

**A
SMALL
INSPIRATIONAL
MANUAL
FOR
DOING
INTENSIVE
COURSES**

Welcome!

Designing an inspirational, meaningful and memorable intensive course is a fine art, that it takes experience to master. In this short manual we would love to share a short, and easy to remember process that can give you a great start. We also added the sketch for an intensive course we plan to make, so you can get a better picture of how it might work in action.

We sincerely hope you enjoy reading this text, and that we will leave you with energy and inspiration to take your next intensive course to the next level.

**Payam Susanni, Magareta Brandt,
Spencer Down & Morten Nottelmann
Den Haag, September 18**

THE I.DO.A.R.T.S. PROCESS

This simple process with the easy to remember acronym forms the backbone of our course-design-practise:

Intention

Desired Outcome

.....

Agenda

Roles

Rules


Time

Space

Over the next pages we will break down the meaning behind each letter.

Intention (I)

We have to start with a clear intention. This is what drives us, and makes it possible to attract the right people. Few people like to be involved in things that are abstract, fuzzy and hard to follow. Knowing the core reason of why things happens creates a natural connection to them. Our intention should guide all other choices we make in our design — (together with its (almost) equally important sibling: desired outcome)— so be sure to formulate it in simple, jargon-free language

 **Ask yourself why you wish to make this intensive course in the first place.**

Whenever we feel lost during the design of the course, always return to the intention. If things dont support the intention they must go!


*As an example we designed an intensive course for small classical ensembles.
We imagine our participants to be self-directed groups from trios up to sextets.*

Our intention is:

Moving small ensembles to the next professional level by gaining experience through taking actions.

Desired Outcome (DO)

Once our course is over the World should be a different (and hopefully better) place. So how do we imagine that the participants have changed? Like intention, it is essential that we can formulate what it is we wish has happened in clear simple terms. Only then can we determine if our design actually worked. I am deliberately not writing if it was *successful*. Success can show up in many shapes and unexpected forms, completely out of our control, so what we wish to know is to what degree we reached the outcome we had in mind.

 **Ask yourself where you want the participants to be once the completed the course**

Like intention, whenever we feel lost during the design of the course, always return to the desired outcome. Anything that dont support the desired outcome also have to go!

The desired outcome for our course is:

Confident, able ensembles that is ready to act in a changing market.

Agenda (A)

With our intention and desired outcome in place, in its time to look at our agenda. This is the collection of actual events, we wish to happen that supports the intention and desired outcome. Our agenda consists of building blocks that can come in many shapes and forms: lectures, workshops, reflections , etc. To choose the fitting components analyse the desired outcome and start with the end in mind.

In our example with small classical ensembles we looked into succesful players in the field. We asked ourselves what traits they had in common, and discovered 4 essential characteristics:

- 1. They have a great sound and a clear performance concept*
- 2. They are funded*
- 3. They have a strong brand*
- 4. They are capable of operating as a well-functioning unit*

Through these insights we decided to have activities that supported these four pillars. So our agenda should have components that supported:

- 1. “Sound”: performance, repertoire and conceptualisation*
- 2. “Economy”: fundraising, sponsorships, new markets etc*
- 3. “Branding”: visual identity, communication, PR. etc*
- 4. “Running The Group”: collaboration, leadership and daily operations*

Since our four pillars are quite different we looked into how best to deliver their contents. We believed as an overarching philosophy that the various ensembles

would have great insights and experiences already worth sharing with each other. Therefore much of this design would be based on peer-to-peer learning, with a few experts brought in to coach, advise and inform. You can see in the example later in the text how we chose to facilitate the learning in the example program.

There is so many ways of generating knowledge/new habits/skills.

Here is a few resources for inspiration:

<http://toolbox.hyperisland.com/>

A toolbox from Hyper Island - a Swedish design school known for its creative methods.

<http://www.liberatingstructures.com/lis/>


A toolbox from Liberating Structures - an American consultancy known for very action-based workshops

<https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/>

Various tools from the world famous design school Stanford D-school

Roles (R)

Depending on what we do together our need of various roles can switch. Knowing what roles are needed — and expected — in a certain situation can help clear out potential misunderstandings. It matters a great deal if we are present as experts with exact knowledge, or facilitators with the responsibility of reaching a collective understanding.


 **Ask yourself who should be present and what their role/function is. Describe your expectation to the role in simple language.**

Having an overview of our various agenda components already shows us what kinds of roles we need for our design:

- *A facilitator/host that is present throughout the course — not field expert.
Expectation: A person that can create a safe learning culture and move the program forward in an elegant way.*
- *Up to four field experts.
Expectation: A person that they can provide up-to-date information from their field of expertise, in a way that this useful and relevant to the participants*
- *Participants as co-creators/peer-reviewers.
Expectation: That participants are willing to share their knowledge, and can give and receive suggestions, advice, criticism , etc., in a good spirit.*

Rules (R)

“R” also stands for “rules”. These are non-negotiable principles that must be followed if our design should work.

 **Ask yourself if there is any rules that must be followed to support the intention and the desired outcome.**

It can be something simple like “no phones during classes” or something more demanding like “total confidentiality is expected”.

A few essential rules we discovered for our design was:

- *The participating groups much have concert experience*
- *All groups members must be able to follow the course*


Time (T)

If we look back at the activities of our agenda, we can now determine what kind of time we need to reach our desired outcome. There is two time factors in play:

The total time: The duration of the entire course

Component time: The duration of each activity/element

Often it can be difficult to set an exact time on activities, but the available time is often guided by how much space the activity can take in the entire course based on how important we consider it. We should also consider where we place activities according to energy and focus. Late afternoons are never good for “heavy lifting” for instance.

 **Look into the various components and prioritise them according to how much they help support our intention and desired outcome. More importance equals more time and better placement (morning before lunch)**


After much consideration we found that the ideal set-up for our course would be 2 x 2 days of workshop with an experimentation period of 6-8 weeks in the middle. We wanted to give equal weight to our four pillar topics so we ended up with four equally sized blocks in workshop 1. See more in the full design sketch.

Space(s) (S)

Our environment is an important — and often overlooked — “teacher”. The rooms we are in have a huge impact on what we can do, or how we behave.

Think about how the acoustics of a church makes us go silent for instance.

Or how a walk in nature leads to different type of conversation.

 Ask yourself what kind of space(s) would be ideal for your activities. Consider number and types of rooms, acoustics, size, temperature, furniture set-up and type, AV-equipment and aesthetic touch-ups like candles.

If you dont have access to an ideal space, think about how you can transform your available space so it suits the activity. Removing unneeded clutter and adding fresh flowers goes a long way...

For our design a resort away from the institution would be lovely. It would need access to a space suitable for musicplaying, places for sleeping and access to a couple of grouprooms for break-out sessions.

The Next Level

If you really want to take the course to the next level, consider the details. Things to think about can be:

Commute: Arriving and leaving smoothly to your course is a great start to begin and end

Food: Healthy, tasty and freshly prepared food makes our hearts sing and our brains sharp

Socialising: Making the time outside the class-room count. So much learning takes place when people can enjoy each others company in a relaxed setting

Sleeping arrangement: Getting you sleep in a decent bed makes for a tuned-in participant

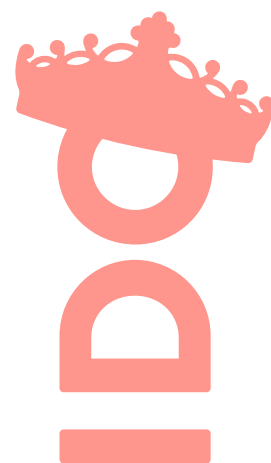
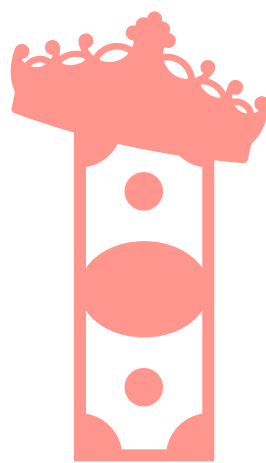
Hand-outs: Nicely layed-out prints with all the material is a beautiful bonus

Invitations: A clear programme with answers to all the FAQ's makes participants feel safe about the quality and purpose of the course

Magic: What unexpected extra can you add?

Who is your “King”?

No design is born into a perfect world. No matter what we will always meet constrains. Some constrains are more powerful than others. I call them “The King”. Like a king they rule over us, and must be obeyed at all times. Ideally our intention and desired outcome is our kings, and everything we do will have to please them, but there is often other more “evil” kings at play. Maybe the budget is a king. No matter what you only have a 1000 € to complete the workshop, and you where dreaming about it taking place in Bali. Now every design decision must we weighted against this ruler, but we must still not lose eyesight with our two most important heroes “intention” & “desired outcome”. In some cases a “budget”— or “time” — or “space-king” can be so powerful that it can threaten to kill the entire project. If that is the case we have to go back and alter the intention and desired outcome. It is a hurtful proces, but remember: Over-promising and under-delivering leads to angry participants, so better be realistic and honest about what we can do within the frames.



Our Sketch Design

Background:

We wanted to design a meaningful intensive course that could help conservatory students involved in performing ensembles to boost their professional practice. By working with and through something they are already invested in and passionate about we believe we would attract enthusiastic participants that would be able to apply the content of the course directly to their everyday life.

This is how our IDOARTS turned out:

I:

Moving small ensembles to the next professional level by gaining experience through taking actions.

DO:

Confident, able ensembles that is ready to act in a changing market.

A:

Cover four essential pillars:

1. “Sound”: performance, repertoire and conceptualisation
2. “Economy”: fundraising, sponsorships, new markets etc
3. “Branding”: visual identity, communication, PR.
4. “Running The Group”: collaboration, leadership and daily operations.

R:

- A facilitator/host that is present throughout the course — not field expert. Expectation: A person that can create a safe learning culture and move the program forward in an elegant way.

- Up to four field experts.

Expectation: A person that they can provide up-to-date information from their field of expertise, in a way that this useful and relevant to the participants

- Participants as co-creators/peer-reviewers.

Expectation: That participants are willing to share their knowledge, and can give and receive suggestions, advice, criticism etc. in a good spirit.

T:

2 x 2 days of workshop with an experimentation period of 6-8 weeks in the middle.

S:

A space suitable for music-playing, and access to a couple of group-rooms for break-out sessions.

Putting all this together this is how a rough cut of our actual schedule could look like:

DAY 1

WELCOME AND SETTLING IN

THEME: "SOUND"

Participants perform for each other, and share their thoughts on repertoire. The group offers insight and feedback

REFLECTION:

After each session the ensembles meet up and assess themselves by figuring out how they can improve this aspect.

LUNCH

THEME: "BRAND"

The ensembles share all branding material. The group offers insight and feedback

REFLECTION

DINNER

SOCIAL EVENT

DAY 2

THEME: "ECONOMY"

Talk from an expert in the field. Topics could be new markets and trends, fundraising or alternative funding.

REFLECTION:

Possible assignments from the expert that relates the knowledge to the ensembles reality.

LUNCH

THEME: "RUNNING THE GROUP"

Sharing best practices, possible some frameworks provided from facilitator to show their current state and a possible more ideal state of collaboration.

REFLECTION

DESIGNING AN EXPERIMENT:

The ensembles go over their findings from the four reflections and agree on an experiment they can conduct that will strengthen them most. In ex: Build a new visual identity

CHECK OUT

EXPERIMENT PERIODE

During this 6-8 weeks periode the participants will have acces to a sparring session from a mentor from their home institution, possible an expert from their chosen field of experimentation via online conversation.

DAY 3

WELCOME AND SETTLING IN

THEME: Sharing learnings, experiences and results from the experimentation period.

LUNCH

THEME: More sharing...

DINNER

SOCIAL EVENT

DAY 4

THEME: Further boost. "World Cafe"-style* setup with acces to four experts from the various fields

LUNCH

THEME: Looking forward: What is next step?
Designing a commitment plan: What to do now, in a week, in a month in 6 months

WRAPPING UP

Before participants leave a "touch point" has been arranged. They will check in and share progress w. facilitator after 2 months.

* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_café

Wrapping Up

We hope we managed to inspire you to go do your own intense course design! Intense Courses are not the answers to everything, but done right they can provide some potentially life-changing pockets of intense learning and inspiration that is difficult to make time and space for in a busy everyday.

If you have any questions or comments never hesitate to reach out:

Payam Susanni: Payam.susanni@yasar.edu.tr

Margareta Brandt: Magareta.brandt@uniarts.fi

Spencer Down: Spencer.down@gsmd.ac.uk

Morten Nottelmann: post@mortennottelmann.com

Now please GO.DO.ART!

