

co·wonders



pierogi comms

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What is it about:

- using the cooking as a tool for communication
- discovering leadership and project management skills
- building group dynamics with a fun, entertaining and delicious

source: Jorge Aguado Sánchez and Agata Stajer
(with the support of Kasia Pilitowska)

domains: group communication, leadership, manual jobs,
organisational management and team building

approach description:

Kasia Pilitowska, a vegan-chef from Krakow, said once:

"I like talking to sellers, getting to know the stories behind objects, asking about countries of origin, species, or weather... you just need to sit down anywhere to have someone approach you and start telling you stories. Unbelievable stories!"

With this philosophy, Agata Stajer and myself asked ourselves how we could connect food with communication. We came up with the idea of giving people the recipe of Pierogi, a common dish in Eastern European countries.

This method uses cooking as a tool for communication, leadership and teambuilding. In just one hour, participants need to experience how a shared task can build collaboration, leadership roles, and group dynamics.

The process of making Pierogi involves planning, clear communication, and effective delegation, as each step requires coordination. Participants naturally step into different roles (leaders, organizers, hands-on workers, quality controllers), reflecting team dynamics in a professional and experimental setting (see The Nine Belbin's Team Roles in this communication canvas).

At the end of the process, people enjoy eating the pierogi together, developing a common ritual for food and symbolizing the prize for the collective effort and success.

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aim of use:

The Pierogi Comms canva aims to create a creative and experimental space using the cooking tools for building the group's communication. It can also be used to discover leadership skills and to build the first steps of the community. It has proved to be an excellent method to foster team building.

educational method:

• Step 1: Buy ingredients and show the recipe

As a facilitator, make sure to buy the needed ingredients. Some aspects of this recipe may need previous steps (e.g. boiling the potato or cooking the fillings, as this takes longer than 1 hour). Prepare the kitchen with the tools they will need to use.

Unite the participants and show them the recipe. Explain that they will need to prepare, assemble and cook pierogi. Show them the recipe steps:

- Dough
- Filling
- Gluing
- Boiling

Put in a flipchart the questions they need to self-organise themselves:

- Who knows the recipe?
- Who can be a cooking project manager?
- Which roles do you need? (dough or filling maker, assembler...)
- Do you need anything to succeed?

Emphasize the need for support within roles. If someone does not feel well to cook, the group can find them another role (e.g. photographer, recipe reader...)

Tell participants the main rule: everyone needs to have a role.

communication canvas



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- **Step 2: Cooking challenge**

Start the 1 hour countdown.

Facilitators need to monitor and be observant of the dynamics of the group. If a challenge arises, ask participants questions to support the solving of conflicts.

Encourage open communication and creative problem-solving.

- **Step 3: Hands-up and debriefing**

When the time ends, ask them to put their hands-up. It is time to debrief while one volunteer, the cook or another trainer, boils the pierogi.

Tell participants to talk between themselves and to enjoy the moment too.

Make a circle and ask them few debriefing questions:

- How do you feel after this cooking experience?
- What did you notice at the beginning, during and ending of this process?
- There were any difficulties?
- What did you find natural or easy?
- How did communication impact your team's success?
- What helped the communication?
- How can this workshop serve us for what we want to achieve?

- **Step 4: Time to eat!**

Unite participants around a long table (if possible) or in the same room, and share the home-made pierogi.

Congratulate them for making the lunch/dinner possible and encourage them to keep the communication open and flowing.

Last, the Pierogi recipe can be changed for any other local dish. Pizza or the making of pasta are also common recipes.

read more:

- **Instagram:** @CoWonders social media has a post about this canvas
- **Book:** Ziemniak. Znakomite i nieskomplikowane przepisy z ziemniakiem w roli głównej. Katarzyna Pilitowska and Zofia Pilitowska [in Polish] (2021)



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