

## THE GENUINE CONTACT™ WAY OF WORKING

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### Storytelling

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*Prepared on behalf of the Strategic Plan Refresh Team*

### This Session within the Strategic Plan Refresh

Co-creating the future for Genuine Contact. Over the last few years, Genuine Contact has been growing in leaps and bounds. With a shift to being a strategy-focused organization, the development of an expanded membership model (and over 100 members worldwide!), design and implementation of a new brand, and all the other small steps along the way, we're proud to celebrate achieving all of our original strategic plan. To set our direction for the coming 5 years, the international Genuine Contact Organization is undertaking the development of an updated operating matrix including a refreshed strategic plan



This Storytelling session within the Strategic Plan Refresh of the international Genuine Contact Organization (GCO) was held on November 4 and 5. It was offered twice, at different times of day, to accommodate a variety of time zones and differing work schedules. It is the third of four opportunities for engaging with the collective wisdom of our whole community during the strategic refresh process.

During the session, participants were led through a storytelling activity to continue developing the picture of the organization in its current state. Our collective experience is best expressed when many voices can contribute.

## Prior Activity

The first opportunity to engage in the Strategic Plan Refresh was the Orientation session, held twice on October 5 and October 7. In these meetings we opened the Whole Person Process Facilitation for the whole strategic plan refresh process. Participants were oriented to all of the parts of the work we are doing during this process to develop a clear picture of our process and a sneak peek into what strategic planning the Genuine Contact way looks like. The process was designed to help each participant better understand how the contributions they might make in the other parts of the process will fit into the bigger picture. [You can read the report of the Orientation sessions here.](#)

The second opportunity to engage in this process was the Organizational Health and Balance Assessment. This session was held twice, on October 12 and 19. In these meetings, participants were led through an organizational health and balance assessment (as taught in Foundational Module 2 of the program) to make a picture of the organization in its current state. Participants had the opportunity to experience this process firsthand (which supports ongoing learning of how to apply this module) and contribute their experience of our organization. [You can read the report of the Organizational Health and Balance Assessment here.](#)

There was also an asynchronous opportunity to participate in the Health and Balance Assessment through the completion of a Purpose Fulfillment Survey. This survey is also drawn from the Achieving Organizational Health and Balance module. 23 people responded to this survey, offering important data for consideration in the state of readiness for moving forward in our strategic plan refresh as well as checking in on our organizational health and balance. [You can read the report of the Purpose Fulfillment Survey here.](#)

After the Storytelling, members of the GCO have one more opportunity for engaging in this Strategic Plan Refresh process: in Open Space Technology sessions on November 12 and 13.

[Keep up to date with the Strategic Plan Refresh in the Information Centre.](#)

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## Consultant's Comments

In the report, we share with you the results of the 2 storytelling sessions. Overall, the tone of the storytelling was light, joy-filled, and with much laughter. Even though stories were touched on that were challenging or sad, they were often met with notice that they were stories of the past and that were no longer part of our present-day story.

It is interesting to note that there is a shift in the focus and tone of the storytelling from the last event in 2017 until now. In 2017, the stories were noted as 50% Glad and 50% Mad or Sad. Glad stories often centered on people coming together to contribute, celebrate and on initiatives. Sad stories focused on break-downs of initiatives, health issues of the founders Birgitt and Ward, on disappointments regarding outcomes that didn't match the intended results (both impact-wise and financially) and they also spoke about people feeling mistreated by their colleagues.

The stories told in this 2020 storytelling event were noted as being 73% Glad, which is a significant shift. The stories of the organization are much more positive in nature, reflecting a more life nurturing experience. The stories themselves included those about experiences inside the organization as well as those that were from people working the Genuine Contact way with their clients. This may support another shift that was desired in the 2017 assessment – wanting to focus together more on our work out into the world rather than focusing only inside our community. This entire shift is consistent with the results of the Organizational Health and Balance Assessment and the Purpose Fulfillment Survey.

## Storytelling

### The Invitation



In mid-September, a Save the Date notice was sent out to all members of the organization and via the Genuine Contact List for these session dates. After the Organizational Health and Balance Assessment was complete, an invitation was sent out through the same channels with regular reminders of follow-up as the dates approached. People were also invited to participate without having RSVP'd beforehand.

### The Participants

In total, 21 people joined the Storytelling dates: 9 people participated on the first day and 12 on the second. This group of people included a wide variety of stakeholders, as has been true for all of our work in this Strategic Plan Refresh so far. The participants included people who were members of the organization at all levels as well as those who are new to Genuine Contact. It included people who have been a part of this community and the organization since the beginning, those who are just getting to know Genuine Contact, and everything in between. The participants offered a variety of perspectives and experiences.

**Session 1: November 4**

Story Sharing

Rachel  
Anna Caroline  
Alina  
judy  
Mariëlle  
Wieneke  
Stefan Sargent  
Ann-Heidi  
Urban  
Ad  
Richard  
Nancy

GC

**Session 2: November 5**

Story Sharing

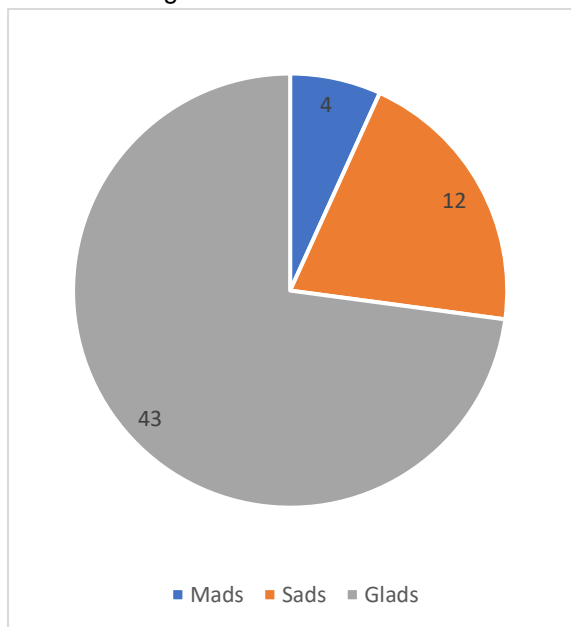
Welcome to the circle!  
Please take a seat by adding your name or photo where you wish to be seated.  
If you haven't already, join the video call by clicking the "join video for main space" button.

Nancy  
Eiwor  
Doris  
Tulika  
THOMAS  
ANNA CAROLINE  
jjudy  
Martina  
Ann-Heidi  
Britt  
Birgit

GC

## Telling the Glads, Sads, and Mads of Genuine Contact

Participants on both days were invited to break into small groups and share the stories that are in their hearts right now about their work with Genuine Contact and the international Genuine Contact



Organization. They spent about 45 minutes sharing their stories with one another in these small groups. When participants were sharing their stories, they made note of whether each story was one that was glad, sad, or mad.

Over the course of these 2 sessions, 59 stories were shared. These stories were mapped as being:

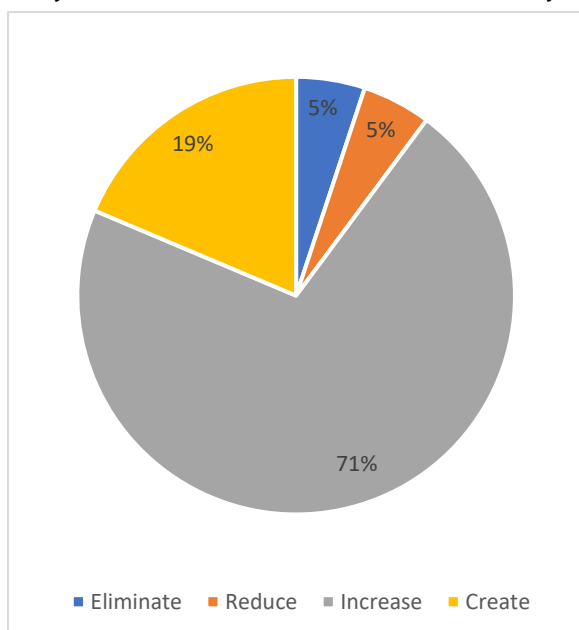
- Glad 73%
- Sad 20%
- Mad 7%

With nearly ¾ of the stories being ones that were noted as glad, it indicates that the organization has regenerated a more life nurturing environment in recent years and that people are likely in a phase of the grief cycle that is ready for something new. When the majority of stories are ones that are Glad, it supports the picture of an organization that is ready for moving forward into the future together.

The stories are organized according to Glad, Sad and Mad in **Appendix 1**.

## Mapping Stories for what can be Eliminated, Reduced, Increased, or Created

When the participants returned to the main circle, they were invited to share the highlights of their stories with one another. As they were sharing the stories, we used a second form of mapping to further turn the qualitative data that had been shared into quantitative data that can be measured. They were asked to decide whether each story was one that could be:



- Eliminated: what should be stopped.
- Reduced: what should be done less frequently or less intensely.
- Increased: what we should do more of or find ways to do more effectively.
- Created: things that are not yet happening that we should begin doing.

In mapping the stories in this way:

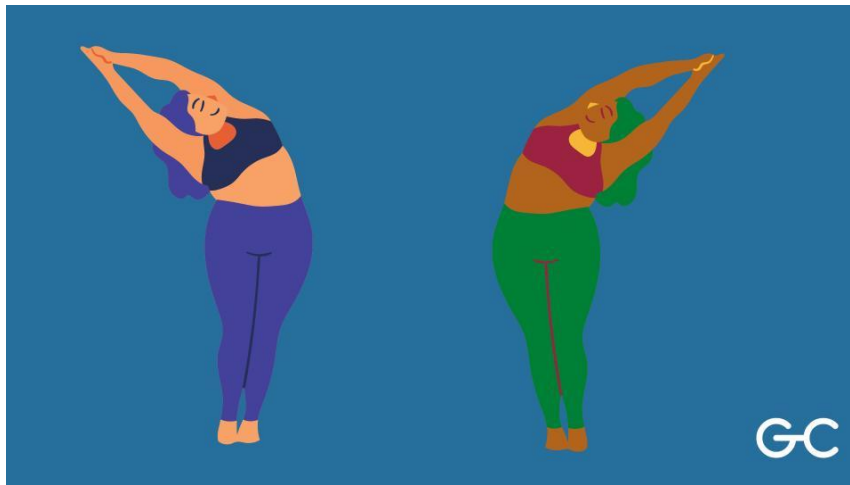
- Eliminate 5%
- Reduce 5%
- Increase: 71%
- Create: 19%

More than 2/3 of the stories were one that were identified as things that should be Increased. This may be a result of the significant organizational transformation that has occurred in recent years. Having reduced and eliminated unhelpful activities

and creating many new things including the expanded membership model and new branding, we could be in a position of pausing for a period of stabilizing and tuning up all that we have been implementing in preparation for continuing organizational development (as per the cycle of transformation). Having organized the stories in this way, we can now work with the suggestions of what can be eliminated/reduced and increased/created as we refresh the strategic plan. The stories of the past help to point the direction we can head into the future.

The stories are organized according to Eliminate, Reduce, Increase, or Create in **Appendix 2**.

## Imagining Stories into the Future



When the stories from the past had been shared, participants were invited into a yoga flow called Greet the Universe. This yoga flow has been used at many in-person Genuine Contact events in the past, meaning some participants were familiar with it already. Before starting this yoga flow, participants were invited to use this opportunity for movement to consider the future of Genuine Contact. What might they notice in their bodies, minds, hearts and spirits about the future as they spent a few moments in this movement.

After the yoga was complete, participants were invited to think of one word or phrase that represented their future story for Genuine Contact.



Having chosen a word or phrase, they were then asked to find an image to share that represented their vision of what that word represented. Following are the collages that were prepared.



These collages represent a future that is bright, vibrant, and full of hope for what is possible when we work together in Genuine Contact. As the storytelling concludes, it appears that the participants are ready for whatever might come next.

***“Whatever happens is the only thing that could...”***





## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Stories as Glads, Sads, and Mads

#### Glads

- Confusion about the organisation has to do with the minimal structure
- GC became a guide in my professional and personal development
- Richard The macro story of GC from 2001 to today. Birthed in the turmoil of 9/11, changing of the world, and even more relevant to invite conversations. Plus the evolution of energy of the GC organization over time.
- The capacity of the GC method to allow what wants to emerge. - Go slow to go fast
- Richard - the capacity this container has for connection and community... stories of connection and community
- Demonstrating learning styles and coming as we are (3D MWT)
- So many glad stories in GC, **in other organization there are often more sad or glad stories.**
- Storytelling is actually used as technique in the organization, great and cozy
- We talk both about what works and does not work
- 20 years of expertise of working with online communities
- Keeping in mind the value of 'what is nourishing' as GCO
- So many things possible. People come as they are
- Chris Weaver brings Five to Fold to Genuine Contact
- Chris Weaver - Fire Keeper, Sitting around a fire at Virginia
- The Power of empowerment
- People joining as they are in GC meetings. Eating in meetings, sleeping in meetings...
- Curious about OHB workshop Anna Caroline/Thomas were offering. I researched GC, and found a GC consultants website. On it, Birgit described her way of working. I loved her style of writing, clear, honest, open, with spirit and love. I was convinced: I trust her, this is the kind of people I can connect with. I joined the workshop and absolutely love the DET.
- In the Online Workshops about holistic Facilitation more men take part and start to 'understand' or feel what genuine contact means
- CEO resisted the Transfer-in with stones BUT fully enjoyed the meeting and admits that it was the most effective he ever attended
- GC - this is what I have been waiting for!
- Deeper awareness that so much is about genuine contact with self/other/all
- Success story of NiiT Foundation! Working with the whole system. How it changed the board and how they "found" how smart the staff are... And the whole org flourishing. "Persevere and they will see the light"
- To be back after a couple of years. Coming from a corporate company, GC sounded very unrealistic for business purposes.
- CEO taking part in my training, has used GC coached by me before and knows it works but such a big step to implement in org. Two different worlds but they can be combined!
- WPPF is hard to tell people - what it is and get people to understand. This is something that you have to experience - and then it is very strong/ deep inside. Bring you to awareness.
- Balancing the past and future. There is a shift in people, a lot of new ones coming in, bringing new wants and energy, and then the people holding space for the ones that have been here for a long time.
- GC - cleared the water of my life, which helped me to reflect with more clarity- reflection from the fire activity. Reflection- 'Their souls are on our side'- BW
- The fire took me back to the cottage and my summer, just as GC function, bringing me back to how I meet Birgit. Attending with Birgit gave me a vibrant feeling of belonging. The pieces and tools speak to me, about giving opportunities to learn and contribute when ready and

given enough support. It is so more powerful than being told what to do. This are ways of connecting to people, giving them chance to learn by them self.

- First Workshop experience. So many intense reactions No gray areas great learning from it. Getting better each time.
- Great joy seeing the new generation join. My son joining and we have different ways of learning but I have great joy seeing others stepping into GC - perfect fit for everyone. Allows people to be who they are, in every state their are in.
- Old stories can contribute to good learnings for us when we are moving forward. In conflicting times the stories bring insights.
- I really really like morning and evening circles- especially when you meet over more days, the sharings go deeper and deeper. You do not want to leave, mental communication between people, surroundings
- Really love mentoring circles - ask questions when I do not understand, and always the trainers was like an Buddha, do not give answers but I always found them myself after listening to myself.
- Came from another world - big corporate company - given information about OST, got in contact with Anna C. , many questions, trusted her, English training, did not work English, retrain myself, it worked. Trust in my self, insight about restart, learned about OST, found the special freedom inside, you can do this. Fallen in love in this kind of work. WPPF afterwards, mentoring circles, many trainings in short time, connected to other GC persons, special people , love community, integrated in my new work  
Not about tools, but mindset you learn through doing it the GC way.
- Getting in contact with GC on a journey for her own future; in a meeting of theory U she met someone who linked her to Hege; she got to know a lot of great people, she got hooked, learned a lot, box of treasures, brought her to knew meetings; it starts to become normal to talk in groups about how happy we are; story about generosity and hospitality
- Stewardness. There is a shift in people, a lot of new ones coming in, bringing new wants and energy, and then the people holding space for wholeness
- Honoring the Past. Firekeeping took me to great moments in GC- Chris Weaver had a school fire keeping, giving kids from families - five to fold, Canadian outdoor experiences, close to nature, being in nature is very dear to my heart.
- Beckoning. Fire drew me in. Drawn to the horizon, see the sun arising - image beckoning - inviting come here, soft. Whispering more effective than screaming.
- GC made many people do strange things in difficult times just to come and join the workshops/the work
- Tools that are great to use also in personal situations, “you have been visiting your mother too much” :-)
- Pride in our GCO and our GCO transformation...
- How normal it is to be whole...and has reminded me that when I invite they join...
- GC taking big steps in moments of crisis and GC is there for me.

## Sads

- Richard - the story of Peace Leaders in NB and the challenge of inviting people into leadership for what they have passion for and the polarity of action vs process
- **So many glad stories in GC**, in other organization there are often more sad or glad stories
- Honoring Grief in GC
- We went from processes taking 4 years where energy slipped away. Now 3 months - yes! We like to see results!
- It has been stories of sads and mads over the years in GC - people coming from different traditions, we do not want to preach, you want people to experience what great things that can come out of this.
- Met a company with “fake soul” :) But curious about GC
- As we grow it will be hard to get to know people at the same level as we do now in a small organization

- Looking back at recordings of old meetings, there was a tone of sadness
- There have been frustrations about different traditions, language, culture, etc. Tension between structure and freedom, process and action. But it gave us experience in using our tools to bring us forward
- The genuine connections and love GC brings to us also sometimes comes with loss and grief, when you never meet again.
- GC taking big steps in moments of crisis and GC is there for me.
- Really touch and go for a while - but we survived and we learned from our mistakes.

## Mads

- No one is willing to look at the financial issues
- after an OST last year on the topic "soul of the company" I was called last days again to give feedback because the groups are not successful. But I shouldn't do this esoteric stuff - I basically work as a GC facilitator holistically and recommended a storytelling so that the group leader can share their problems. What this is supposed to bring, it only takes time and costs money - and went into resistant outside they show up as very modern but inside they have fear to come in contact with themselves and each other and Fake soul - now I am curious if they are open for storytelling
- No way I am going to complicate things again, no flashy (empty) meetings when it is so easy to use the wisdom of the people
- sticking to your process, irrespective of the initial criticism

## Appendix 2: Stories as what to Eliminate, Reduce, Increase, or Create

### Eliminate

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