

## Group Exercise

### Topic

The Co-operative Values & Principles

### Aim

To introduce participants to the co-operative values & principles and encourage them to analyse and reflect on their importance and relevance.

### Description

This is a group-based, analytical exercise that enables students to discuss and debate the merits of a particular concept. It challenges students to construct an analysis of a concept and to present and defend this analysis to other groups.

### Learning Outcomes

- Understand the relevance and importance of the values and principles.
- Develop new concepts based on their analysis of the original concept.
- Analyse and debate an issue in a group and be able to articulate their opinion coherently and logically.

### Time & Materials

#### Time:

Approximately 35-45 minutes depending on how in depth the facilitator wishes the discussion to be.

#### Materials:

- Values & Principles handout
- Markers and flipchart paper for each group
- A space to display the groups' analyses

### Scenario

The participants are divided into groups of between four and six. Each group is given a copy of the co-operative values & principles, as stated by the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA, 1995). These values and principles are adopted by most co-operatives in the world, particularly in the UK. Each group must debate the merits of each value and principle and then complete the following tasks:



- Rank the values and principles in terms of their importance to a business.
- Amend the values & principles. This can be done by adding new values and principles or by removing those that they consider to be irrelevant or impractical.

### Rules

- Each group must reach consensus on both of the tasks and present their work as a group.

### Conducting the Exercise

1. Divide the participants into groups of roughly even number. The suggested size of each group is between four and six participants.
2. Give each group a copy of the values & principles and ask them to read and digest the information for four to five minutes.
3. For the next ten to fifteen minutes, ask each group to complete the tasks required of them (stated in the scenario above). Ask them to draw up their analysis using the materials provided.
4. When the tasks have been completed, ask each group to stick their flipchart paper containing their analysis on a wall and allow each group a couple of minutes to survey each group's work.
5. Conduct a discussion with all the participants on the reasons behind their analysis using your own insight and/or some of the discussion topics below.

### Discussion topics

- Ask each group to explain the rationale behind their ranking of the values & principles. Does it relate to their preconceptions of what a business is for?
- Are some of the values & principles a hindrance to a business (e.g. does principle number six prevent businesses from sourcing the best deal from the market?) or are they a source of competitive advantage (see article on [The Co-operative Bank winning the FT Sustainable Bank of the Year award](#))?
- What is the difference between a co-operative's values & principles and the values and corporate social responsibility initiatives of conventional businesses?
- What are the potential problems inherent to particular principles e.g. does the 3<sup>rd</sup> principle affect the ability of a co-operative to raise finance? Does the 1<sup>st</sup> principle lead to problems engaging a large number of members?

