

GUIDING OBEYA DEVELOPMENT & EXPERTISE



OBEYA

BY THE OBEYA ASSOCIATION



OBEYA
association
obeya-association.com



Table of contents

PAGE

3	INTRODUCTION
4	WHAT IS AN OBEYA?
7	OBEYA & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
10	OBEYA ROLES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OBEYA MASTER ROLE• OBEYA HOST ROLE
14	OBEYA ROLES & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
19	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NETWORK OF PRACTITIONERS
CASE ORIENTED KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT
CONSOLIDATED INTO A CONTINUOUSLY ENRICHED
BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

About the Obeya Association

The Obeya Association is a community (or “Association”) where Obeya knowledge is developed and experiences are shared. Our platform www.obeya-association.com accommodates a home for Obeya practitioners worldwide.

We aim to provide all practitioners with the means necessary to work with Obeya effectively. Providing practical Obeya knowledge and inspiring people to start with Obeya. The ultimate aim is to contribute to sustainable and inclusive decision making, benefitting a world in which organizations positively contribute to their surroundings.

We consolidate Obeya experiences and use cases into this body of knowledge on effective Obeya practice.

Then we return this information back into our worldwide network of Obeya Associates. Through this constant cycle we create a dynamic Obeya framework that provides a foundation to work with Obeya.

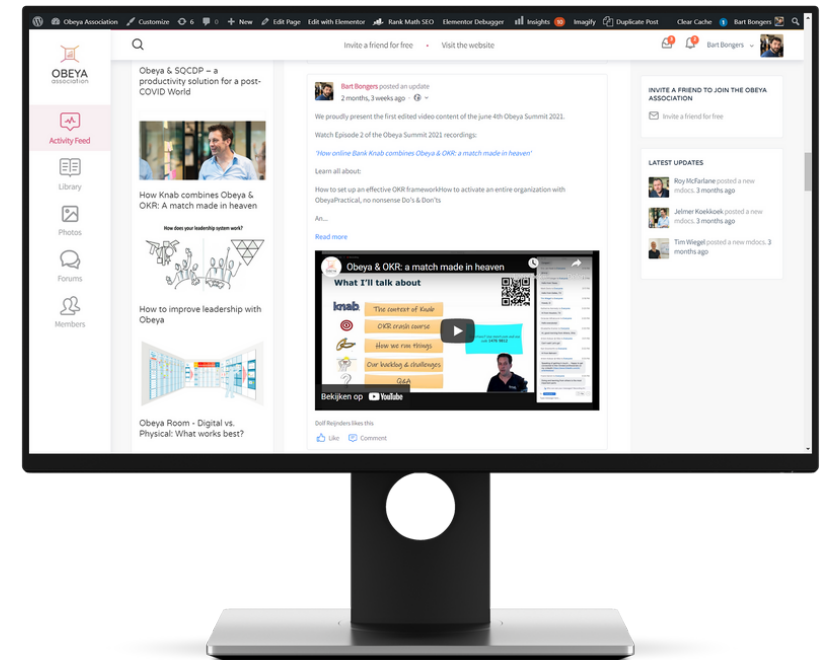
FOUNDERS OF THE OBEYA ASSOCIATION



BART BONGERS



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As Obeya Associate you can login on the Obeya Association platform and exchange experiences with Obeya practitioners from around the world, visit the Obeya Summit or browse the largest Obeya library in the world.



CHECK OUT THE STORY OF
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OBEYA ASSOCIATION AND
MORE OBEYA CONTENT ON
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Table of contents

PAGE

3	INTRODUCTION
4	WHAT IS AN OBEYA?
7	OBEYA & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
10	OBEYA ROLES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OBEYA MASTER ROLE• OBEYA HOST ROLE
14	OBEYA ROLES & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
19	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“A physical and/or digital space where strategy meets execution. The Obeya approach builds alignment and ownership across diverse groups of stakeholders to solve complex problems, drive cultural change and get work done.”



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Obeya: inclusive & sustainable decision making

Obeya is a system, a concept, a philosophy, defined by a particular set of ideas (“principles”). Organizations use these 11 Obeya Principles in the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable decision making.

Obeya or Oobeya (from Japanese 大 部 屋) literally means “large room”. Toyota put Obeya into practice back in 1993 launching their first Prius as a part of the Toyota Lean Manufacturing System.

In less than three years, the first hybrid car, the Prius, was brought to market – 15 years ahead of the competition. They used Obeya to pull off this magnificent feat. This success brought Obeya to the attention of the wider public and its popularity has been growing ever since.

Most people know Obeya as a physical or digital workspace where strategy meets execution. Obeya guides both behavior as well as a work environment design. The 11 Obeya Principles summarize this powerful combination between the two.

‘Obeya is a Japanese term that means: “big room”. It is sometimes compared to the bridge of a ship or a cockpit.’





Table of contents

PAGE

3	INTRODUCTION
4	WHAT IS AN OBEYA?
7	OBEYA & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
10	OBEYA ROLES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OBEYA MASTER ROLE• OBEYA HOST ROLE
14	OBEYA ROLES & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
19	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

11 Principles: structure without loss of flexibility

There are common traits and characteristics that are shared by most Obeya that are represented in the 11 Obeya Principles.

The 11 Obeya Principles collect and synthesize these characteristics and aid best practice sharing. They are meant to guide Obeya use and development. The 11 Obeya Principles provide a common language and a conceptual foundation of Obeya.

An Obeya means to work across 4 quadrants: Mindset, Alignment, Workspace and Content. The 11 Principles further define how to approach work in an Obeya in every quadrant. The relative order of the separate Principles are regardless of their relevance.

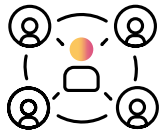
The combination of the Principles with the roles Obeya Master and Obeya Host provide a solid framework to approach Obeya. It provides structure in your Obeya setup without loss of flexibility.

‘The 11 Obeya Principles provide a common language and shared understanding of Obeya.’



You can [download](#) the poster ‘The 11 Obeya Principles’ from the Obeya Association website.

Mindset



#1 People come together in the Obeya to respectfully see, learn & act on vital information

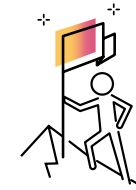


#2 People are committed to engage in continuous improvement, resolving obstacles along the way

Alignment



#3 In the Obeya, we communicate a strong sense of purpose



#4 Purpose is recognizably tied to our organizational strategy through meaningful objectives



#5 The Obeya connects strategy to execution with visible orientation on customer experience

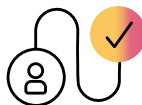


#6 The Obeya meetings have a rhythm in sync with the operational heartbeat of the organization

Workspace



#7 The Obeya visuals provide a logical and practical information and conversation flow



#8 The Obeya reflects a good understanding of the flow of work from start to delivery



#9 The Obeya is an attractive and available area, in proximity to the workflow

Content



#10 In the Obeya, we use analytics-driven-evidence to make business decisions



#11 Data owners ensure information is easy to consume, readily available, up to date, and visually attractive



Table of contents

PAGE

3	INTRODUCTION
4	WHAT IS AN OBEYA?
7	OBEYA & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
10	OBEYA ROLES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OBEYA MASTER ROLE• OBEYA HOST ROLE
14	OBEYA ROLES & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
19	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Obeya Roles explanation

Getting the best out of your Obeya requires specific expertise and skill. There is craftsmanship to be identified in the field of Obeya, in which professionals can be trained and educated to improve Obeya effectiveness.

Skilled Obeya professionals can make sure an Obeya is well anchored in your organization and provide discipline needed to achieve long term benefits.

Two distinct competency area's can be defined that make an Obeya work, summarized below in two essential Obeya roles:

'The Obeya Master and the Obeya Host'.

The roles illustrate approaches and competence area's, allowing professional growth in the field of Obeya. Practically, these two roles can be executed by one person. But this doesn't have to be the case.



Obeya Master

Organizes the evolution of the actual Obeya space, Obeya content and its position in the organizational context & infrastructure.



Obeya Host

Aids group processes and development.
Turns learnings into sustainable decisions through informed conversation.

Intention

Organize the build and maintenance of a fit-for-purpose Obeya



Approach

Assemble a genuine representation

- **Incorporate organizational dynamics**

Obeya meetings are a social gathering in business context. Obeya spaces have a meaning, a social function within the organization. An Obeya Master needs to involve both workflow reality and relationships with social connections and situational context.

- **Reflect organizational structure & interdependencies**

Understand the organizational structure as a network of systems and their interactions. An Obeya presents a true reflection of an organization at any moment. Covering inconvenient signals can hamper progress, making improvement directions unclear. Establish a transparent reflection of actual workflows. Approach the Obeya as a process, not as a job that can be finished.

- **Visual translation**

People need to be able to understand the Obeya with a degree of comfort. Information should be relevant, visually revealing essence. Use coloring as indicators - red indicates a problem, which should trigger problem solving. An Obeya is a map, a visual path. Standardize formats across the Obeya. Both information and Obeya space itself should be clean, organized and decluttered. Less is often more.

- **Simplify**

Synthesize when too much detail, break down when too chunky. Use language that everyone understands. Engage experts. Keep an eye on the bigger picture. Delegate complex content to professionals, focus on representing its true meaning.

Routines

Apply rhythm for predictability and reliability

Find a rhythm for everything. An Obeya Master establishes disciplined Obeya meeting rhythms for different groups.

Use standardized formats and visualizations as much as possible. Use rhythm to improve incrementally. Predictable rhythms help people to gradually build confidence in the information presented and show people how and when to get involved.

Intention

Mobilize group wisdom for sustainable and inclusive decision making



Approach

Establish co-creation

- **Participative dialogue**

Ask (specific) questions to get (specific) answers. Honor every perspective as every person has a piece of the puzzle. Cultivate curiosity; don't teach. Skillfully deal with disagreements. Move the dialogue from a constant flow of divergence and convergence towards decisions and actions. Be aware of fears, judgements, assumptions and limiting beliefs.

- **Balance long term & short term**

Research plans, proposals and resolutions across different time horizons. Longer timeframes should show links with purpose and therefore value. Shorter timeframes can inform you about feasibility.

- **Balance overview & detail**

Alternate between positions of overview and detail in an Obeya. They provide different perspectives and carry different information content. Thoughtfully and deliberately choose focus area's for closer inspection. Be mindful of time constraints: too much detail can lead a group off-topic – allowing people to stray from the bigger picture.

- **Psychological safety**

Be open and explicit about expectations and challenges. Clarify why it's important to speak up. Role model vulnerability and fallibility. Have an open mindset; be curious. Train positive & curious response – always be honest. Ask for and provide feedback. Appreciate all input. Promote healthy friction – allow all to participate without anyone losing face.

Routines

Cultivate meeting habits to benefit stable Obeya dynamics

Don't expect success, prepare for it. Cultivate valuable habits that can be duplicated and improved each time as best practices emerge. Habits allow Hosts to create conversation flow without effort. Energy or attention saved through these habits can be used to benefit group dynamics. This way, habits in the Obeya meeting setup allow Hosts to remain flexible and attentive towards people.



Table of contents

PAGE

3	INTRODUCTION
4	WHAT IS AN OBEYA?
7	OBEYA & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
10	OBEYA ROLES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OBEYA MASTER ROLE• OBEYA HOST ROLE
14	OBEYA ROLES & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
19	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mindset



#1

People come together in the Obeya to respectfully see, learn & act on vital information

People coming together in meaningful interaction are the biggest compliment to any Obeya workspace. Integrity of the information presented is important for people to trust the Obeya process.

Obeya Hosts cultivate curiosity. In safe environments, multiple perspectives benefit the sustainability of decisions. Questions that turn insights into action are a Hosts' ultimate superpower.



#2

People are committed to engage in continuous improvement, resolving obstacles along the way

An Obeya Master realizes that imperfections provide improvement opportunities. Never cover up bad news or white spots, always provide a genuine representation.

An Obeya Host challenges status quo in a disciplined and cyclical rhythm where we try to improve every cycle. Facts and data are vital and empirical evidence builds up along the way.

Alignment



#3

In the Obeya, we communicate a strong sense of purpose

The Obeya Master ensures purpose is distilled, periodically revised and clearly presented within the Obeya.

The Obeya Host refers to purpose and its implications at decisive moments. Purpose is a precondition for a Host to do meaningful work in the Obeya and enables teamwork.



#4

Purpose is recognizably tied to our organizational strategy through meaningful objectives

The Obeya Master exhibits a visual and apparent link between purpose and objectives. Objectives are directional and transformational. Visualizing progress on objectives helps the work of the Host.

Obeya Hosts cultivate understanding between objectives' outcomes, interdependencies and purpose. Hosts identify progress on objectives to accelerate learning and facilitate action.



#5

The Obeya connects strategy to execution with visible orientation on customer experience

The Obeya Master displays value creation as experienced by the customer. Clear strategy display benefits operational direction. In turn, work floor experiences provide feedback on strategic priorities.

Strategic feasibility gets tested through lessons from execution and customer experiences. Strategy provides operational direction. This is a cycle in which Hosts recognize and activate adjustments on both sides.



#6

The Obeya meetings have a rhythm in sync with the operational heartbeat of the organization

Through meeting rhythms the Obeya creates systemized engagement. The Obeya Master makes sure that all governance rhythms have synced timeframes.

Obeya Hosts coordinate that Obeya meetings take place at the right time and with the right people. Obeya decisions are recommended to be timely shared with the wider organization.

Workspace



#7 The Obeya visuals provide a logical and practical information and conversation flow

The Obeya Master continuously improves information flow in the Obeya according to feedback from the Obeya Host. Information flow needs to translate into conversation flow.

Visual Management should guide Obeya conversation flow intuitively. Feedback on how the conversation flows is valuable towards Obeya Masters for information flow improvement.



#8 The Obeya reflects a good understanding of the flow of work from start to delivery

Obeya Masters exhibit the process or activities by which value is created, showing how and where different parties contribute their work into the larger whole.

Obeya workspaces need to allow an Obeya Host to invest in a shared understanding of 1) value delivery and its challenges and 2) the impact of workflow dynamics and practicalities.



#9 The Obeya is an attractive and available area, in proximity to the workflow

An Obeya Master pays attention to Obeya location, appearance, (smart) tooling and utilities. As a consequence, Obeya budget allocation also needs consideration.

Well sustained, often visited & transparent Obeya's work best. Hosts pick up signals where poor Obeya arrangements complicate Obeya results. Obeya Hosts coordinate with Obeya Masters.

Content



#10 In the Obeya, we use analytics-driven-evidence to make business decisions

Obeya Masters organize unambiguous (numerical) evidence. Critical information (data) can be synthesized into categories, whilst also reflecting their relative importance.

Obeya Hosts spark the learning process by skillful questioning, advancing insights in (the relation between) statistics. The insights benefit sustainable and inclusive decision making.



#11 Data owners ensure information is easy to consume, readily available, up to date, and visually attractive

The Obeya Master works alongside data owners, removing as much complexity as possible. Data collection is a formalized process that centralizes information in the Obeya.

Obeya Hosts improve fit between data (representation) and user needs. Hosts may invite data owners for explanation, building trust needed for organizations to rely on data for decisionmaking.



Table of contents

PAGE

3	INTRODUCTION
4	WHAT IS AN OBEYA?
7	OBEYA & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
10	OBEYA ROLES <ul style="list-style-type: none">• OBEYA MASTER ROLE• OBEYA HOST ROLE
14	OBEYA ROLES & THE 11 PRINCIPLES
19	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE CONTENT

Without the active contribution from Obeya Associates from all around the world, we would never be able to build the Obeya Association platform and shape such powerful documents.

A big thank you for all your time, efforts and contributions. Thank you for making the Association a warm and professional network where we all help each other out. Thanks for all the experiences and cases you all have brought to our attention.

The work we provide is **licensed under Creative Commons licensing** - meaning everybody can use this work (even commercially), change, adapt and add to it, as long as you mention the Obeya Association.

Do you have ideas for improvement or do you want to become a co-writer or content specialist? You can! Please send us an email at contact@obeya-association.com, we are very curious to hear your ideas and expand our Obeya wisdom!

Especially worth mentioning:

Regarding the 11 Obeya Principles only:
Tim Wiegel, Jeroen Janssen

Regarding the book as a whole:
Mark Marijnissen, Jelmer Koekkoek, Roy McFarlane, Sarah Tessier, Frederic Cornec, Nadine Soyez, Jasper Dijk, Tom Jans, Vanya Mander, Joep Bos and Carol McEwan.





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