Idea for a criticism and evaluation process.

This is an idea which I got from Donna who was talking to us about the collective criticism process at Better Read. She affirmed my horror of its mechanistic appearance but said that in fact it evolved as a supportive process and had helped her considerably in sensing her contributive role in the collective and in understanding and sometimes developing aspects of her role.

The process runs this way: as a group we decide on a frame of reference within which we attempt to criticise ourselves and others. Personal, political, technical etc. factors we may choose to discuss separately or together; whichever factors we select, they must be chosen in such a way that a collective basis for evaluation is established.

One person is worked with at a time. We point out what we consider to be that person's strong points. When everyone who wants to has contributed their comments, the person answers to these comments, adding to the strong points and challenging those she/he doesn't agree with. We then point out what we consider to be that person's weaknesses. Others of us challenge ones we don't agree with, and a collective agreement on the person's weaknesses is reached. That person then answers to these criticisms, challenging them, agreeing with them, commenting on them. We then set out suggestions as to how that person might be able to overcome her/his weaknesses, and the person responds to these suggestions.

Well that's how the process runs; I don't know how it would work for us and would like to know whether people see it as a good idea. As I see it, its advantages lie in the fact that it provides a context, albeit structured, for critical interaction. Do you think we have a sufficient critical interaction now? It also will possibly help determine the degrees of objectivity and emotionality (rationality and irrationality) in criticisms felt, and by providing a situation where those criticisms can be voiced directly and publicly.

Suggested areas of consideration for a frame of reference could include production skills(technical abilities, overview of the production schedule, work habits); collective skills (initiative, reliability, managerial or anti-managerial leanings, power roles through monopolization of knowledge, expectations of others); attitudes (feelings about collectivity and individualism, relationships with customers, whether straight or wobbly, sense of political certainty, preferred direction of individual and collective energies, into shop improvement or into outside activities).

Response to this idea would be very much appreciated.

                                                    mary.