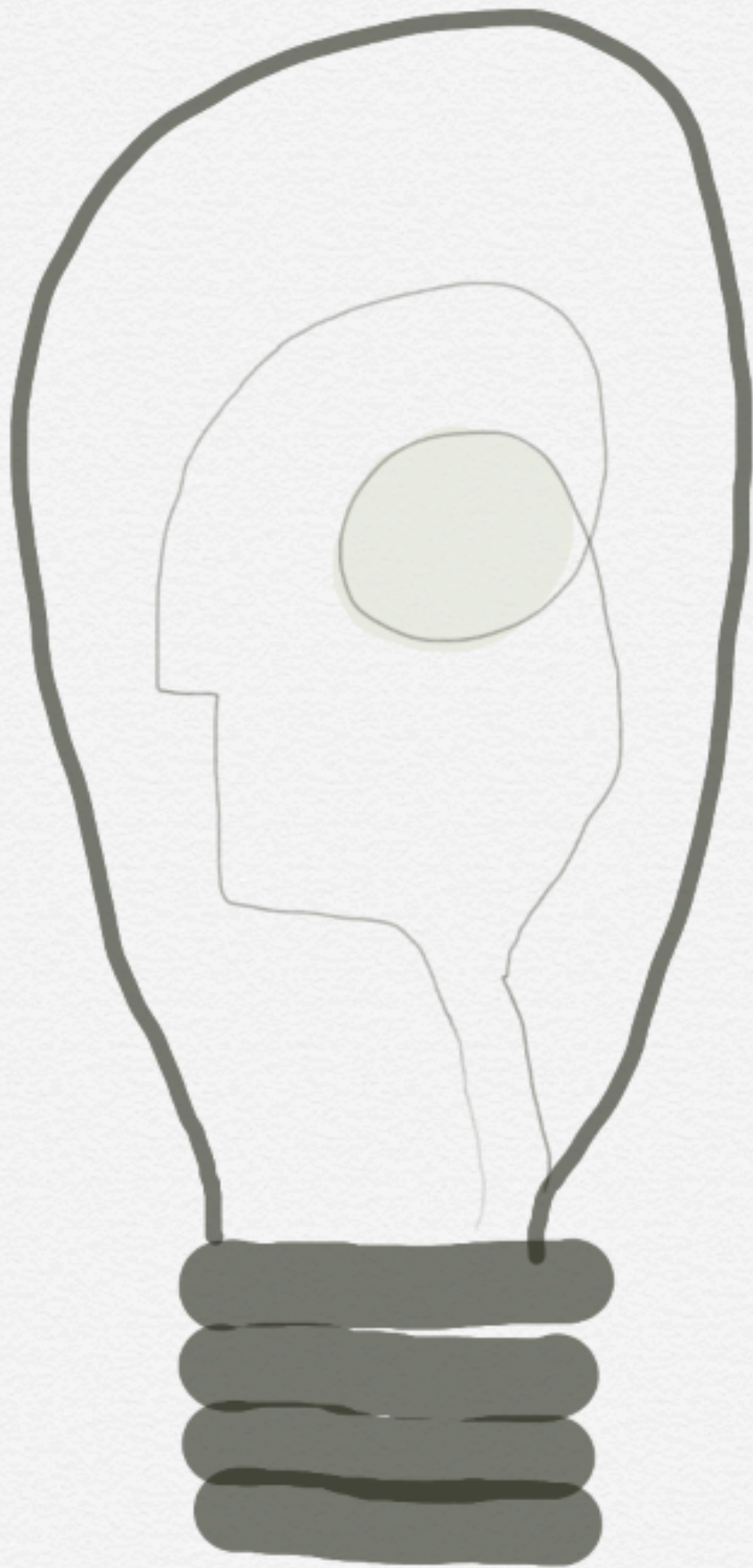
THE DECISION GAME

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Each change in the scenario requires participants in the game to make a decision and account for it.

You will not be asked directly in the game what would you do, simply whether what you see unfolding is **good** or **bad** for us.





THE DECISION GAME

HOW DOES IT WORK?

8

8

1

1

ALL

THE CASE STUDY INFORMATION



Briefing Sheet

Re-scale ambition + Grow Income: The Agora Centre

Background:

You are Helen Tandon and have recently started work as Business Manager in Agora, a small but financially important part of the organisation's network. Agora has a relatively large business, and currently earns about £1.6 million in revenue.

Regionally, Agora is a middle-income country, with an economy based on agriculture, oil, industry, and tourism. However, Agora's economy faces serious problems, challenges and impediments to growth, including: a large and poorly performing public sector; declining rates of oil production; a widening non-oil deficit; wide-scale corruption; weak financial and capital markets; and high rates of unemployment tied to a high population growth rate.

Its GDP growth rate is approximately 2.4%, according to IMF statistics. The two main pillars of the Agora economy have been agriculture and oil. Agriculture, for instance, accounts for 25% of GDP and employs 42% of the total labor force. The government hopes to attract new investment in the tourism, natural gas, and service sectors to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil and agriculture.

Agora has a population of approximately 21 million people, and Government figures place the population growth rate at 2.45%, with 75% of the population under the age of 35 and more than 40% under the age of 15. Approximately 200,000 people enter the labour market every year. According to Agora Government statistics, the unemployment rate is 7.5%, however, more accurate independent sources place it closer to 20%. Government and public sector employees constitute over one quarter of the total labour force.

Earnings from oil exports as well as remittances from Agorati workers are the government's most important sources of foreign exchange.

As a result of an increased demand for higher education, Agora admits 20,000 students annually to its main university. This poses a serious challenge, with significant impact on infrastructure and educational programs, which is being addressed through huge expansion planned.

We have been working with the universities on quality assurance methodology and advising on modernising the curriculum in various disciplines, so that they are in-tune with market need and the national development plan of Agora.

Agora is an interesting case in the concept of *brain drain* and *brain gain*. There are many thousand highly-skilled Agoratis that work in the Gulf, drawn to higher wages and escaping high unemployment, and high cost of living with salaries barely able to reach self-sufficiency in Agora.

Agoratis save the least in the entire region, with only 54% of residents saving some of their monthly wages. Agora was ranked as the Arab World's most expensive city in 2006 by the Economist Intelligence Unit, ahead of Dubai.

Many college graduates work in the Gulf where salaries are often three or even four times as much as salaries in Agora, working mainly in engineering, construction, finance and medicine. Agorati expatriates send back about 2.7 billion dollars every year, helping sustain living standards for many Agorati households.

However, to balance that, Agora is experiencing a brain gain from Iraq where highly skilled professionals are escaping the violence in their native country. These Iraqi expatriates mainly work in medicine, business, and education.



Briefing Sheet

Change is evident. In its annual report, the IMF has rated Agora as one of the top countries in the world undertaking economic reform, citing a dramatic slashing of customs and tariffs in 2003 and a new taxation law implemented in 2005 which decreased corporate taxes from 40% to the current 20%, resulting in a stated 100% increase in tax revenue in 2006.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Agora has increased considerably in the past few years due to the recent reforms and economic liberalisation measures taken by minister of investment Mahmoud Mohassin, exceeding \$1.5 billion in 2006.

The best known examples of Agorati companies that have expanded regionally and globally are the Pyroscam Group and Tabla. The IT sector has been expanding in the past few years, with many new start-ups conducting outsourcing business to North America and Europe, connecting with companies such as Microsoft and Oracle as well as numerous SME's.

Agora has maintained very good security in the past, but the general climate, and the terrorist and other activity in the region has made the Agoratis (and our Embassy) give special attention to security issues.

Our Centre is well regarded in Agora, with strong civic, business and government connections. Many prominent Agoratis have studied with us, used our services or have benefited from informational support to obtain international qualifications.

Our Centre is engaged in the range ELT activities. In terms of audience and reach, Agora Centre is working to fit with global developments, leveraging on the regional programme portfolio and looking to grow its partnerships, while maintaining a strong focus on opportunities for income generation. Its work in the area of Equal Opportunity and Diversity is considered to be significant and leading.

Our Agora Centre is seen as one of the growing strengths of our brand offer in the country. It has enjoyed reasonable growth since the early 2000s and suffered less than other regional Centres in the downturn.

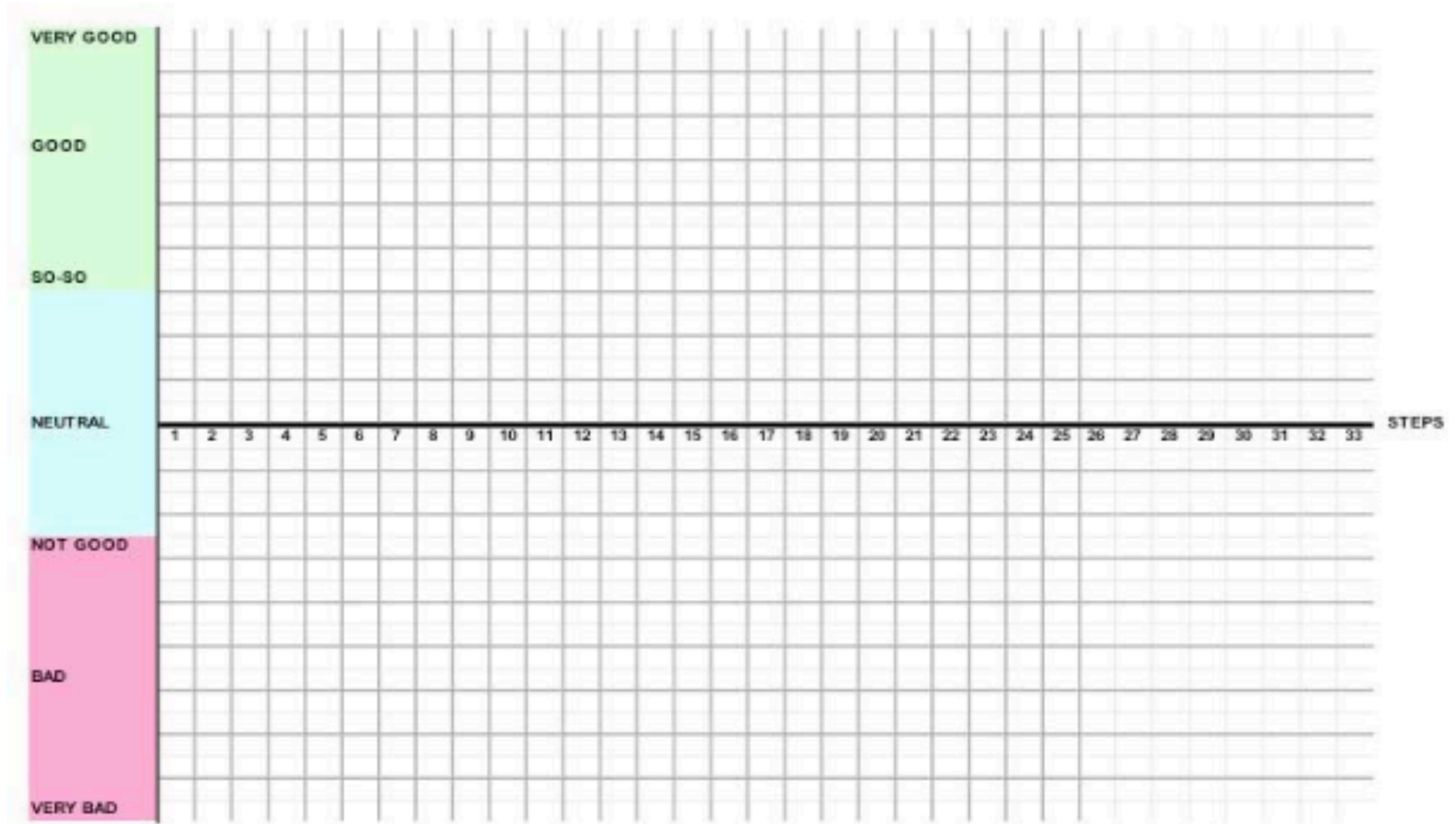
This growth is not without challenges. Staffing is an issue: teaching staff costs are high relative to experience. In-Centre INSET and other regional support mechanisms are addressing the quality in the classroom agenda. Course pricing structure is another issue that has potential to cause friction. The Centre is looking to build a sounder formula for pricing, especially one that bears a stronger relation to the marketing approach. Price is not used as a waiting list clearing mechanism though the Centre Manager feels there is scope if done sensitively.

Offsite teaching/training is being looked at: as the business climate changes there will be a wider engagement which will require more skills training in key sectors of the economy. A potential break on growth here is the lack of experience and expertise within the teacher group.

Exams provision or support is a growing business with potential growth in additional business streams, most notably in the area of educational and professional exams. Agora's favourable environment has meant that local staff tend to stay with us for many years, which has meant a lot of stability. However, increasing salaries in the private sector threaten this stability in the staff. Agora has one main location.

The General Manager is Gillian Clavicle, one of the most experienced managers in our network. Gillian has been in Agora for two years, and has been General Manager in two other of our countries, so is seen as something of an expert on the region. She is very keen to see the Re-scale Ambition Project incorporated into business planning and operations.

THE SCORE CARD



STUFF TO MAKE IT REAL - NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

MINISTER TO INTRODUCE NEW RULES ON VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR ELT SECTOR.

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STUFF TO MAKE IT REAL - business emails

From John Smith

To Mary O Shea

Cc

Subject PURCHASE OF 20 IWBs

Date **16.02.2019**

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Looking forward to our next meetings

Best wishes

John

STUFF TO MAKE IT REAL - business flyers

ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

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THE PARTNER SCHOOL



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DOLOR SIT AMET,

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Call us now!

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NOW HAVE A GO!

Grab a scorecard

Grab a pen

Grab a partner

SIMULATION INFO CARD #2

You receive a deputation from the Teachers Reps. They are up in arms about the latest contract changes reducing their holiday entitlements, and they want compensation in the form of a salary increase. When you say the Centre is not performing well, they ask where the money for the “fancy website and the new paint job came from”. *“We have turned in good numbers for you over at least ten years, and all we’ve had in return is cut after cut in the value of our contracts. No wonder we can’t keep our good teachers.”* You say you’ll study the market terms and conditions and get back to them.

SIMULATION INFO CARD #3

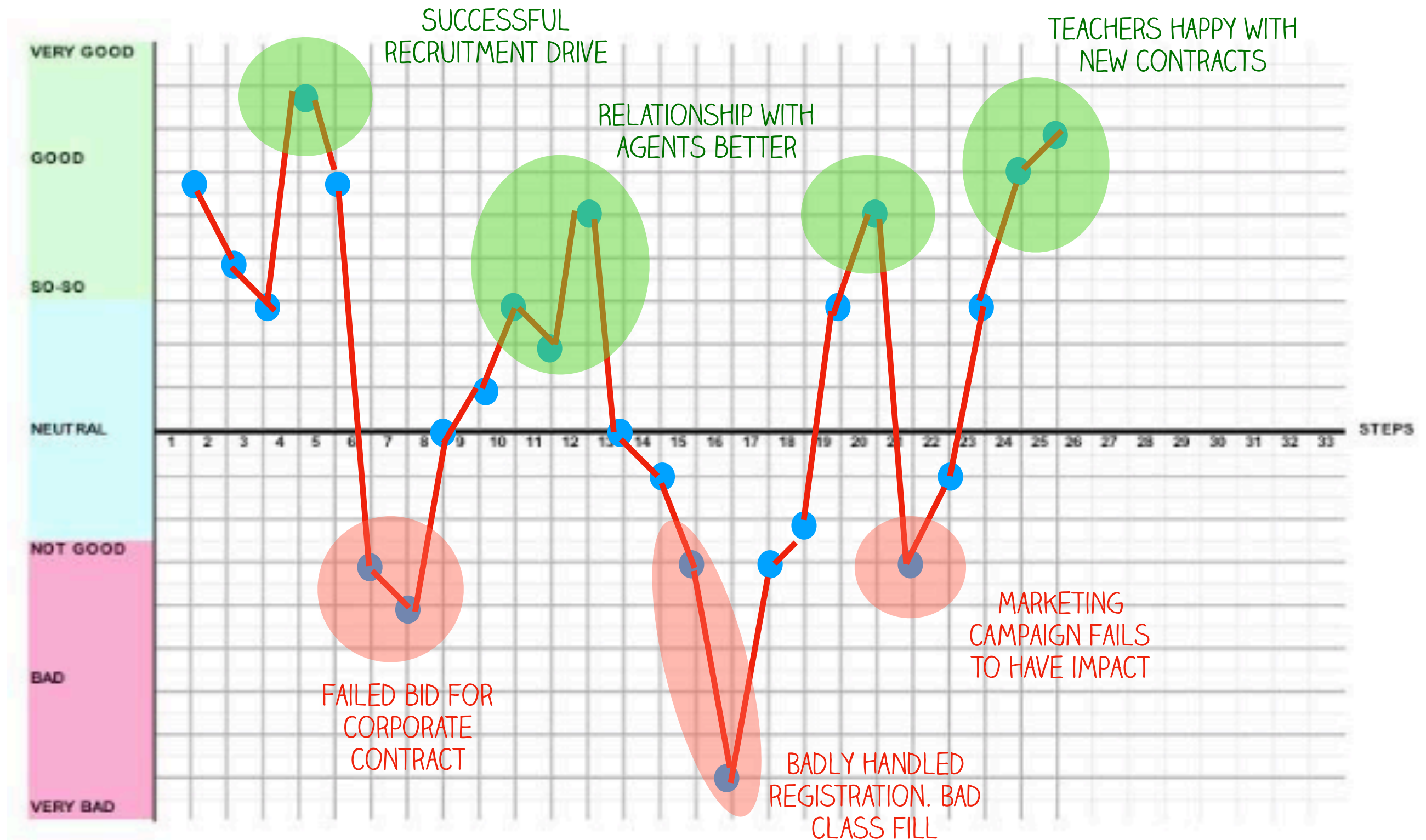
Leonora Bass, your Head of Teacher Training, tells you excitedly that she's got an assurance of a big increase in the in-service contracts with the **National Adult Literacy Agency** next year. *"They are trying to boost the English teaching quality offered to refugees. We had a big contract like this a couple of years ago but this time they say it will be a three year commitment. Worth at least 200,000 euros."*

SIMULATION INFO CARD #12

Your study of market conditions for teachers clearly shows that your Centre's teachers are still better off than their peers in other language schools. The Teacher's Reps are not impressed. *"You are comparing us with the cowboy outfits. There are loads of schools for children and adults around here where teachers are at least 10% better off."* You ask them to produce evidence so you can consider it.

The promised teacher training contract with the **National Adult Literacy Agency** is going to be much smaller than originally thought. Leonora Bass, your Head of Teacher Training, tells you that the Ministry is giving the bulk of the contract to the UCD Teacher Training Institute. *“The worst thing is, we trained those people, and at least half of them are ex teacher trainers of ours!”* You tell Leonora that she can offer a 10% cut on normal rates if they can increase the volume. She says she’ll try.

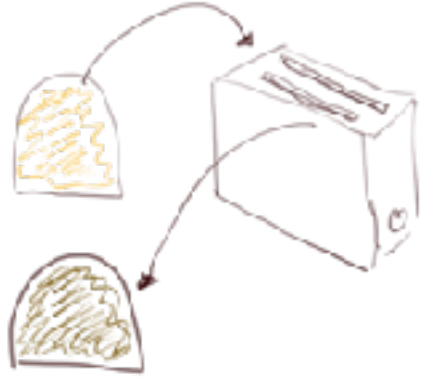
THE SCORE CARD - COMPLETED



SO, NOW WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE HAY?



DIAGNOSIS AND ACTION



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TRAINING



OTHER KINDS OF FACILITATION OPTIONS



Straits Knowledge
Redefining corporate knowledge

FUTURE BACKWARDS

A facilitated technique for getting common ground in a group on how they got to the current position and helping them identify the range of possibilities open to them.

RICH PICTURES

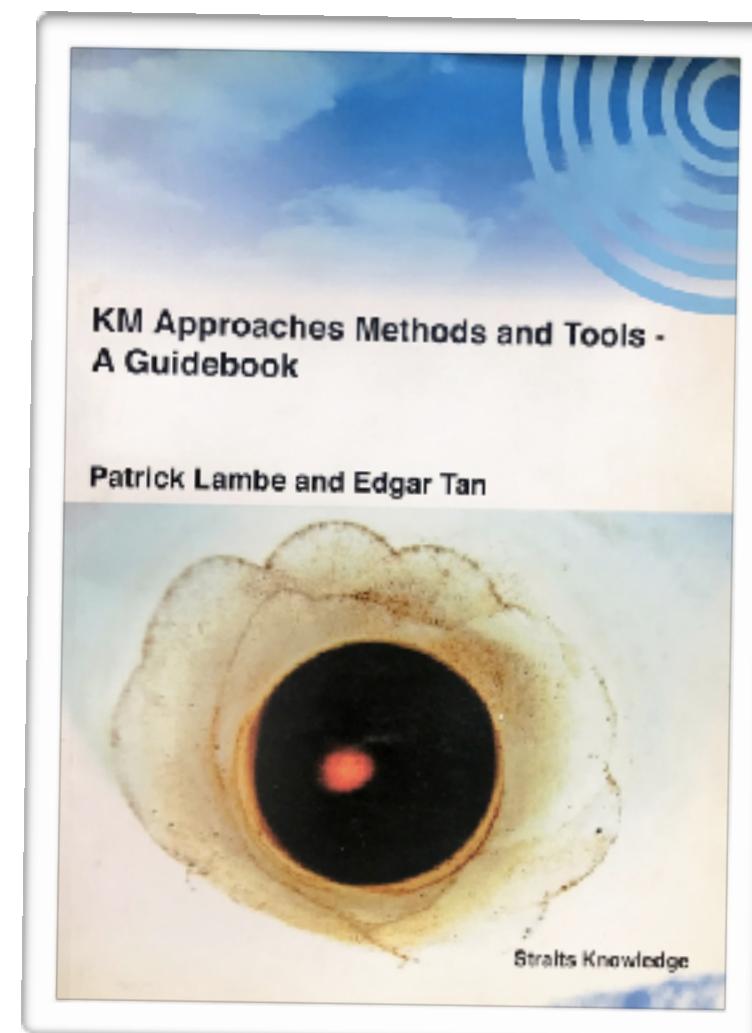
A way of representing knowledge domains where you want to communicate different perspectives and concerns on the same page especially for situations involving multiple stakeholders. Use symbols, illustrations as well as words.

PEER ASSIST

A facilitated meeting where a team brings in peers from outside their own workgroup, selected because of their experience and knowledge, to help them with a particular issue or challenge, and offer a new perspective.

PRE MORTEM

A facilitated meeting which says you are now in a future point in time, and that your planned activity has failed. You must account for the failure by imagining all the things that could have gone wrong.



LIAM BROWN
TRAINING

THE STORY
ENDS... ..

THE STORY
ENDS.. ..

LET'S HAVE **MORE**
OF THESE
AWAYDAYS!



LIAM BROWN
TRAINING

THANK YOU!



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