

H4 Consulting Brief

Good, Bad, and Ugly

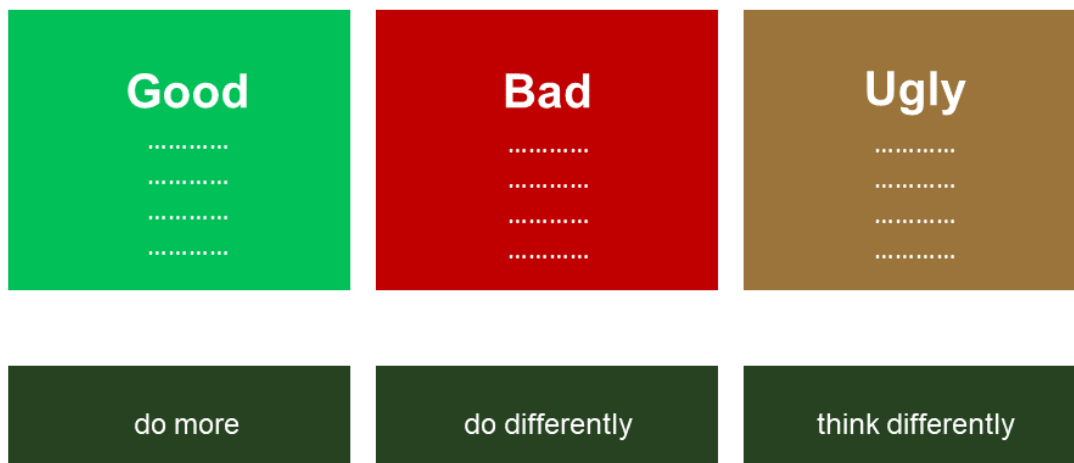
Despite the best efforts of teams, most endeavours are not a total success. Some outcomes will be good. Some will be bad. Some will be downright ugly. People working in publicly funded organisations often feel that they have limited scope to change their work in ways that will improve future results. That is rarely true. The Good, Bad, and Ugly exercise helps staff to reflect on and learn from all experiences, and to focus on what they can improve.

People working in publicly funded organisations often feel that their work autonomy is limited. They may feel constrained by rigid processes, or unable to influence the attitudes and actions of important stakeholders. These staff may become disengaged over time, repeating the same actions over and over, being disappointed by the results, and feeling powerless to improve outcomes.

In many cases, opportunities for better outcomes 'next time' are missed because staff lack structured mechanisms to reflect on and learn from experience. Habit and strict processes tend to reinforce existing approaches and discourage experimentation.

Even where opportunities for structured reflection exist, they are usually too infrequent to support effective learning. Fast and immediate reflection and feedback on actions taken and outcomes achieved can help all staff to harness the benefit of every experience, even the bad ones, rather than being doomed to repeat it.

The Good, Bad, and Ugly (GBU) exercise is efficient, action-oriented and focused on what staff can influence, while acknowledging the complex operating environment of publicly funded organisations. By focusing on actions to improve future results it improves confidence, mood, and performance.



The exercise is fast and simple. As soon as possible after a key event such as a major meeting, deliverable, or encounter with a stakeholder, any member of a team can trigger a GBU exercise. For 15 minutes, the team collaboratively lists a few outcomes of the event under each of three headings: Good, Bad, and Ugly.

Good – positive outcomes, where contributing actions taken by the team should be repeated or enhanced in future. There is often considerable agreement among team members about what went well and the implications for future work. Focusing on actions that drive success can also motivate teams after a setback.

Bad – negative outcomes, where the results could have been improved by the team acting differently.

The team should identify what they will do differently to improve the outcome the next time a similar situation arises. There is often considerable debate about whether a particular outcome is Bad or Ugly.

Ugly – negative outcomes, where the team could not have reasonably been expected to anticipate or influence the outcome. The Ugly list often starts out long, but shrinks as the team explores actions they could have taken to reduce or avoid ugly results. Recognising the ability to influence future events enables the team to shift factors from Ugly to under control, creating opportunities for more Good results.

The GBU exercise is a powerful tool to quickly regroup, reflect and refocus so that every experience – good, bad, or ugly – makes your team stronger.

To find out more about how you can use this approach in your organisation, contact us: info@h4consulting.com.au
Find additional resources at www.h4consulting.com.au/resources