Principles of Liberating Structures

Through thrills and spills, we try to live by these principles.

Principle	Must Do's	Must NOT do's
1. Practice Deep Respect for People and Local Solutions	Believe that people in a local context *doing the work* have expertise & inventiveness to solve complex challenges.	Import "best practices" and drive "buy-in."
2. Include and Unleash Everyone	Invite everyone who touches a challenge to share possible solutions & invent new approaches. Actively reach beyond the usual suspects.	Design an "elegant solution" & then ask others to implement the design after the process is complete.
3. Build Trust As You Go	Cultivate a trusting group climate where speaking the truth is valued. Shared ownership is the goal.	Make decisions about people & their work without including them.
4. Engage In Seriously-Playful Curiosity	Stir things up – with levity, paradoxical questions, and improvisation – to spark a serious exploration of current practices and latent innovations.	Keep it simple by deciding in advance what the solutions should be; ignore how the conversation unfolds.
5. Practice Self-Discovery Within A Group	Draw out rather than compel behavior to the maximum degree. Solutions generated from within a group or unit will fit local conditions and be sustained.	Adopt solutions generated by experts not involved in the work of a unit or group.
6. Amplify Freedom AND Responsibility	*Liberate* people to try many experiments and rigorously track progress, feeding back results to all parties.	Report results in ways that are not understood by or accessible to frontline staff.
7. Emphasize Possibilities	We focus on what can be accomplished now with the imagination and materials at hand. Taking the next step leads us to the edge of creativity and renewal.	Waiting for all the barriers to come down or ideal conditions to emerge.