

STOP PLAYING OFFICE NOW!

**10 PRINCIPLES
TO FLOW
COLLABORATION**



10 Principles

to Stop «Playing Office» Now!

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What do you mean, «Playing Office»?!

«Playing Office» means **performing work rather than actually doing it**. And doing things that everyone believes are normal or necessary, without ever questioning them.

It looks like work and feels like work, but it is **neither productive nor efficient**.

«Playing Office» costs large amounts of money, energy, and time, because it constantly distracts people from activities that would actually move the organization, the projects and the people in it forward.

There is a long list of things that people do every day and could be labeled «Playing Office». Here are just a few examples:

Cult of busyness: Running from one meeting to the next, involved in 17 projects, no time to think deeply, slowing everything and everybody down.

«I am in meetings all day. I will look at it tonight and write you back ASAP.»

«The next available meeting slot with everyone is in 10 weeks. 1 hour max!»

«Professionalization»: Pretending that humans can act like machines. Policing people's individuality for the sake of «professionalism», asking them to hide their authenticity.

«Don't be so direct all the time.»

«I want you to laugh less in meetings.»

«Man up!»

Office politics: Everything becomes a tactic, a strategy, a move in a game to manipulate others and to get ahead.

«We've already decided. Now how do we make them feel involved?»

«How can we bring this to the executive board so they'll think it was their idea?»

Fear: Keeping issues, challenges, and problems to yourself to avoid the consequences.

«We all know this won't work. But the board wants it. So we have to do it.»

«I am stuck in my project. But I won't bring the challenge to the team meeting because that would look bad.»

Playing flat hierarchy: Being asked to be proactive, take risks, and make decisions, knowing you'll be punished by those in power if you actually do.

«I want everyone to be proactive and entrepreneurial and to take risks.»

«This company is more like a family.»

«Kit talked to somebody from another department without my permission. We have to fire her!»

Avoiding people, diversity, and conflicts: It's hard to interact with others, so let's keep it to a minimum. Or better yet: Just talk to AI.

«People are so annoying. Claude just gets me!»

«Max criticized my idea in last week's meeting. I think he hates Gen Z. I'll talk to HR for a transfer to another team.»

Lone wolf: Designing your own work, career, and path to success. Pretending to be busy. Meetings create the illusion of collaboration.

«Working with others distracts me from what's important to get my annual bonus.»

«I will knock them out with my 80-page PowerPoint presentation.»

«That's not my job.»

In your organization: Where do you observe «Playing Office»? When do you play office yourself, or join in?

What can we do instead of «Playing Office»?

The cure for «Playing Office» is **Flow Collaboration**.

Flow Collaboration means doing much, much more **together** (almost nothing alone), which results in ongoing synchronization and a strong team spirit. Focusing on Flow brings higher efficiency and satisfaction. Focusing on **doing** instead of talking gets everything done much faster.

The power of Flow Collaboration: Projects and tasks flow, the team and the team members experience Flow, the whole organization is in a synchronized Flow state.

*You know how **Flow state** feels: You have clarity and focus, you feel great, things get done almost effortlessly, playful and light.*

Typical experiences in an organization with Flow Collaboration:

Everyone works as one and passes the ball to others. All feel responsible for the whole. Blame and finger-pointing have no place.

Everyone is very aware of how much energy is put into tasks. The organization is in energy-saving mode and super efficient.

Ongoing tasks and projects are limited to one or very few at all levels. The organization is working on the same strategic priorities at the same time.

Everyone is connected to the ever-changing reality at all levels: world, customers, organization, team, self.

Everyone is comfortable and safe to be vulnerable, ask questions, voice doubts, and get support with challenges.

When things have become fuzzy or unclear, people get clarity as a team on how to deal with this reality together.

Everyone works as an equal with everyone else. Hierarchies don't get in the way. Everyone contributes whatever they can.



Put your Flow Glasses on:
You'll spot where Flow is stuck. The question «**How can we make it flow?**» works magic and prevents you from «Playing Office».

Humans together on a journey

When we talk about «not playing office», we also want to put humans at the center. After all, in organisations, people interact and take responsibility together for the purpose and the organization.

People are not cogs in a machine, and they are made to be in community, not in separation.

People can deal with complexity through experimentation, sense-making, and dialogue.

No matter how confusing the world or the situation, people can find solutions if they work together. And no one is alone.

Human intelligence is different from artificial intelligence.

Intuition and things that cannot be measured or explained are human superskills.

When human connection is well-established, humans can solve almost any problem.

This is why paying attention to human interaction, improving the connection between humans and addressing typical human challenges like conflicts, emotions, authenticity and safety are central to success.

When people connect on a human level, truly collaborate, address problems and conflicts in healthy ways and support each other, the virus of «Playing Office» has a harder time spreading.

Every person, at any moment, is at a different point of the journey and has a different understanding and a different motivation.

The most important thing is to meet reality and to walk together.

This creates an unstoppable force and culture of togetherness and support.

*When you meet with others:
Do you just talk about work and
then everyone does it on their
own? Or do you actually get
things done together?*

Principle

TOGETHER!

When you cultivate true togetherness in all you do: creating, thinking, deciding, doing, reflecting together, and working alone is the exception.

This leads to trust, learning, belonging, understanding, growth and inclusion of all skills and perspectives. And to better results.

Playing Office

Doing things separately.
Lots of misunderstandings.
Lots of emails and meetings.

Flow Collaboration

Doing things together.
Everyone on the same page.
Fewer emails. Less additional meetings. Super fast.

*In your team and organization:
Are decisions taken according to
the preferences of a leader or
based on a purpose that
everybody knows?*

Principle

FOLLOW THE PURPOSE

When teams and organisations have a clear purpose, follow it like the North Star, and focus on courageous action toward it.

This creates clear focus, simplifies decision making, and makes space for creativity.

Playing Office

Only a few people make decisions. Everybody acts and decides based on different assumptions.

Flow Collaboration

Clear purpose and focus for everyone. Great alignment. Everybody can contribute to it and take decisions.

*In your organization: Are the top priorities clear to everyone?
Do lots of things get deprioritized in order to have full energy and resources for the top priorities?*

Principle

RADICAL FLOW ALIGNMENT

When priorities are aligned through dialogue throughout the whole organization and everyone knows at any time what is most important, what the capacity allows, and what needs to be deprioritized.

This leads to more flow in projects and work, faster and more aligned results and more job satisfaction for everyone.

Playing Office

Endless todo-lists,
everything is top priority.
Dozens of projects at the same
time, all stuck.

Flow Collaboration

Everyone knows the few things
that really matter this week,
focus only on those and get
them done together.

*When was the last time you
tried out something and
had absolutely no clue
how it would go?*

Principle

PLAY PING-PONG WITH REALITY

When everyone is doing small, playful experiments all the time because no one can know what works before trying. Try something, see how reality answers, adjust, try again.

This leads to faster feedback, better adjustment to reality, quicker and more successful implementation.

Playing Office

Months-long planning
and re-planning,
meetings after meetings,
no feedback from reality.

Flow Collaboration

Instant feedback and hints on
what to change or improve.

If something important came up today, could you easily get the right people together this week for two hours or are all calendars booked for weeks?

Principle

WE HAVE TIME

When everyone ensures that there is time and that people are not constantly busy. When there are dedicated times and spaces for different types of work and synchronization. When everyone has time for what is important now.

This creates room to breathe, reflect, deepen understanding, to react to new developments, and get into action to create better results that are more connected to purpose and customers.

Playing Office

Endless planning and discussing. Everything gets complex, slow, and overwhelming.

Flow Collaboration

Less talking, more doing and experimenting. One clear next step keeps things simple, fast and full of creativity.

In your organisation: Do projects move forward daily and weekly and are done within a few weeks or months? Or do they barely move forward or take forever?

Principle

STEP BY STEP

When energy flows into one step at a time, not into making detailed plans for the future. When you are only loosely sketching what comes next. Concentrating on getting just enough clarity to start. Defining doable chunks that take little time to implement.

This leads to space for creativity and quicker results that can be tested and adapted. It also saves you from having to backtrack when the feedback calls for changes.

Playing Office

Everyone has endless to-do lists and way too much to do.

Flow Collaboration

Everyone knows what the few things are that need to be done this week and collaborate to get them done.

Do you spend more time empowering people who want to try out new things? Or more time and energy on those who don't want to move forward?

Principle

WORK WITH THE WILLING

When you work with those who are ready for the change or transformation, instead of focusing on convincing those who are against it.

This leads to forward movement and flow, and gives those who are hesitant more time to observe and join, while not holding back the ones who want to move forward.

Playing Office

All the energy goes into convincing the skeptics.

Flow Collaboration

The organization moves forward with energy and joy.

*When something goes wrong:
Does the team take responsibility
together? Or is there finger-
pointing, blame, and isolation?*

Principle

IN IT TOGETHER

When everyone cares about the whole, feels responsible for it, understands it and naturally takes action. When everyone supports each other.

This creates a culture of shared responsibility and more flow because everyone is supported and feels safe.

Playing Office

Every person is alone and responsible for their stuff.

Flow Collaboration

Everyone is responsible together and helps each other.

*Where you work:
Are conflicts avoided as
dangerous? Or do people meet,
listen and get creative together?*

Principle

ALL CONFLICTS ARE WELCOME

When conflicts are seen as information about what people care about and what has not been considered yet. When it's normal to listen with curiosity to the people involved instead of keeping your distance.

This leads to understanding, connection and creativity, all necessary for more flow, and increased efficiency.

Playing Office

Conflicts are avoided until they explode or people leave the organization.

Flow Collaboration

Tensions and conflicts are addressed without fear, and people stay connected.

*In the last five meetings:
Was there more doing
or more talking about doing?*

Principle

TALKING IS NOT DOING

When everyone knows that the real work does not happen in meetings, in writing documents, reports or presentations, but in implementation, testing and improving. When people move from talking to doing every day, not after long planning and approval sessions.

This leads to results, realtime feedback, more impact, and faster adaptation.

Playing Office

Endless meetings and talks
before people actually
get to work.

Flow Collaboration

When things are clear enough,
everyone starts doing things
and making them happen.

Approaches to radical system design

You want change in your organization?

Do you want to immediately stop «Playing Office» and get into Flow Collaboration and live the principles?

Start where you are now. With yourself. With your team. With the projects you're involved in.

And **start talking** about it. Your reasoning, your observations, your experiments and fails. It will **inspire others**. You won't stay alone for long.

Expect backlash. As soon as something really starts working, everyone, including you, will feel threatened. Sounds irrational but it's a normal part of any big change.

***Don't wait.** For anybody. You don't need to convince the CEO or the board of the revolution that will save the company. It will take forever and nothing will change.*

You are the CEO, a founding team or board member, a department leader? You can start a bit bigger and use the power of disruption or system separation.

Big disruption

Creating one big disruption throughout the company such as establishing a meeting-free day or a «Get-it-done-day», immediately forces everybody to reconnect and adapt to today's needs.

Easy, fast and effective!

Dialysis

Exchange the culture bit by bit, like dialysis filters the blood: Ask who wants to do things in a new way and let them build it separately from the dominant structure. Because they are smaller they can learn, adapt and create a new Flow system easily. When it works and is fun, ask who wants to join. The smaller part grows organically.

A safe way for big organizations.

Slow & steady transformation with everyone

Transform the whole organization step by step by encouraging everyone to experiment and by adapting the system bit by bit.

You need a lot of energy and time for it and most likely you won't be around to see the end. But it's definitely a way.

Do a project

Do a project within the organization that has different rules and can develop its system, processes and rules following the purpose and its needs so it can flow fully. An enabling team from the top supports the team when it bumps into the dominant system. Variation: A **team** or **department** can rebuild itself and use the Flow principles fully.

Project: Quite easy to set up and learn from it

Build from scratch

Start fresh if you build a new organization. You get a chance to set up everything in a way the principles become applicable. Variation for big organizations: **Spin Off**: Start a new, permanent unit outside the organization and learn from it.

Sounds cool and fun, but be aware that everybody brings their own baggage of old culture from previous workplaces.

Questions? Surprise! Every card could fill a whole book! These are quick inspirations for you. If you'd like to talk about them, write to us! We love ping pong.
hello@flow-collaboration.com

Who we are

and why we care about this

We are Nadja and Laurent. Together, we have 35 years of experience setting up collaboration in a wide range of settings, in startups, communities, associations, foundations, groups of friends, ad hoc teams, corporations, and among ourselves.

We find the virus of «Playing Office» everywhere we go. And it kills the Flow and the joy of creating.

We believe that humans are made for collaboration and connection.

Why does this matter beyond the office? Because the way we work shapes the world we live in.

Would you like to team up? Let's get in touch!
hello@flow-collaboration.com



«We discover the knowledge of Flow Collaboration and make it accessible to everyone.»

We support individuals, teams and organizations to find and pursue their purpose.»

Nadja & Laurent's purpose

Our Society Purpose

***In our society,
everyone can live
a good life and flourish.***

no exceptions!

Our: We build this society together, and we keep rebuilding it. It belongs to all of us. What we shape is influenced by everyone's needs. Everything contributes to both the individual and the whole. We share what's hard and we share what's good, risk and prosperity.

Society is all of us, connected and interdependent, we are «in it together.» One living organism of humans, animals, and nature, caring for each other and future generations.

Everyone – no exceptions! Everyone means every human being, from newborns to elders, with the same rights and the same access to power.

Can: We are self-determined, supported and welcome as we are. All our needs are really taken into account.

To **live** means to live free, safe, healthy, well-nourished, encouraged, connected. Not just getting through the day.

A **good** life means having more than enough: access to the resources we need, room to live in abundance, and time to actually enjoy being alive.

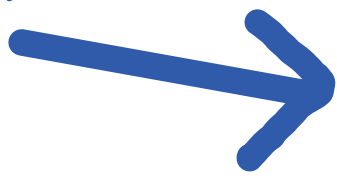
Life: We live embedded in society; none of us is left alone. We are all on a lifelong journey of trying, failing, learning, celebrating, with infinite chances and real togetherness.

To **flourish** means to grow into who we are, at our own pace, with what we want to bring and contribute. We live out our talent, our passion, our purpose.

Whatever we do,
we ask ourselves:
**«Does it help everyone
flourish?»**

How do you know if it's really working?

Look for this!



IS IT FUN?

10

«Working on this together
was really fun today!»

1

«I survived another day...»

One clear sign that you are not «Playing Office» in your team or organization is when people start **saying that work feels meaningful and fun**. Not «pizza Friday fun», but fun that's connected to purpose and meaning.

You can't really ask for it, but you'll hear it: «*That was intense, but really fun!*» That's Flow Collaboration happening. Maybe just for a moment, in one meeting or one project. Every big change starts small. Notice these moments, and help them grow.



The QR code and link to **Everything** *Everywhere All at Once :-)*

- Book a free 30 min. conversation with us
- Write us an email
- Subscribe to the Flow newsletter
- Visit our website (with Flow methods)
- Order the book (all about Flow methods)

linktr.ee/flow_collaboration

