

Four Phases of Structured Debriefing

What you are hoping to learn from the debrief?

The initial request - or scope of work received was to develop and deliver a “debrief” which would incorporate:

- what worked - what did not work
- what we can improve - do differently
- do more of - do less of
- identify any gaps, and
- develop an action plan to enable implementation of lessons

Background notes on “Debriefing”

Debriefing has become a key element of building a culture of learning/unlearning across organisations.

	Harvard Business Review
<p>Debriefing is a structured learning process designed to continuously evolve plans <i>while</i> they're being executed. It originated in the military as a way to learn quickly in rapidly changing situations and to address mistakes or changes on the field. In business, debriefing has been widely documented as critical to accelerating projects, innovating novel approaches, and hitting difficult objectives. It also brings a team together, strengthens relationships, and fosters team learning. In my experience, teams who debrief regularly are more tight-knit than those who don't. They communicate more effectively across the board. They are more aligned on values and purpose. In essence, they become higher performing teams.</p>	
Ref: HBR 2 July 2015	

Debriefing is used extensively in sport - as reflected in the note below by Cameron Schwab.

“We use the last game to draw as much learning as possible from an individual and team perspective before the next game. As games are played, the knowledge accumulates, soon embedded as wisdom. There are always three contexts:

1. What Happened? - What did we learn and how do we share these learnings with our teammates?
2. What Now? - What are we going to do about it, and what aren't we going to do? We cannot do everything and 'strategically quitting' is often as important as what we are still focused on.
3. What Next? - What have we consciously put off to the future and where are we heading?

Building a culture of learning/unlearning might just be the most important leadership objective there is.”

More than a conversation to discuss what did and did not go well, debriefing digs into why things happened and explores implications for the future.

Accurate understanding and knowledge are placed ahead of egos.

People participate with a desire to understand root causes of their successes and failures, so they know what to repeat and what to change.

The conversations may be uncomfortable, but participants realise that the discomfort of getting things out on the table is minimal compared to the pain of making the same mistakes again.

Thinking should start by considering four key questions before we start Phase 1:

1. What were we trying to accomplish? Think about context - the objectives you were trying to hit.
2. Where did we hit (or miss) our objectives? Review our results - is the group aligned?
3. What caused our results?
4. What should we start, stop, or continue doing?

Prompts vs Leading the witness

There are potentially many different areas and aspects to debrief, looking at the preparation and then the linear response, as well as looking at general points. How you decide within your own organisation to debrief will be very dependent on time available and the senior management's appetite to have a detailed debriefing or a more general review. Even if there is not the appetite for detail, you should at least be looking at your part of the organisation's response!

It is important to establish a "prompts framework" which will encourage and allow participants to hang their reflections on - and be used in the future to develop capability. Some methodologies suggest consideration of the following subjects for prompt questions: - Notification/activation - Deployment/mobilisation - Operational issues - Relationship management (Ref - from NZ Guide).

There are many different aspects you may want to review and look at during the debrief:

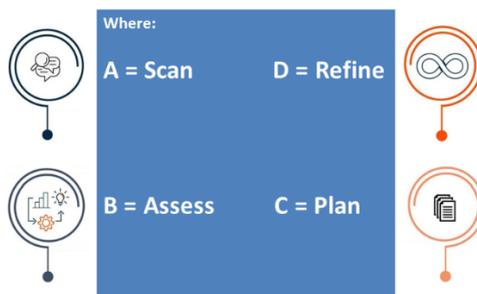
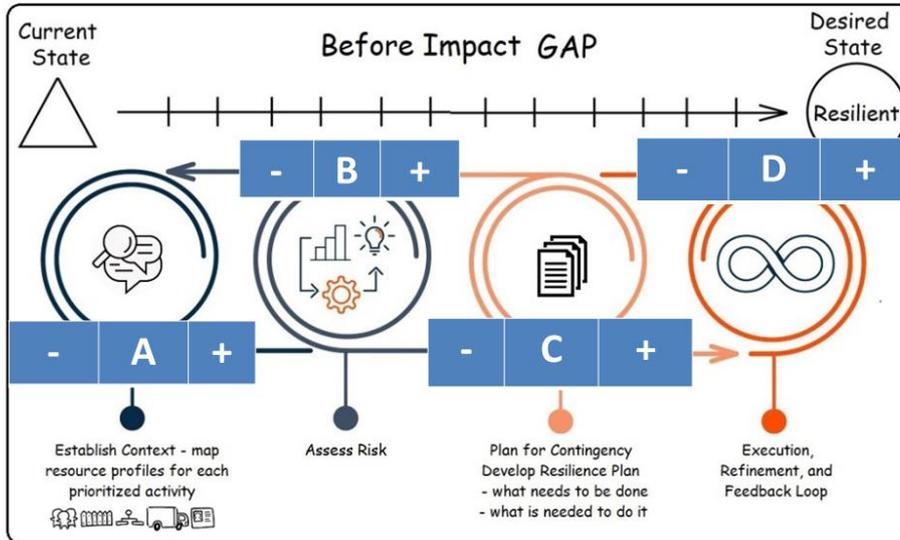
1. What level of planning did the organisation have in place before the onset of impact?
2. Why was the specific level of planning in place?
3. Who was responsible for the plan and identifying potential risks?
4. Did our organisation's plans fit the incident, how far off were they, what assumptions were made and why/what was the difference compared to what happened?
5. How did the organisation respond and when? In hindsight, could we have done more and earlier? What was the reason for any differences?
6. Review communication with stakeholders and whether the communication had the desired effect.
7. Did our incident management process, team(s) and procedures work as we thought they would?
8. What have we learned from our overall response and how could that response be improved?

You might use all the above things to think about before the debriefing.

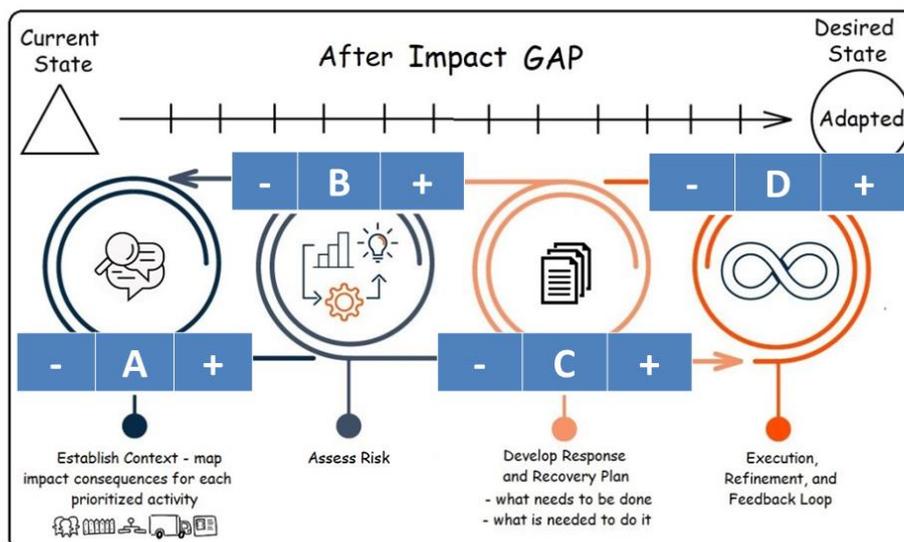
It is important to not let a framework stifle or direct your considerations too narrowly.

Stimulate good questions - and - Nest good answers

“Prompt” Diagram - Before



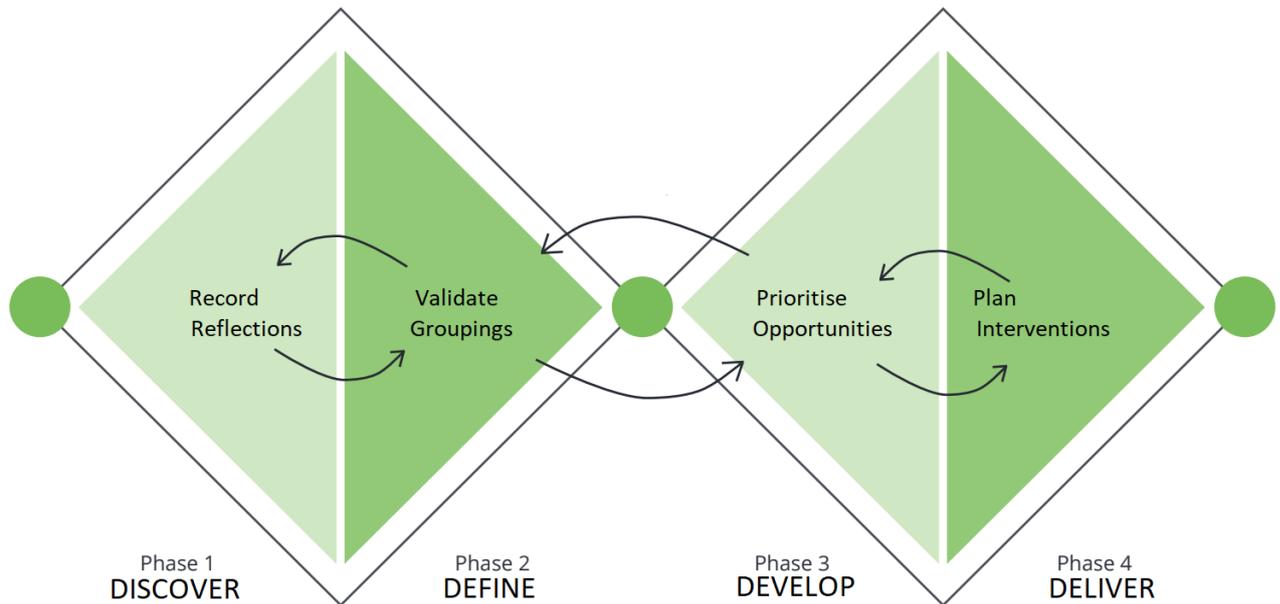
“Prompt” Diagram - After



Conducting the Debrief

We will apply a modified version of Structured Debriefing - a methodology, which was developed in the early 2000s by English policeman John Arney and which is still very much in use today.

Enhancements to Arney's approach come from nesting it within a "Double Diamond Design".

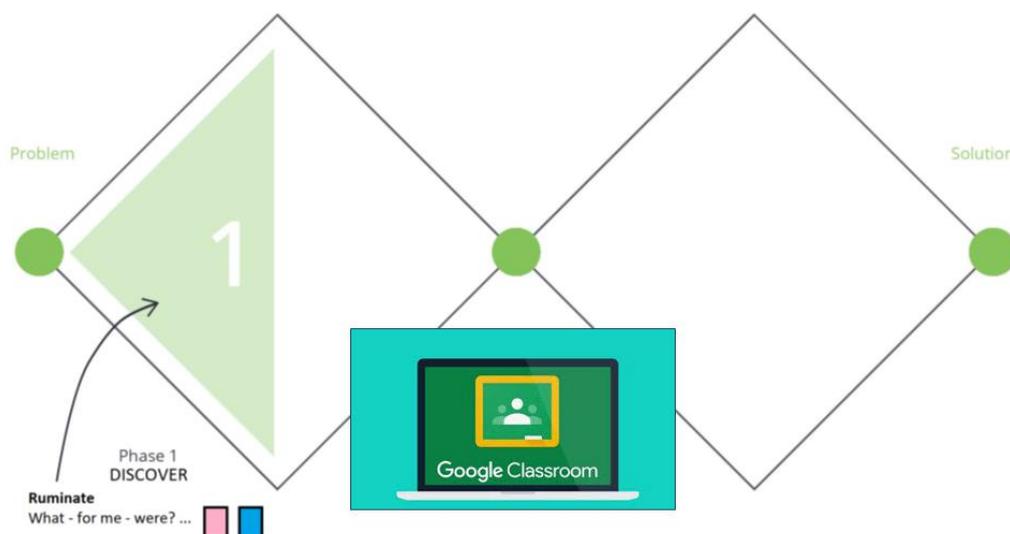


Diamond 1: Discover and Define - is all about 'what you do'. Doing the right thing. Defining the right question or the right problem to solve first.

Phase 1. Discover /Research - insight into the problem (diverging) - exploring and opening up.

Present and facilitate, (or coach the client to present and facilitate), a meeting to take the Crisis Management Team and Executive Management Team through the approach and demonstrate how to enter "initial individual reflections".

(Ref: Double Diamond - PHASE 1 DISCOVER / Structured Debrief - STAGE I THE OPENING)

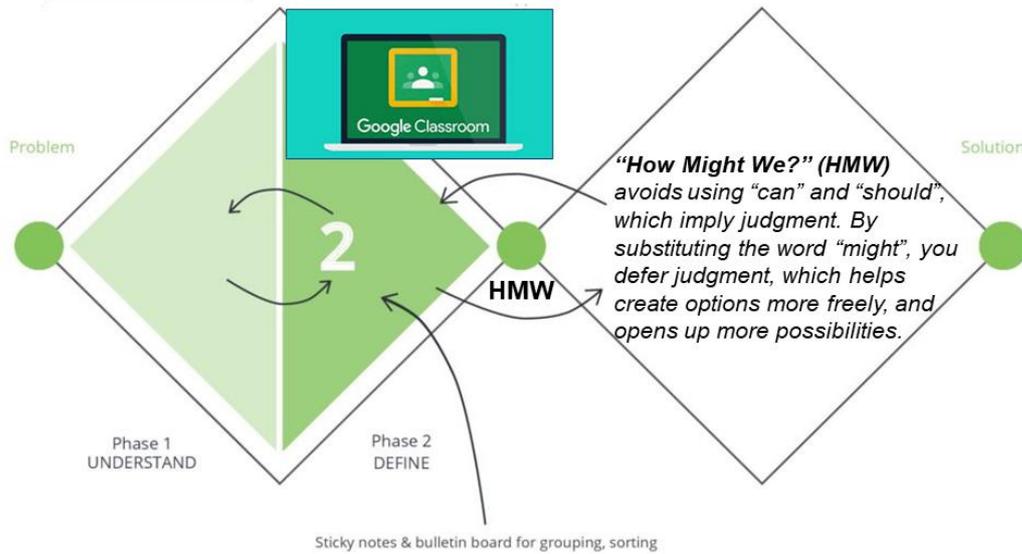


Phase 2. Define/Synthesis - the area to focus upon (converging) -condensing and narrowing ideas.

Group the individual responses received from PHASE 1 DISCOVER into “like with like - issues of significance”.

Collaboratively “consolidate issues of significance into draft opportunity clusters” - phrased as ‘How Might We’ statements.

(Ref: Double Diamond - PHASE 2 DEFINE / Structured Debrief - STAGE II THE SHARING AND DISCUSSION)

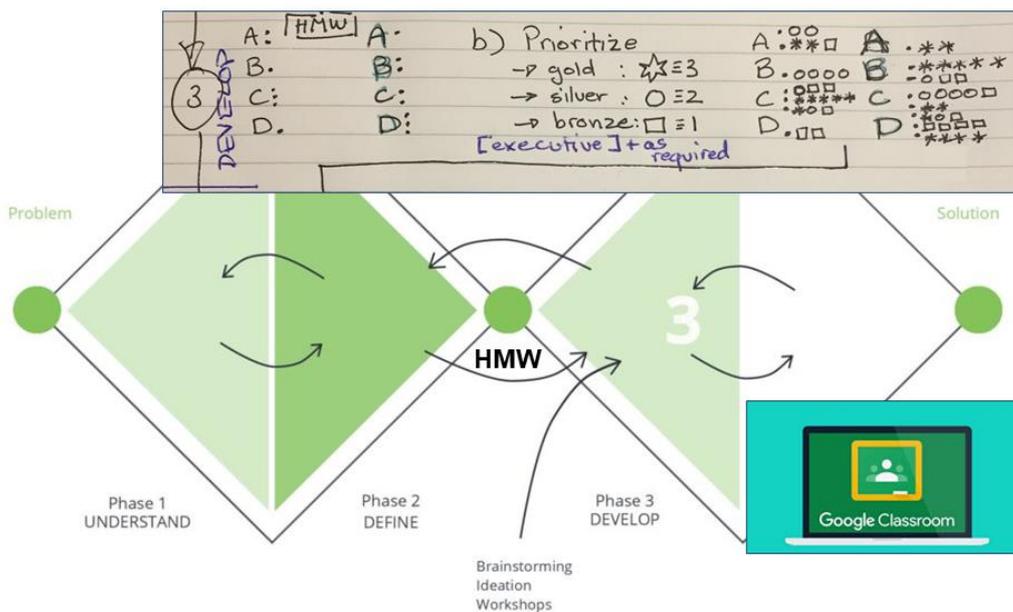


Diamond 2: Develop and Deliver - is all about 'how you do it'. Doing things right. Making sure the right question to answer or the right problem to solve, is answered or solved the right way.

Phase 3. Develop/ Ideation - potential solutions (diverging)

Present and facilitate (or coach the client to present and facilitate), a “validate and rank opportunities” activity using a modified nominal group technique i.e. “dots”

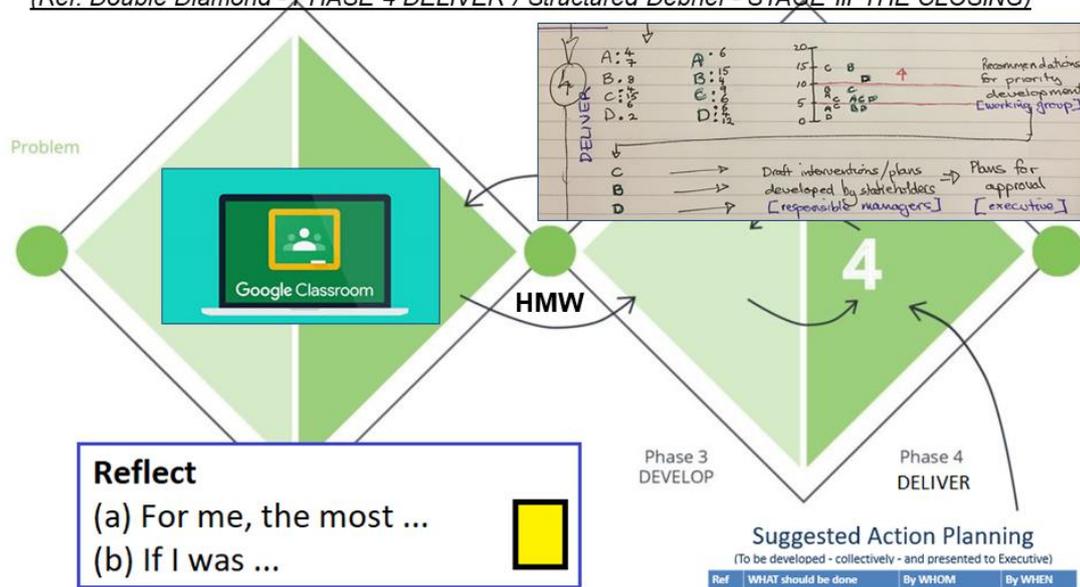
(Ref: Double Diamond - PHASE 3 DEVELOP / Structured Debrief - STAGE II THE SHARING AND DISCUSSION)



Phase 4. Deliver /Implementation - solutions that work (converging)

Managers responsible for “critical activities” (from a business continuity perspective) build on validation and ranking work to develop draft action plans to implement the opportunities (A confirmation of proportionate interventions by asking **five whys** to identify ‘what needs to be done, why, by whom, how and by when’ for possible transfer to the Corporate Plan.) Plus an individual closing reflection.

(Ref: Double Diamond - PHASE 4 DELIVER / Structured Debrief - STAGE III THE CLOSING)



References

Organisational Debriefing, New Zealand Govt, 2006

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