Leading with Obeya explained

**The practical, visual *management method*
that helps execute strategy**

leadingwithobeya.com

This explainer guilde will help you swiftly understand the very basic components of the Leading with Obeya method.

For further understanding we recommend you read the book 'Leading with Obeya', or go to leadingwithobeya.com for the most recent templates, tools, articles and community.

Strategy, execution, together

Wouldn't you wish your team was better at realizing their strategic goals?

The LWO method serves teams that lead strategy to execution, connecting the dots, providing flow of information and the building blocks for each leadership team to improve their own way of working.

Building your leadership system

When more teams within the same organisation start adopting the method correctly, they will experience the same benefits, but they will also find itself automatically aligning with other leadership teams as they now start to show the same leadership patterns of structuring strategy, meeting routines, flow of information and problem solving throughout the leadership layers of the organisation.

The Leading with Obeya method is applicable to any organization and any team that is interested in executing strategy together.

Leading with Obeya

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

PERFORMANCE

TOUGH PROBLEMS

PLAN TO VALUE

ACT & RESPOND
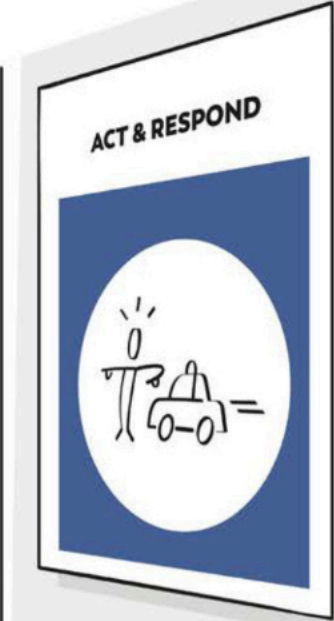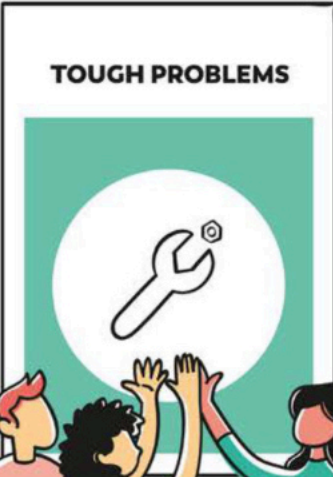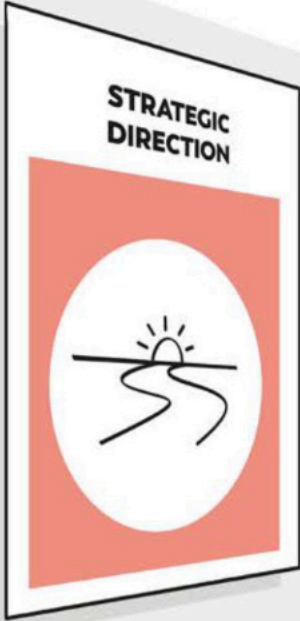
SEE, LEARN & ACT TOGETHER

THINK IN SYSTEMS & OWNERSHIP

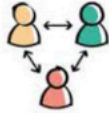**SHARE CONTEXT & PROBLEMS VISUALLY**

DEVELOP PEOPLE

RHYTHM & ROUTINE

KEEP IMPROVING

GO & SEE

CASCADE & CONNECT

What's on the walls?

# Where are we headed and what do we need to get there?

In this area we lay the fundamental framework for all other activities in the Obeya. The team's goal or purpose is our starting point. Based on that we determine the necessary capabilities in order to achieve that goal and start setting out our strategie course. This creates a complete overview of everything that matters to us, allowing us to identify objectives to work on.

(2) PERFORMANCE

How well are we doing in terms of what's important?

Now it's time to identify and to keep track of progress and performance towards the strategic direction. Here we determine indicators that show how well we are performing. The ambition levels set by the team show us what is going well and what challenges remain. This helps us prioritize on the right things. Key results will be visible here.
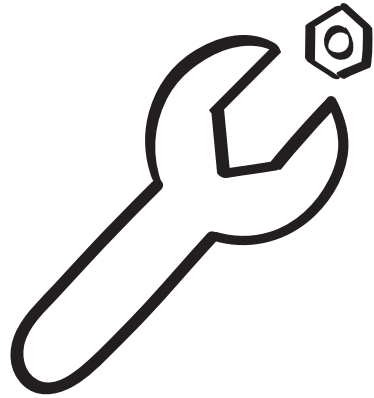
TOUGH PROBLEMS

# What tough problems must we work on?

When an indicator shows that we consistently fail to reach our ambition levels, we might have reached the edge of our knowledge threshold. We recognize problems that we don't have a clear solution to. In solving them, we want to avoid bias and assumptions. Therefore, a structured problem-solving method is used to tackle the root cause of problems.

(4) PLAN TO VALUE

What's our plan to deliver value to our organization & customers?

Our plan shows what steps we need to take as a team in order to reach our goals. Within these steps, we determine how our scarce means and people can best be deployed to create value. Both value for customers (external) as well as the development of the organization and team (internally). The value of our actions becomes visible through milestones and the smooth flow of work through our value streams.
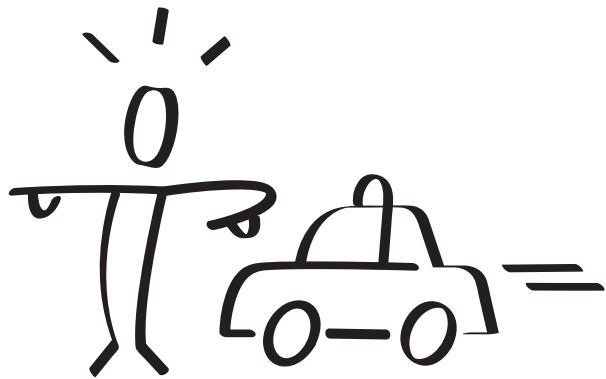
5 **ACT & RESPOND**

How do we address issues that arise when doing the work?

Working on a plan sounds good, but we never know what tomorrow might bring. Therefore, a flexible and adaptive way of werking is key. At this area the team addresses problems, requests and new developments that arise from within the organization. This may lead to problem resolution, new policy decisions or actions for the team to support the teams that are doing the valuable work.
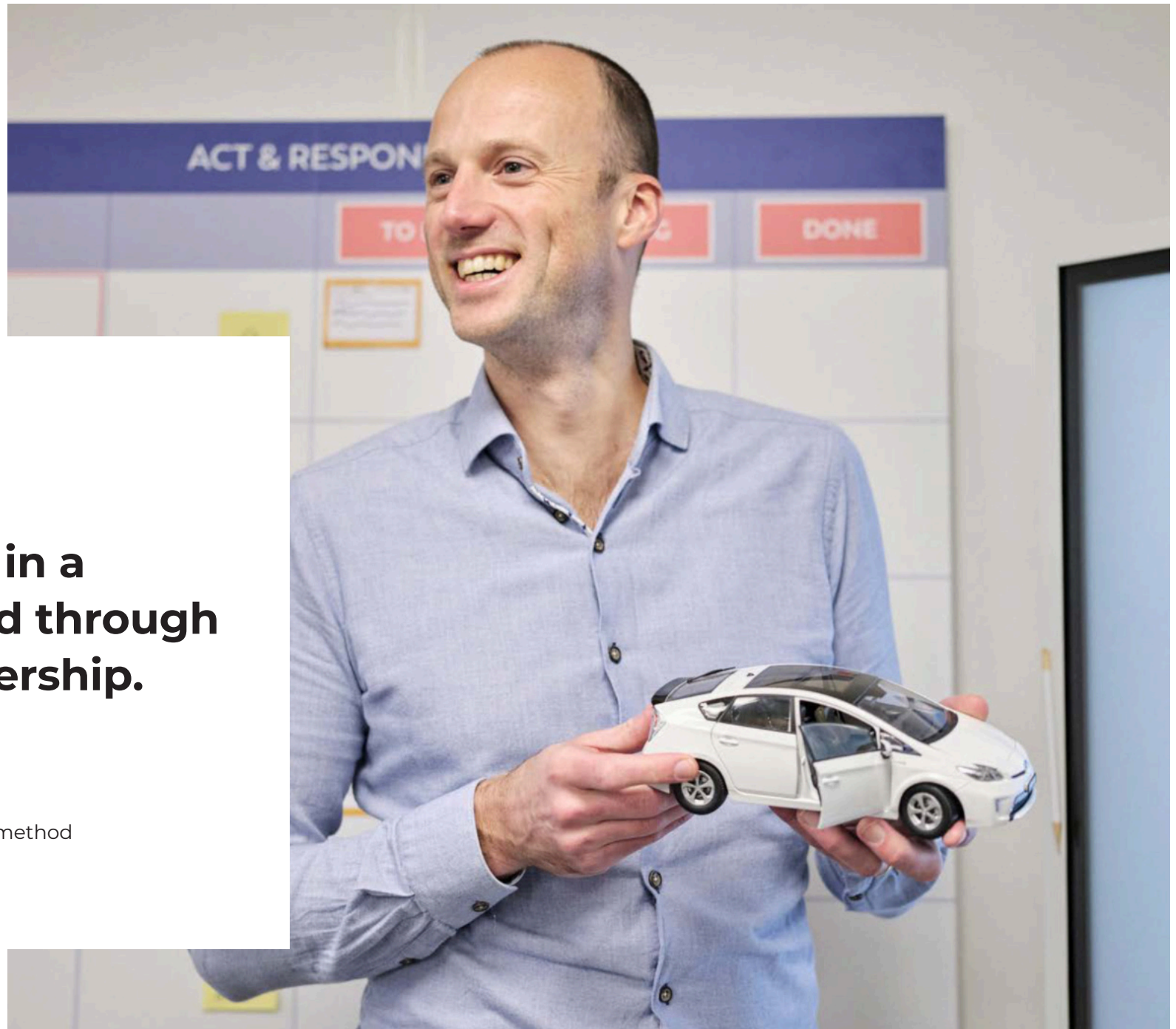
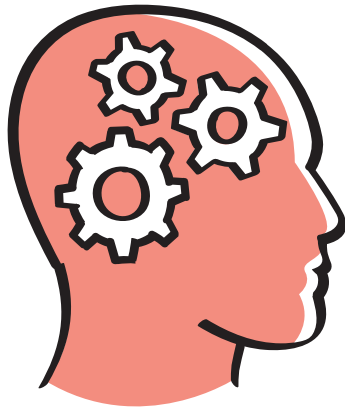> **We believe in a better world through better leadership.**

Tim Wiegel
Author and founder of
the *Leading with Obeya* method

How the team thinks & acts

Think in systems & ownership

We make all the aspects we need to govern in our organization transparent on the Obeya. This gives peace of mind; everything that matters to our team hangs in our Obeya. We also learn how the system we are trying to govern works and how it responds to our decisions. In the Obeya, we assign each aspect to an owner, that way we can always see whom it belongs to.
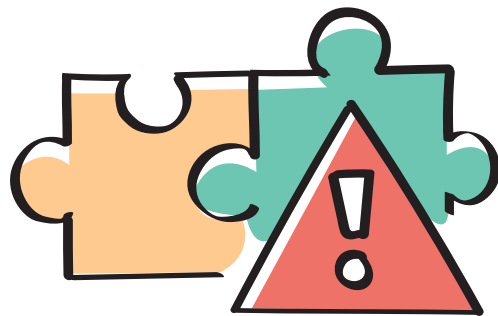
Visualize shared context & problems

By visually displaying all key steering information with clear frameworks and tools for arriving at decisions and actions, we make the best use of our strongest sense, sight. This promotes effective alignment and mutual understanding. In this way, we try to avoid assumptions and thinking errors. By visualizing problems, we see them coming early, put them in perspective and come to better insights.

Develop people

Respect for people means recognizing that we are constantly developing ourselves individually and as a team. This requires trust and room to make mistakes. We are consciously working on our development by taking the Obeya sessions, structured problem solving and the methods we set up here to the teams we manage ourselves as well.

Rhythm & Routine

We make sure we have the right meeting at the right time so we can keep our responsiveness high. Meanwhile, we stay focused on the bigger picture. Our meetings are effective because we discuss the right topics at the right time. By appearing disciplined and well-prepared at each meeting, working with the Obeya becomes increasingly effective. In this way, we save precious hours. Important issues can be taken from the shop floor to senior management within a day if necessary. This increases the speed with which the organization can respond to problems and requests.
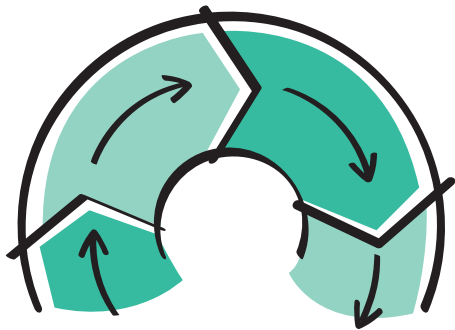
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By Leading with Obeya, teams are working out a strategy they can start using right away.

Reinko de Vries
Obeya trainer

Keep improving

The Obeya is never finished. We are always on the lookout for ways to improve the way we work and the outcomes of our work. Continuous improvement isn't something we just talk about. It is visible in the Obeya on the walls, in the way of thinking & acting within our team during our meetings and in interaction with the teams we lead.

Go & see

To learn from daily reality, we are going to take a look where it all happens. This way, we immediately see the impact of our policies. A great way to avoid discussion and bad policy decision-making, which are solely based on assumptions.
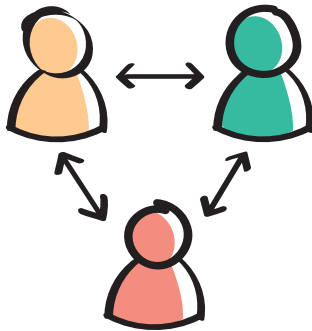
Cascade & connect

All teams are interconnected; top-down, bottom-up, throughout the whole organization and it's core processes. Following this chain of teams, clearly outlines the red thread of the organizational strategy. In every Obeya there's a representation of this parent strategy. All teams are connected by well-timed dialogues. Important cases can easily be transported from the workplace on to the board table.

See, learn & act together

As a team with a common goal, we respect each other and let the Obeya work for us. We accept the things we do not know, and support each other in staying focused to avoid thinking errors. We make an effort to improve our results. We take the time to understand each other and to reflect on our main actions to get closer and closer towards our strategie goals.

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Unlock your leader-ship potential with Obeya.

Tim Wiegel
Author and founder of
the Leading with Obeya method

Obeya meetings

Overview of meetings

Strategic direction

📅 **ONCE EVERY QUARTER**

- If we are still on the right path with regards to the purpose or higher goal
- What the plan looks like for the upcoming quarter
- How we function as a team (reflection)

Performance

📅 **ONCE EVERY TWO WEEKS**

- How to expose true performance of key areas of our organization
- The ambitions we set in relation to today's reality.
- Identify problems and address steps to solve them.
- What we learn while improving our organization's performance

Tough problems

📅 **ONCE / TWICE A WEEK**
(1 on 1, so not with the team)

- Understand what must be achieved (the challenge).
- What we learned about the current situation and where to improve first.
- What experiments to undertake to get to a better understanding and improvement of the situation.
- Which steps to take next.

Plan to value

📅 **ONCE EVERY OTHER TWO WEEKS**

- What valuable milestones will be delivered?
- What are the key steps we must take to achieve our goals?
- Which problems are hindering our plan and how do we deal with them?
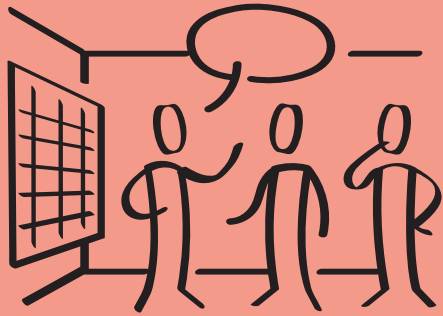- What do we learn whilst walking down this path together?
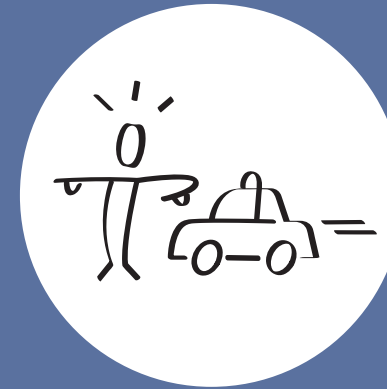
Act & respond

📅 **THREE TIMES A WEEK**

- Problems blocking our planned actions or daily operations.
- Requests that benefit performances or clarify policies.
- Policy decisions we have to take in order to reinforce execution.
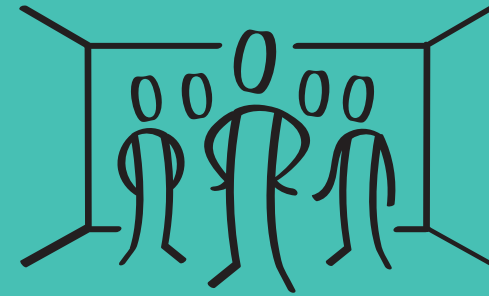- Context that might be worth sharing.

Obeya roles

The Team

The team working together in the Obeya to determine the strategic course and make sure their dreams become reality.

The Senior Leader

The role reporting (on behalf of the team) to a senior leadership level in the organization (if applicable).

The Facilitator

The role facilitating effective dialogue by the team during Obeya sessions. The coaching takes place by fixed routines. It's important that the facilitator does not mingle in the content of the discussion.

The Representative

The person (or persons) that take(s) the lead developing the capabilities and corresponding indicators on behalf of the team, so that the team improves their performance in the area of this capability.

The Coach

The coach observes thinking and behavioral aspects of the individuals and the team as a whole. To avoid conflict with the work of the facilitator, the coach must carefully decide what type of intervention is appropriate and when.

The Improver

Person inside or outside the team that is actively involved in taking next steps to solve the 'Tough Problems'. The person will follow a structured problem-solving method such as Toyota Kata, in which there will be a member of The Team that is the Coach following the Coaching Kata.

Supporting Participants

This goes for large teams (think 10+), where not all team members will be directly involved in every dialogue in the Obeya. These members do take interest, directly or indirectly, in the conversations of the Obeya sessions. but not as an active participant. They do not always have to be present. They can add topics to the agenda. such as problems or requests.

Guests

People who are not part of the team and don't participate in Obeya sessions. This could be someone from an operational team to illustrate a certain problem, or it can be a visitor wanting to learn more about Obeya sessions. For example, it could be a director, explaining background of new policy being introduced.
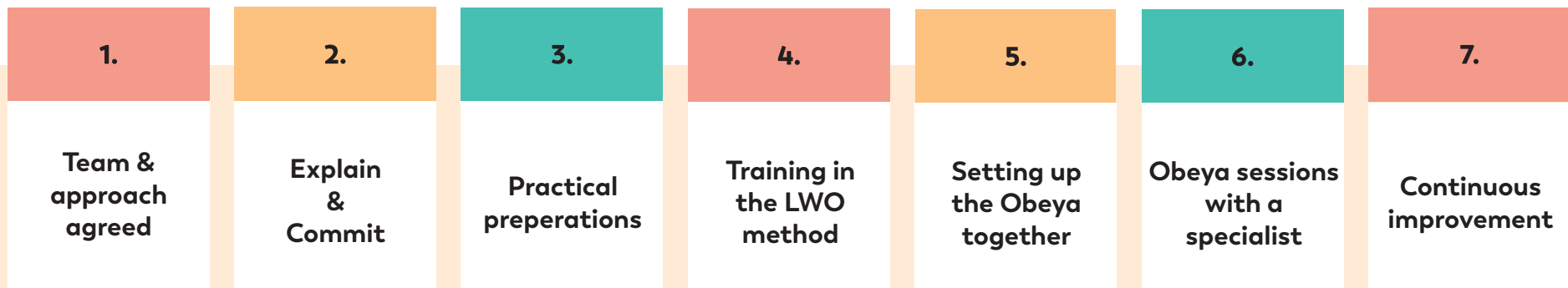
Three tips from good practice experience

1.   A committed and capable leader and a good facilitator are key for success.

2.   The walls in an Obeya do absolutely nothing by themselves. The value comes from the team. A bit of discipline is required, but will also pay off.

3.   Where to start? We recommend to work with pull: start with the leadership team that has the most chance of success. It doesn't have to be the top layer of the organization.

Seven steps to help your team get started.

The sevens steps are a basic format for helping you understand what is needed to get started. They help avoid common pitfalls and are further defined in the book and included in LWO trainings.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
Team & approach agreed	Explain & Commit	Practical preperations	Training in the LWO method	Setting up the Obeya together	Obeya sessions with a specialist	Continuous improvement

Scaling your leadership system

Connecting teams in all directions
A leadership system is about how management and leadership teams of an organization work, both within their own team and how they are connected to other teams. Each team working with Leading with Obeya adopts certain patterns that are visible both in how they work (such as meeting frequency and routine), and in how they display their strategy, performance and plan on the walls. LWO thus helps take the leadership system from ad hoc to a real working system.

See strategy unfold throughout the organization
When more teams start to adopt the method, they start to show the same patterns and find they can more easily connect their work to other teams. This makes it so much easier for your organization to enable flow of strategy, performance, information and solve problems. Just walk past each Obeya (physically or virtually) and see the thread of strategy run from workfloor to boardroom and back.

Leaders are key
The leader (or representative leader) of each team plays a critical role on this: only they can truly bring the message via human interaction from one team to the other and deliver the story behind any policy decision, relevant context or impact a problem.

Get it right the first time
This is one of the reasons why proper training and understanding by leaders is highly recommended. It is also why we recommend to bring a few of your organization's members up to the level of LWO Specialist to help support leaders with cascading & connecting and also enable cross-organizational learning by applying learnings from one team's Obeya to the other teams.
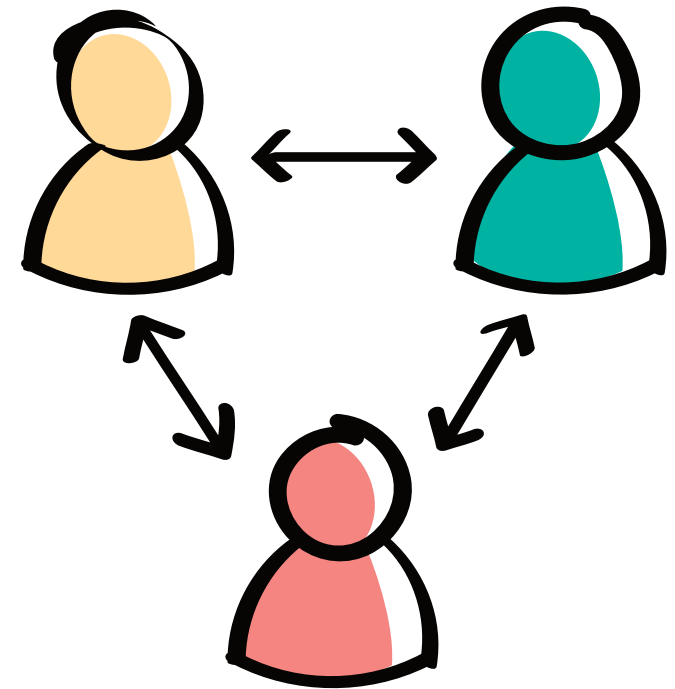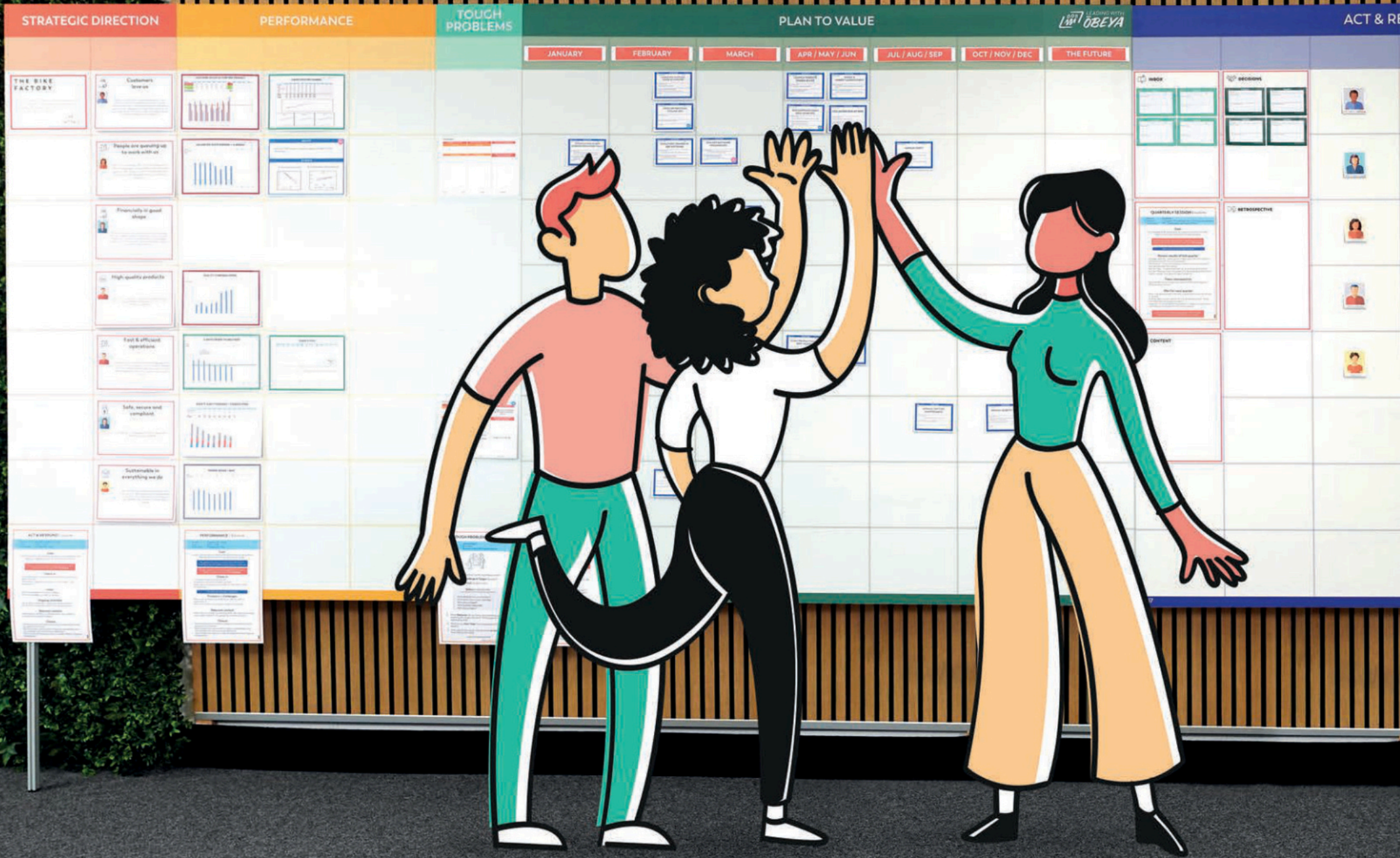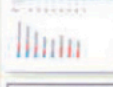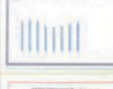
Start vandaag nog met Leading with Obeya:

Dé praktische, visuele managementmethode die helpt strategie uit te voeren

Read the book Leading with Obeya

Immerse yourself in the origins Obeya, the essence of the Leading with Obeya method and learn from the many practical lessons described.

- Ⓥ *Available both physically and also in e-reader format.*
- Ⓥ *256 pages of material.*

Go to the website

Do the introduction e-learning

Learn step-by-step the essentials of the Leading with Obeya method in this accessible introductory e-learning.

- Ⓥ *Over 40 minutes of class material*
- Ⓥ *Low-threshold startup*

*The purchase price of this e-learning will count as a discount on your purchase for follow-up training.

Ga naar de website

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Participate in physical training?

The Leading with Obeya method is taught for managers and coaches at various levels. Check out these opportunities for live training in your local region.

Go to the website