

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MASTER PRACTITIONERS

“No, no! The adventures first – explanations take such a dreadful time.”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

EYE-OPENERS & SKILL BUILDERS

In front of you lies a book of eye-openers and skill builders. They are experiential learning games developed for THNK in 2012 and 2016. All of these games are used in THNK’s program to unlock important insights (‘eye-openers’) or encourage certain behaviors (‘skill builders’). They support the THNK’s Creative Leadership philosophy and the four phases of the Creation Flow. The games are divided here under the phases of the Creation Flow: **Sensing, Visioning, Prototyping, Scaling.**

SOME BACKGROUND

All of these games are derived from teaching tools for improvisational theater, which trains its players to be resilient, present, and co-creative while connecting with each other and embracing uncertainty and failure. Improv artists have to perform at their best under pressure, while interacting with fellow players and/or an audience in constantly changing circumstances. This is a scenario that probably sounds familiar to any creative leader – the ability to thrive in ambiguity and produce results under pressure.

Many of our ideas on how to apply improvisation in a business setting come from the applied improvisation network: www.appliedimprov.com. For the games mentioned here, we have included the inventor of the game whenever possible.

If you are interested in learning more about using theater improvisation techniques to enhance creativity and leadership in the workplace, we recommend the book *Training to Imagine* by Kat Koppett.

THREE GUIDELINES TO START:

The instructions included for these games are written for anyone with some leadership expertise. Keep the following three guidelines in mind, and you should be able to facilitate each well, even if it’s the first time.

1. Know your objective. What should your group know, experience, or do differently after playing the game? That’s what you should ask yourself when choosing which game to play. The fact that you like a certain game is great ... if you’re playing it just for fun. Spreading fun is wonderful, but if you provide fun *and* pass on an idea, you facilitate change that sticks. Providing this kind of perspective-changing fun is all about debriefing, which is explained on the next page.

2. Focus on the people you work with, not on this piece of paper! Watch your participants’ behavior during the game, and really listen to their answers when you ask them the debriefing questions. You are working with experiential learning. If the participants’ experience is different from what you expected (or were told to expect by this toolkit), the experiences of your participants always wins. The only answers that matter are their answers. In the debrief, you bring the key takeaway’s home that you initially wanted to bring across.

3. It’s a game, so be playful! When you play these games, you want people to explore, take

risks, fail, and laugh in order to learn. The wonderful thing about games is that you can learn from real-life interactions without facing real-life consequences. If you approach these games as serious business, your group will waste time trying to 'get it right,' and will learn less as a result.

THE GAMES

At the right of each game description you see 'at a glance' the time and number of participants needed as well as to which part(s) of the THINK curriculum this game goes well with. Every game has a title, a key phrase that should work itself into the vocabulary of your group as a reminder of what participants have experienced. Under the title (in italics) is a tagline: a short description of the purpose of the game, with a more detailed description provided under the Learning Objective heading.

These games are written as scripts. The texts in *blue italic* are suggested verbal instructions to make gameplay clear. The black texts are notes for you and things to pay attention to while facilitating. Every game also has a flow of debrief questions with common answers from participants listed under each. Since a well-done debriefing is often the key to helping people learn by doing, we provide a little more information about the art of debriefing below to help you.

DEBRIEF

"Every exercise is just an excuse for a good debrief," Sivasailam Thiagarajan says (www.thiagi.com). It's not quite true that people learn from experience alone. They learn from reflecting on an experience. That's why it's extremely important that, when you work with this set of experiential games, you reflect with your learners on their experiences. This is what is known as the debrief.

In this set of games, we provide debrief questions with typical responses gathered over years of experience with a particular game. Your team might, of course, have other answers. The key in experiential learning is to pay attention to your participants' actual experience and ask more about that. Never tell them that what they've experienced is wrong, just because it's written differently in this toolkit or because you don't know how to continue your debrief with their answers. You can also use the same game for different learning objectives, although this toolkit sets certain debrief questions under particular exercises – these debrief questions are placed where they are simply to drive the listed 'key takeaways' home.

The basic structure used in many of the debrief questions in this toolkit is to ask 'what' three times.

1. What? (...was it like to do? ...happened? ...did you feel? ...did you notice?) Participants need to get these feelings off their chests in order to reflect further...especially when they laughed a lot or got frustrated in the game.

2. So what? (...does that tell us about ourselves/the topic/our work? ...do we take away from this? ...did you learn? How does this relate to the real world? What would happen if we...?) Encourage participants to apply their insights to new contexts. They need to be able articulate themselves why what they have experienced matters.

3. Now what? (...do we want to do differently now that we know this? How can we use these insights in the workplace? Where do we want to apply this takeaway?) The last step is to apply the takeaway in a practical setting, like the participant's real life. You can choose to debrief as a whole or in pairs. The advantage of pairs or small groups is that people get to say more, so they will learn more, and generally feel more safe sharing their feelings. The

advantage of a bigger group is that you get to hear more insights from others, granting more learning opportunities, and the collective experience feels stronger.

Our eye-opener game toolkit remains a co-creation. Please send any feedback to lieselotte@thnk.org

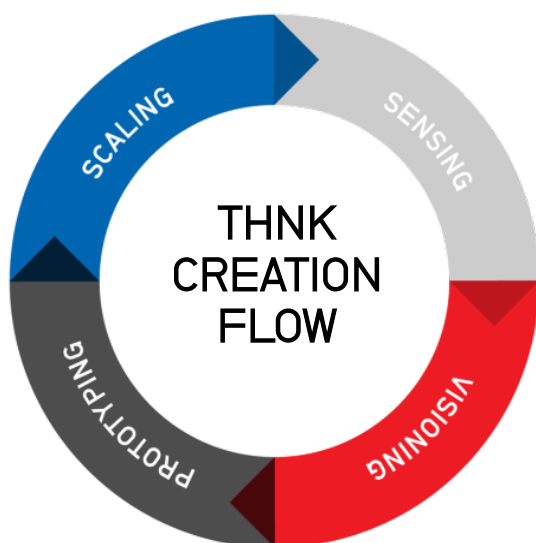
Let's play!



About the author: Lieselotte Nooyen is a senior-facilitator on innovation and leadership topics. She brings the principles of improvised play from the stage to the work space – both high-performance environments that change constantly. Her motto: take serious things playfully and playful things seriously.

This book does not consist of as many Eye Openers as possible. Instead, we designed Eye Openers to help you and your team with specific insights for specific circumstances. Each Eye Opener is designed to provide an insight on innovation and creativity in accordance with the THINK Creation Flow.

THE THINK CREATION FLOW



Innovation is a fun, but tough journey. There are a few good guides along the way and many pitfalls. One thing is clear though, when you are looking for innovation it will not be a linear and deductive process with guaranteed outcomes. At THINK, we do believe that there are many insights, pointers, and tools that can help you along the way, and we have clustered those around the four phases of the Creation Flow.

The **Sensing** phase consists of divergent and exploratory thinking, in order to get a broad and different perspective on the

initial problem. Sensing requires an explorative mindset, and works best when the natural urge to formulate a judgement, a hypothesis, or an answer is delayed as long as possible.

The **Visioning** phase paints a solution space and provides a vision, a concept, and concrete ideas to make it come alive. It consists of emergent creativity and shows a vision of 'what could be'. It allows for dreaming and designing; individual and team creativity; spontaneous ideas and slowly ripening ideas.

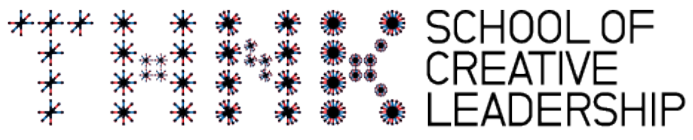
The **Prototyping** phase starts with a concept and consists of 'thinking with the hands', a series of rapid trial and error cycles that are aimed at experimenting, leaning, and improving concepts. It encourages playfulness, falling often and cheaply, redundancy (testing different concept versions in parallel), evolution and selection.

The **Scaling** phase is still a design phase in which we ask questions: How can a "positive revolution" be inspired, triggered, and enabled? How do ideas spread and lead to acceleration at scale? How is this acceleration different from linear gradual scaling?

- * If you use the Eye Openers to drive innovation, it's helpful to think about which one to use when. That's why we've clustered them around the four phases of the THINK Creation Flow with some added games for Program Opening and Day Closing activities.

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PROGRAM OPENING:

SOCIAL METRICS

OBJECTIVE

Get to know each other quickly or start off a program in a playful way. Research shows that if people know who else is in the room, if they know how they fit into the order of this group and have said something early on in the program, they are more open and relaxed to learn and show themselves.

HOW TO PLAY?

Let's come and stand in a big circle. In a minute I would like us to stand in a new circle based on alphabetical order. So if your name starts with an A, stand on my left and if your name starts with a Z stand on my right. We have 60 seconds, let's go!

It is fun to do a quick check if they got it right and let everybody say their name loud and clear in the circle.

Great! Let us do it again. Please organize yourselves in a line/circle based on how long you have traveled this morning/ how long you've been working for the company. So on this side short, that side long. Again, you have 60 seconds. Go!

Again do a quick check.

All right! Let's now do one which has a more subjective answer. This time, please organize yourselves based on to which degree you consider yourself an innovator/creative leader. On this side, if you feel you are not that good yet and have lots to learn, on that side if you feel more experienced.

Allow more time for the subjective questions, because people feel more insecure about them and want to see a bit how other people take it before they take a stand.

You can obviously vary with the (number of) questions you ask the group and the time you have, but always start with objective questions. Other questions could pertain to the content you will be working on for example.

DEBRIEF

None

AT A GLANCE

Get to know who is in the room and where you belong in a simple and playful way

Time: 5-10 mins

Participants: 10 - 50

Conducting

Suggestions for use: starting a program, right before the Hello Game or another opener.

HELLO GAME

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Kick-off the program, demonstrate experiential learning, get to know each other, and “have fun, move fast, get messy”.

HOW TO PLAY?

Preparation: depending on the size of your group, you will have 4 to 6 teams for the Hello Game. Each team will have to answer a question you prepared in advance, so you will have prepared 4-6 questions on a slide. Usually at least 3 questions will have to do with the company, innovation at the company and/or the topic brief you will be working on. Other questions will be on the subject of creativity and innovation or their objectives for the program and usually a funny one.

Examples of questions that work well are:

- What does it take to be truly innovative?
- What do you hope to get out of the program?
- What obstacles are there to innovation at your company?
- What is your company doing well when it comes to innovation?
- What does [TOPIC/BRIEF] mean to you?
- What [COMPANY]'s innovation are you most proud of and why?
- Who is an innovation rock star?
- What is the coolest innovation in your field?
- If your company would be a band/animal/force of nature, what would it be and why?

Materials: sticky notes, markers/pens, whiteboards/flipcharts, other materials from the prototyping cart for the presentation. A slide with the questions and the time allotment to be on the same slide or on a flipchart:

2 minute – Strategy
3 (to 8) minutes – Data Collection
2 minutes – Preparation
1 minute – Presentation

AT A GLANCE

Kick-off the program by doing something fun, energetic and fast-paced

Time: 25 mins

Participants: 10 - 50

Conducting

Suggestions for use: starting a program

HELLO GAME QUESTIONS

1. What would you like to get out of these two days?
2. What is your favorite future technology and why?
3. Who is a true visionary leader and why?
4. What does the future of work mean to you?
5. What is wrong with work as we know it?

1' Strategy,
3' Data Collection,
2' Prep,
1' Creative Presentation

Briefing:

At THNK, we love to talk less and do more. We are going to start the day off by getting right to it. Please stand up and clear the space so we have room to move about. You have 10 seconds to form [#] teams of [#] people. Go!

Check if every team is about the right size.

We have prepared an assignment for you. In the next twenty minutes we are going to learn a lot about the rest of the group. To do that, each team is going to answer one of these questions. So Team 1, you get Question 1, Team 2 gets Question 2, etc...

It helps to be very clear about this part; so point out the team and read out the question they will answer. Do this for each team.

Your objective is to get your question answered by as many people in this room as possible. Each team will get 2 minutes to prepare that strategy, then 3 (to 8) minutes to collect their data from all the participants, 2 minutes to prepare a dazzling and creative presentation and 1 minute to present.

Have the time allotment on a slide or flipchart so they can read it as well.

You can use the sticky notes, markers and whiteboards/flipovers (and any other materials in the room). I will let you know when it is time to move on to the next task.

Clear? GO!

Use the gong to let them know when the next phase begins.

Once you move on to the presentations, you can encourage the participants to be a brilliant audience and clap enthusiastically after every presentation. Tell the presenters that we would like to hear about the outcomes, not about their strategy and process.

DEBRIEF

If we are on a tight time schedule, we often skip the debrief.

What was it like to do?

Fun, hard, time was short, but it was actually very doable.

What made it fun, hard or doable?

We got to some pretty interesting results fast.

Who had a strategy that did not work? And what did you than do?

Praise groups that were agile and changed their strategy along the way if necessary.

What can we learn from this game?

That we often take a lot of time for things but you can get interesting results pretty fast.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In real life we often take way more time for our strategy. Meanwhile, the world around us is changing. In innovation we advise you to work in short iterative cycles so you move along with your fast-changing reality instead of planning inside your ivory tower for a world that no longer exists.

During a THINK program there is always too little time. Time pressure can give good results if you have a good process, allow things to get messy and make sure you have fun along the way.

*Hello game by www.thiagi.com

TEAM FORMATION – COMMONALITIES

OBJECTIVE

Form teams based on maximum diversity and find commonalities to get off to a good, fun start.

HOW TO PLAY?

You can start off with finding commonalities in the group such as hair color, shoe style, region/nationality, etc.

You have 20 seconds to organize yourselves into groups of more than one person and less than [...] based on [...].

You can speed things up by giving them less time to organize into groups. It's fun to check that they got it right.

Do about three fun and informal rounds before moving on to the next part.

Now that we have found out what we have in common, why don't we do the opposite? You have 3 minutes to self-organize based on maximum diversity in teams of three [maybe 1 or 2 teams of 4?].

It works well to give them a slide or a flipchart giving them the criteria for Maximum Diversity, such as: Age, Role in Organization, Location, Gender, Background.

These will be the Creative Teams we will work with for the duration of the THINK program.

Usually, we will now have them claim a work station and give them the next assignment:

In a minute, we will invite you to go find a work station. When there, we have one more assignment for you. You have [three] minutes to find as many things as possible that you have in common. And they have to be things you cannot see or things you did not know about each other yet. Please write them down.

When done, ask for fun or unexpected commonalities they found as a team.

AT A GLANCE

Form teams based on maximum diversity and find commonalities in team

Time: 15 mins

Participants: 6 - 100

Conducting/Casting the Creative Team

Suggestions for use: forming teams at start of program.

SELF ORGANISE

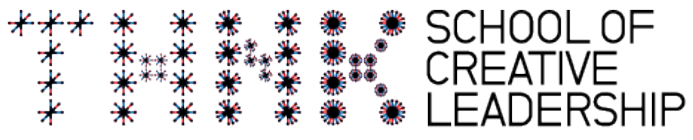
* Three team members, 1 or 2 teams with four

* Maximum Diversity
 - Role in your Organisation
 - Location
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Background

* Three minutes

THINK

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DAY CLOSING:

HOW EXCITED ARE YOU?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Getting participants to think about how they value their concept or other aspects of the program, as well as their own influence on the outcome.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Getting a feel of where you are in relation to other participants.

HOW TO PLAY?

With a show of fingers, please indicate how excited you are about [your concept/the program/visioning/how much energy you have etc.]. 0 fingers being not excited at all, 5 fingers being extremely excited.

Look at how many fingers they show and cast back what you see. Instead of fingers, you can also have them line up physically between 0 and 10.

Discuss with your neighbor, what would be necessary to get you one point higher, so if you are a three now, what would have to happen for you to score a four? If you are at a five, what would be necessary for a six? And what could you do to make that happen?

DEBRIEF

You can do a brief sharing of what partners discussed if you have time.

AT A GLANCE

Participants have more influence on the outcome than they realize

Time: 5-10 mins

Participants: 2-500

Directing/Maintaining the Execution Cycle

Suggestions for use: End of visioning, prototyping or at the beginning or end of a module.

FLOWER SHOWER

OBJECTIVE

End the day, module or program with a very positive, high energy by sharing as much positive things about your team members as possible.

HOW TO PLAY?

Stand with your team. One of you, turn your back to your other two team members. For the duration of the exercise you will stay standing with you back towards them. Do not turn around!

For the other two, you finally get the chance to talk about this person behind their back, and gossip about him/her. There are just two rules: you keep gossiping until I say stop. And you can only say positive things! If you run out of things to say, just make stuff up! GO!

Switch after about 90 seconds. Be aware of teams with more than three people; you might need to do an extra round.

You can also choose to give the gossip a specific direction such as “why this person will succeed with ...” Or “why this person is a great creative leader ...”

DEBRIEF

None

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In creative processes, positive energy and feedback influence the outcome. Sometimes the process is tough, even frustrating or demotivating. Allowing for time to share what went well and what each team member contributed to the process keeps things moving forward and relieves tensions that might have been experienced personally or in the team.

AT A GLANCE

Giving compliments as a way to close off the day.

Time: 10 mins

Participants: 3 - 500

Conducting

Suggestions for use: Closing of day, module or program.

RUNAWAY COMPLIMENTS

OBJECTIVE

End the day, module or program in a very positive, high energy and playful way by sharing positive things about yourself and your team members.

HOW TO PLAY?

On a piece of paper, write down 5 compliments to yourself about your contribution to this day/module/program. Take your time and let us do this in silence.

Some people might find this difficult. Encourage them to do it anyway. Check if everybody has their list.

Now pair up with someone and switch papers. Please read the compliments in silence and add one more compliment from you to your partner.

Make sure everybody has done this and then give the next instructions.

Now, Person A has one job: to make sure Person B hears every single one of those compliments. Person B, you hate compliments, so your only objective is to make sure you do not hear any of them. You will do everything you possibly can to make sure that Person A does not succeed. Keep on going until I say stop!

Clear? Go!

You might need to encourage people to keep to their task and not give up. People should be yelling, running around the room, plugging their ears, etc.

After a minute or so: *Switch!*

There are two ways you can continue, depending on how you want to end the day. If you want to end on a high you can just start clapping and thank them for their participation. If you would like to end it more thoughtfully, you can have them sit down and read the compliments to each other.

DEBRIEF

None

AT A GLANCE

Giving compliments as a way to close off the day

Time: 10 mins

Participants: 2 - 500

Conducting/Building the Creation Skills

Suggestions for use: Closing of day, module or program.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In creative processes as in many others, positive energy and fun influence the outcome. Sometimes the process is tough, even frustrating or demotivating. Taking time to reflect on our own contribution and then ending in a playful way can get rid of a lot of the tension and reinforces what went well.

TOUCH MY HEART

OBJECTIVE

Imprint the positive experience of the program by giving participants a physical memory that symbolizes the lessons.

HOW TO PLAY?

Ask participants to follow you for one more minute before we close.
Give the instructions slowly.

Please stand up. Close your eyes and open them again. Turn 360° degrees on your axis. And finally put your fist on your heart like this.

Now if anyone asks you what you did with those guys at THINK, you can say: They got me on my feet, opened my eyes, spun my view 360° degrees and touched my heart, and that will actually be true.

DEBRIEF

None

KEY TAKEAWAYS

None

*Originally by www.thiagi.com

AT A GLANCE

Positive way of closing the program

Time: 2 mins

Participants: 2 - 500

Personal Mastery

Suggestions for use: Closing of the program

LIKE, WISH, LEARN

OBJECTIVE

Reflection at end of day on what participants liked about the day, what they wish for in the future, and what they learned.

HOW TO PLAY

There are a number of ways to do this that depend on your objective and the time you have. We will deal with two here. Others are variation on the same theme.

1 – Individual reflection

Preparation: on a white board or from 3 flipchart sheets create three categories: Like, Wish, Learn. Make sure you have pens/markers and sticky notes ready.

Please grab a pen and some sticky notes. Now in silence, take a couple of minutes to reflect on what you learned today, what you wish for next time (either in the next program or in your company) and what you learned. Create one sticky note per category. When you are done, please come up to the board/flipcharts and stick your notes in each category. Please do all this in silence.

Play some quiet instrumental music (e.g., Philip Glass, Tycho).

2 – Team/group reflection and sharing afterwards

In your team/with your neighbor/in a group of three, discuss what you liked about the program, what you wish for next time (either in the next program or in your company), and what you learned.

Leave time to do sharing per each category.

DEBRIEF

This is usually not debriefed on the day. Afterwards, you can cluster and discuss the outcomes with the other facilitators and decide if there are any changes that need to be made to the program for the following day or module and/or cast the outcomes back to the group the next time they are together.

AT A GLANCE

Reflection on what participants Liked, Wish for and Learned

Time: 10-20 mins

Participants: 2 - 100

Conducting

Suggestions for use: Reflection on day, often before Flower Shower or Runaway Compliments, Touch my Heart

PEER-TO-PEER

OBJECTIVE

Reflection at end of day, module or program on what participants would like to implement or improve and how they can go about doing so.

HOW TO PLAY

Preparation: on a white board or flipchart, create categories based on what you want to reflect: this could be elements of the program, or innovation in general. Make sure you have pens/markers and sticky notes ready. Prepare a slide like the one below.

With a show of fingers, please indicate where you would like to be in one year on [category, for example Sensing]. One finger being I want to have nothing to do with it, 10 fingers meaning I am an expert.

Pass through the circle, either naming each score or summarizing what you see.

Show the accompanying slide.

Discuss with your neighbor the following questions:

- *Why are you at that number? What are you already doing well?*
- *What would one number higher look like?*
- *What is one step you can take this week to get to that higher number?*

Take about five minutes to discuss this per person. After five minutes, I will let you know when to switch. When you are done, write down the first step you will take this week, and come stick it up on the whiteboard/flipchart.

Play some quiet instrumental music (e.g. Philip Glass, Tycho).

At the end you can invite everybody to come up and get inspired by what they see on the whiteboard/flipchart.

DEBRIEF

None

AT A GLANCE

Reflection on how participants can implement or improve on what they learned

Time: 10-20 mins

Participants: 2 - 100

Conducting

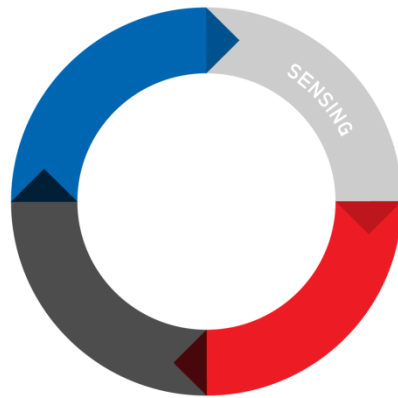
Suggestions for use: Day reflection, often before Flower Shower or Runaway Compliments, Touch my Heart

PEER COACHING

- * From 1 to 10, how innovative would you like to be 1 year from now?
- * From 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself today?
- * Why are you at that number? What are you already doing well?
- * What would 1 number higher look like?
- * What is 1 step you can take this week to get to that higher number?

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SENSING:

SEARCHING FOR YES

Learning something new versus being right

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Searching with an open mind means always looking for more answers. A 'no' to your hypothesis can provide information that is at least as valuable as a 'yes.'

HOW TO PLAY

Let's take a look at an interesting riddle. I will provide you with some sets of three numbers that follow a certain pattern. When you think you know the pattern, you can give your own example. I will say yes or no after every example, so you know if what you came up with fits the pattern or not. Here is a set:

5, 10, 11

13, 26, 27

3, 6, 7

Most participants will have a knowing grin, and some may blurt out their explanation of the relationship among the numbers. However, ask everyone to listen carefully and to wait until you have said yes or no to each test set before offering the next one. Players will probably give you test sets that fit this pattern: n , $2n$, $2n+1$ (any number, twice that number, one more than twice the original number). Listen to each set and say yes to confirm when one follows the pattern.

After verifying a few test sets, ask the players:

How do you feel? What was it like to get a yes? Do you feel smart? Happy?

Mostly the answers are "good" and "yes."

Let me warn you that you might be in for a rude awakening. You quickly discovered what pattern gave you a 'yes' and you started to give me more test sets of the same type, enjoying the yes, feeling smart and superior. Nobody tried to get a no on purpose – probably because you worried everyone would think you were stupid if you got a no. You yourself might feel stupid. A true explorer, however, keeps an open mind. He attempts to disprove his hypothesis. So how about if you try some test sets designed to get a no from me.

Here's where the jolt comes: in spite of how it might appear, the pattern is simply any three positive whole numbers in ascending order. According to this formula, these test sets will also receive a yes:
1, 2, 3 / 10, 20, 999 / 6, 400, 600,000

AT A GLANCE

A rejected hypothesis is a fountain of information for success

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 5 – 50

Exploring/Mastering Ambiguity

And these test sets will receive a no:

4, 7, 6 / 13, 700, 100 / -4, 2, 3

Listen to new test sets and answer yes or no according to whether they contain three positive whole numbers in ascending order or not. It's likely that some people will begin to get frustrated. They might feel like you are playing a trick on them. It's important to keep your facilitation light and playful and be aware of their emotions.

Whenever someone's test set receives a no, or a yes when they expect the answer to be no, ask the person how he feels. Explain that most people feel depressed or confused when their hypothesis is rejected. But actually, a no provides valuable information, sometimes more valuable than a yes.

Speed up the process now by providing some sets yourself. Use crazy numbers like 3, 88, and 3,400,877, and give a resounding yes to each set. Then explain the pattern.

DEBRIEF

How did you feel?

Annoyed, provoked; I hated you for having so much fun torturing us; curious.

What happened?

We wanted to get a yes so we provided test sets that we knew would work.

What was the effect?

We got lots of yesses; it took us a long time to discover anything new because we thought we had cracked the code already.

So we were searching for yes, wanting to be right, and therefore made hasty generalizations. In which parts of our work do we risk this same behavior? What's the effect of that? How can we keep an exploring and open mindset?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In the exploration and sensing phase of a project, no's provide information that is at least as valuable as yesses. We should look at them as important data, not as failures. When you are sensing, it's important not to stop after the first results. Often there's more than one right answer, and wrong answers still tell you a lot about your topic as well. To avoid this trap, you need to be OK with uncertainty and comfortable pushing into the unknown.

Original exercise by Thiagi: www.thiagi.com

JUDGMENT POSTPONER

As soon as we have an opinion about something or judge something, learning and discovering slows down dramatically.

HOW TO PLAY

We will do a small exercise. Just do what I do. Put both thumbs up like this.

Show a 'thumbs up' sign with both your hands. Have your hands a few centimeters away from each other.

Now make a parallel movement like this.

Move your thumbs in parallel like windshield wipers while holding your wrists still.

Very good. Now tuck your right thumb into your fist and instead stick your index finger on that hand out. So you have your left thumb out and your right index finger out. Make sure not to make a gun.

A gun is when you have your thumb and your index finger out on the same hand. Show the gestures as you describe them, and check that the participants are on the same page.

Once you have that, start switching back and forth between fingers. So when your right index finger is out, your left thumb is out, and then you switch to left index finger out and right thumb out. So you have one finger or thumb out on each hand the whole time.

Show all this while you do it yourself and walk around to see if people get it. Pay attention to when people stop doing the exercise. After a minute or so tell them they can stop ... and maybe they want to shake out their fingers.

DEBRIEF

Share with your neighbor how many seconds it took you before you had an opinion or judgment about what you were doing. A judgment can be a thought or comment like, "Oh no, I can never do these things." Or it could be labeling the activity like, "This is about multi-tasking." So share how long it took you to have a thought like this and what your thoughts were.

You can in your examples obviously use comments you heard them make while doing it.

How long did it take you?

Half a second; a few seconds; I already had an opinion before we started.

AT A GLANCE

A short tactile game showing how quickly judgments stop us from discovering.

Time: 15 mins (5 mins play, 10 mins debrief)

Participants: 2-500

Exploring/Taking a Contrarian Stance

What did you notice you did after you had that opinion?

I stopped doing it as soon as I thought, “I can’t do this”; when I saw others were still going on I tried again; I kept on going but wasn’t really trying to figure it out anymore.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

It’s very common to develop an opinion about new things within a few seconds. How quickly that exactly happens is partly culturally based. In Europe and North America it usually takes people between 0 and 7 seconds. In Asia, especially in Japan, people try much longer. Sometimes up to 90 seconds. This is the experience from applied improvisers who did this exercise all over the world.

Speedy judgment is useful in many cases, because often we need to make decisions quickly. However, when you want to discover and learn new things, it actually helps to postpone your judgment. Judging stops us from discovering and learning. Most of you probably stopped doing the exercise as soon as you had an opinion about what you were doing.

To be truly creative and learn, it helps to recognize your judgment. Like, “Hey, this is really hard,” or, “Hey, this game is probably about multi-tasking and I am not good at that,” and then let go of those thoughts. Like in mindfulness or meditation, treat these thoughts like clouds passing by. Notice them and then let go of them to keep an inner calm and peace.

EMERGING CIRCLE

Not everything goes better when you try very hard or push. Some processes benefit from soft attention and awareness. Only then you can get the outcome you want. By focusing on the process, you get a better outcome.

HOW TO PLAY

Come and stand in a circle. We will count from 1 to 20. Each person can say one number at a time, but we will not set a particular order in which to speak. So one person will start with “one,” and someone from somewhere else in the circle will say, “two,” etc. When two people speak at the same time, we will start from ‘one’ again.

Usually this is way harder than it sounds. Often people are eager to get to 20 quickly, so they will say the same number at the same time. Sometimes people try to set rules, like going in order of how they are standing or pointing to the next person who should talk. Usually there are a few people who want to give the group instructions when they have to start from ‘one’ again. It’s important that you observe and don’t help them reach their goal, because that is not the point. It’s possible that the group does not make it to 20 within 10 minutes. Don’t continue the exercise too long just to get to 20, it’s about the process.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to play?

Frustrating; special when it worked

What did we do when it didn’t work?

We tried harder; we started talking about how to make it work; we tried to set rules.

Did that work?

Sometimes; not really.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In a vague/ambiguous/diffuse situation, people often want to set rules in order to better control what’s going on, have a ‘clean’ process, and get to the end result as quickly as possible. However, a

AT A GLANCE

Learning how to stay present in a messy process.

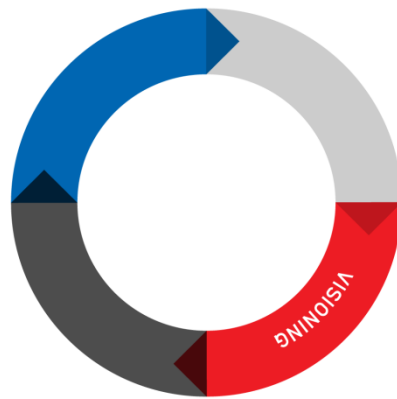
Time: 30 mins

Participants: 10-20

Personal Mastery/Presence

process like this is inherently a bit messy and unpredictable, and seems to have a will of its own. Even though you might get to 20 quickly when you set rules, doing so is missing the point of this exercise. The point is to learn to deal with ambiguity and let the process emerge on its own. This process is about allowing things to emerge on their own, and rolling with the punches.

Only when you are fully present as a group, which is different from doing nothing and letting the rest of the group speak for you, you can almost feel when it's your 'turn.' Trying very hard to succeed puts pressure on the process and is counter-effective. Just as grass does not grow faster when you pull it, a shy person does not connect to the larger group just because you command it. Often this exercise is easier after meditation, mindfulness training, or body and mind (chi quong) or improv exercises, because these make you more aware and present.



VISIONING:

“YES, AND...” CREATES A BREAKTHROUGH

Get team members from individual creativity to co-creation

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

When you say, “Yes, and ...,” to each other’s ideas, you give up some control over the direction of the idea, but you gain new and fresh ideas that might have more breakthrough potential than you could have come up with by yourself. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

AT A GLANCE

Unleashing the creative organization

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 2-100

Divergent phase of Visioning

HOW TO PLAY

“Round 1: Please pair up. We will plan a team outing. One person should propose an activity, and the other person’s answer will start with ‘yes, but...,’ and they will fill in the blank. You can each use one line at a time each round.”

You can demonstrate this with a participant. For example:

A: Let’s go sailing with the team!

B: Yes, but some people can’t sail, so they will feel left out.

A: Let’s take a cooking class, then.

B: Yes, but..., (etc.)

A should keep making new proposals. B will answer each with “Yes, but ...” Have them do this for 2 minutes. It’s normal when this part is not fun yet, let them experience the down energy of ‘yes but’.

“Round 2: Now please switch roles. This time B will propose activities, and A will respond to each with ‘Yes, and ...’ so you will build on each other. You don’t have to be original; you can use proposals you’ve used before. However, this time please act out (mime) while you talk.”

You can demo this again with a participant. For example:

B: Let’s cook with the whole team (starts pretending to cook).

A: (Joins cooking mime) Yes, and let’s make our own sushi (both start rolling sushi).

B: Yes, and let’s drink sake! (Start miming sake-drinking together, etc.)

Have them do this for about 3 minutes.

DEBRIEF

These are two possible answers you can get when you propose something. I want to know what those different answers felt like to you.

What was it like when your partner answered with “yes, but ...” all the time?

Typical answers: annoying, energy draining, challenging.

Did you get an outing arranged?

Typical: no

What was it like when you heard “yes, and ...” the whole time?

Typical: energizing, fun, crazy, we ran all over the place.

When did ideas float most easily – with “yes, but ...”? Or with “yes, and ...”?

Typical: with “yes, and ...,” because then you're co-creating.

What do we hear most at work?

Typical: “yes, but ...”

What does this mean for the work we do?

Typical: that we lose energy, and that we don't create as much as we could.

Which parts of our work process could benefit from 'yes, and ...'?

What could you change about the way you work now that you know this?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When you want to co-create you have to accept each other's offers and build on them. When you say, “No,” you block an idea. When you say, “Yes,” you let your partner work alone, because you are not adding anything. When you say, “Yes, but ...,” you don't reach the idea's full potential, at best finding a creative compromise. When you say, “Yes, and ...,” you are co-creating and postponing your judgment, letting the idea grow into its full potential. When you use “yes, and” well and long enough, you are likely to get into a 'flow' and forget who came up with what idea.

Ideas just flow freely and the process seems to run itself. Breakthroughs can easily happen in this state. Yes-and-ing is the basic principle of improvisation in theater and in jazz. In improvisation they say, “There are no bad ideas, only bad adapters.” You allow co-creation to happen when you are a good adapter, when you go with total faith and devotion into a process with an unknown outcome.

IT'S A GIFT

Welcoming and incorporating unexpected events or suggestions heightens your creativity. It's a gift to have a mindset that treats obstacles as gifts.

HOW TO PLAY

Pair up with someone. Person A will tell a story and, after a few sentences, person B will start throwing in random words that A has to immediately incorporate into their story. For example:

Ask someone to throw random words at you while you tell your story:

*You: (We recommend you make up an example on the spot and not using this example literally.)
John worked in the kitchen of an Italian restaurant. He started working every day at four to make dough for the pizzas. He loved his job because...*

B: Dog

...of Bello, the owner's dog, who was always very happy to see him and...

B: Bottle

... who was always carrying a little bottle of Lambrusco on his collar...

And so on. Let's play!

Have them switch roles after two minutes or so.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

Fun, easy, confusing, hard.

What made it fun, easy, confusing, or hard?

Easy-to-incorporate words; hard when the words come too soon after one another.

What was the effect of the unexpected words?

Unexpectedly good.

What mindset do you need to use the unexpected words well.

AT A GLANCE

Perceiving the unexpected as a gift

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 2 - 50

Co-creation / receiving user feedback

Not thinking they are a nuisance, but that they are a gift that will enhance my creativity.

How does this relate to our work/to reality?

If you look at other people's ideas or their behavior as something that they throw into your way to make your life hard, it probably will be hard. When you look at these things as unexpected gifts, it forces you to be creative and you stay flexible and happy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In improvisational theater, where this game comes from, people see the unexpected things that people throw into a story, project, or life as gifts. If you see them as obstacles, they will indeed become obstacles for you and will feel like negative influences you cannot control. But when you see these prompts as gifts, perhaps gifts you are not quite sure yet how to best use, it allows you to keep a curious attitude. With this mindset, unexpected things you encounter in your path are much more likely to come in handy at some point. Rather than immediately judging these gifts as useless, you cherish the potential of these gifts a bit longer and try them out to discover the possible value they may have down the road.

I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA

Creative ideas can quickly stagnate without fresh, outside influences. While input from multiple sources can become messy, it is the best way to insure creativity is not lost over time.

HOW TO PLAY

We will engage in verbal storytelling in groups of three. Can I have two volunteers to help me demonstrate how it works?

If you have a shy or inexperienced group, you can ask two volunteers to help in advance. Either way, be sure to frame your request as, "Can I have two people who have absolutely no clue what we will be doing?" This is to stress that participants have no responsibility in 'getting it right.'

We will line up in groups of three, and the person in the middle will start telling the story. The other two participants should face the person in the middle, taking on an active body posture that shows they are ready to jump into the middle. This is because one of these participants on the edge will 'tap out' the middle person as soon as they have a 'better' idea. The new person in the middle will then replace the last part of the story told with their own version. The person who previously stood in the middle (now standing on one side) should completely agree with the new version, smiling and saying "Yes, yes, yes!" while taking on a connected and active body posture.

Model this with the two volunteers. Preferably, you should stand on the outside so that you can come in with a 'better idea' relatively quickly, and also ensure that the one tapped out reacts in a 'linking' and not in a 'ranking' way.

Example:

A: Once upon a time there was a woman who had a huge house ...

B: *Jumps in* Wait! She didn't have a huge house – she had a huge heart!

A: Yes, yes, yes!

B: Her heart was so big that she loved everyone she met. She always fell in love at first sight. She's already been married 83 times!

C: *Jumps in* Wait! She never married ... she just stole other people's husbands!

B: Yes, yes, yes! She was a love thief.

AT A GLANCE

Using the team to expand your vision

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 3-50

Exploring/Seeking Inspiration
Broadly

As you walk around observing, make sure the ‘tapped out’ people keep an active and positive body posture and stay connected to the unfolding story.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to play?

Fun! Crazy energetic.

What did this exercise do to your story?

It became more wild, more crazy; it made no sense anymore; it actually got better; it became a story that I could have never come up with by myself.

What happened when you stood in the middle?

At first I was full of energy, throwing in my latest idea, but after a while I noticed that what I was telling was becoming more safe and mainstream.

What does that tell us about responsibility in a creative process?

When creative responsibility relies too heavily on one person, it’s hard for that person to stay fresh, bold, and daring.

What was it like to be tapped out?

No problem because the story got better; no problem because I could always go back in; when I kept on thinking about my own idea that did not make it because I was tapped out, it was hard for me to come back in and reconnect with the story.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In this game, ideas have no owners. When you are truly in the flow, it goes so fast that you have no idea anymore who came up with what: other people’s ideas feel like yours, as much as your own. Just like in the game Rock, Paper, Scissors, if you can go from ranking (comparing yourself with others) to linking (connecting with others) when you are tapped out, you stay connected with your team members. Your mindset makes it possible for you to keep on contributing.

When a person stands in the middle for too long, you see that their ideas start to lose their strength as that person begins to feel too much responsibility for their ideas, and then often starts censoring them.

BOMBS & BRIDGES

Creative processes need different kinds of creative input at different stages. Sometimes a 'bomb' is needed, a divergent derailing impulse that is divergent. Sometimes a 'bridge' is needed, to connect, contextualize, add meaning, converge and bring to an end state. This exercise helps participants become aware of these different inputs and think about their and their colleague's personal preferences.

AT A GLANCE

Understanding two different roles needed in a creative process.

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 10-25

Exploring/Conducting

HOW TO PLAY

We will improvise a story together, in which we can only each use one sentence each. Please all stand on one side of the room, facing an imaginary line. That's our story line. I need one person to stand all the way to the left end of our imaginary line and one all the way to the right.

Have someone stand on the far left and far right of the imaginary line.

(To person on left:) You will make up the first line of our improvised story. For example, "Once upon a time there was a king who was afraid of frogs." (To person on right:) You will tell the last line of the story, which should have nothing to do with the first line. For example, "... And he never ate chocolate pie again."

Make them come up with their own lines.

Now it's the job of the rest of the team to make this one complete story as they fill in the blank spaces between the first and last line. The people with the first and last sentences keep standing where they are and keep repeating the same sentence each round. At the beginning of each round, one or two people at a time can jump in to provide an in-between sentence in any order (does not have to fill left to right). We will start each round with the first sentence again, and will then hear the story in order, ending with the last sentence. Once you add a part, keep repeating the same thing until everyone is in. When the last person is in, the story should be complete.

You may need to coach people to step out. Only allow 1-2 people per round. You may need to "conduct" the story by pointing at the first person and moving through each one prompting them to say their sentence. While the group tells the story, listen for good examples of bridging sentences and bombing sentences.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to create a story this way?

Fun. hard.

There is a difference in the role your sentences played in the creative process. Take for instance [example of bomb] and [example of bridge]. What do you see as the difference?

Field all possible answers.

Did you feel more comfortable dropping a creative bomb or bridging a gap? Do you see similarities with your creative role in the team/process? Now you know each other's preferred style of adding, how can you make best use of that? How can you switch when needed? Are there more bomb droppers or bridge builders in your team?

VARIATIONS

In a second game, stop the group every now and then and ask what is needed now: a bomb or a bridge. This depends a bit on personal style. Some people like stories with more structure, while others prefer to keep more room for imagination. Challenge people to play the other role than they normally do. Separate the preferred bomb-droppers from the bridgers and let them each do their own story.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

To make this story coherent and interesting, different kinds of creative input are needed at different moments. You need creative bombs to be dropped to bring something unexpected and out of the box. You also need bridges to be made to cross gaps, to give context or meaning to crazy creative input, or to push toward a conclusion. With only bombs the story makes no sense and runs off track. With only bridges, the story becomes boring and dies out. The best stories have both, and therefore hold a creative tension. Stories and also projects need both types of creativity to succeed. A good team member can let go of his funny sentence or clever idea when he realizes it's not what the creative process needs at that moment

THAT'S RIGHT, BOB

Playing a role can help people come up with big and crazy ideas. Doing this together forces them to build on each other, ensuring the ideas are new and often more original.

HOW TO PLAY

Pair up with someone. You are an infomercial duo, both named Bob (even if you are a woman). You have been selling items on TV together for a long time, and you think your partner is brilliant. I will tell you what object you will sell today, and you will describe its features together. You will use one sentence at a time each and will start every sentence with: "That's right, Bob!" before adding what you have to say. Start by saying "That's right, Bob," even when you have no clue what to say after that. For example:

Example:

A: Today we have a hairdryer for you.

B: That's right, Bob! And this hairdryer is especially designed for curly hair.

A: That's right, Bob! You can even use it on your pet poodle!

B: That's right, Bob! If you have a Labrador, you can turn it into a poodle, too!

The object you will describe today is a carpet, and the sky is the limit. Let's play!

Walk by the groups, especially the ones that seem quiet and aren't moving their bodies a lot, and see if they need extra inspiration. It might go 'wrong' when a participant only says, "That's right, Bob," and doesn't add much beyond that ... or when pairs start following up with a question, as in: "That's right, Bob ... and what else can it do?" In that case, one person is doing all the work. Stop the exercise after a few minutes. When back together as a group, go around and ask some people to share some of the features they came up with for their object.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do this?

Fun, easy, hard, etc.

What made it fun, easy, or hard?

AT A GLANCE

Using co-creation and role-playing to conceive and build upon new ideas.

Time: 30 mins (5 mins set up, 10 mins play, 15 mins debrief)

Participants: 2 +

Conducting/Building the Creation Skills

It's fun to build on each other; my partner said things that inspired me; I realized I found it hard to really listen, making playing off of my partner's choices difficult.

What was the effect of being Bob?

It made it funny; we started to speak with a thick American accent, which gave us permission to go really crazy; it was freeing to be someone else and not to carry the responsibility of the ideas you throw in.

What does that tell us about creating?

We don't go far or get wild enough when we feel responsible for the outcome; we should task ourselves with giving credit to even our silliest ideas – they may be only the spark for something much bigger or better.

Where did your ideas come from?

From my partner, I built on what they said and that's how we came up with new things.

What aspects of this exercise would you like to incorporate into your work?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When we are looking for creative solutions, many of us tend to think alone, concentrate deeply, and use linear/logical/vertical thought processes. More and more research shows us that this often doesn't generate the creative output that we were hoping for.

This game often works well because it uses two very powerful elements: associations (a lateral thinking technique) and role-playing. Often, when teams brainstorm, they don't build on each other's ideas, making it basically useless to brainstorm in the same room. Another problem is that the ideas generated are often not big enough. Big ideas generally come out of the box and often sound weird at first. So, while throwing in wild ideas might seem risky, because you fear losing face, playing a role (not yourself) can remove that obstacle to innovation.

12 CIRCLES

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Drawing enables more creative parts of our brain. A simple drawing assignment preps us for a more complicated visioning exercise: Brain Sketching.

ALTERNATIVE USE

When we are diverging, we go for quantity over quality. You only reach good quantity if you recognize but don't listen to your inner critic voice that says that you (or your drawing) are not good or original enough.

HOW TO PLAY

Preparation: have pens/markers and A4 paper ready.

Everyone grab a pen and a piece of paper. Now draw 3 x 4 circles on your paper so that you have 12 circles in total.

Demonstrate with a prepped sheet of paper with 12 circles drawn.

You now have two minutes to use each of these circles to make a drawing. You have to use the circle in your drawing. So what could you draw?

A sun, a clock, a smiley face.

Great! Is it clear? Go!

Play some quiet instrumental music (e.g., Philip Glass, Tycho)

If people hesitate or are in doubt, encourage them to just draw the first thing that comes to mind.

Be strict about the time and stop after two minutes and ask them to hold up their papers and comment on what you see. Give extra attention to people that have used "out-of-the-circle" thinking to complete the assignment, for instance a domino stone with 6 circles, a bike with two, a traffic light with three, etc.

Fabulous! Now we know that everyone here can draw!

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

AT A GLANCE

Everyone can draw. We only get to quantity if we don't listen to our inner critics

Time: 5 mins

Participants: 1-500

Suggestions for use: Before Brain Sketching

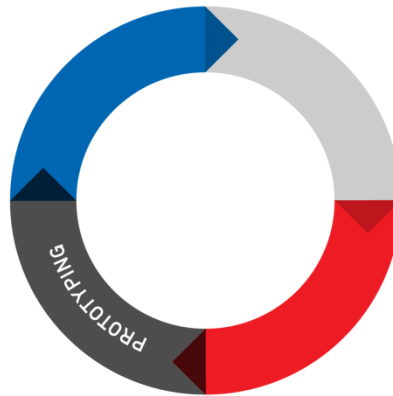
Fun, hard, easy, frustrating etc.

By a show of hands, who managed to draw something in all 12 circles?

And who did not complete the 12 circles?

Who had ideas that they did not draw, maybe because you thought it was not original enough?

We all have an inner critic who makes sure we perform well and wants to save us from looking stupid in public. It can be a useful voice. However, when we let it into our process at an early stage, it sabotages our outcome by only allowing the ideas on paper that seem good enough. In the divergent stage, we want as many ideas as possible, the good, bad and ugly ones. When we reconvene later, the inner critic can be of use again. For now, we can just thank him to help us produce waste.



PROTOTYPING:

RANKING TO LINKING

When interacting with others, people commonly employ one of two different mindsets: ranking or linking. Ranking focusing on one's relative status, and often involves thinking in 'win/lose' terms. On the other hand, linking focuses on the connection with the other person, empathizing with them and considering their perspective. By experiencing losing in a game and being asked to switch to linking straight away, the participants gain awareness of and some control over these mindsets.

AT A GLANCE

Exploring the ranking and linking mindsets, and how to go from ranking to linking.

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 12-50

Personal Mastery

HOW TO PLAY

Discuss the following scenario with your neighbor: Friend A is in a cafe with friend B. A tells B that he just got a promotion at work. What possible emotions might B experience, hearing this news?

Field the group's answers and write them up in two categories, which will become linking and ranking. There are two different mindsets underlying these two groups of emotions. Different thinkers have given them different names. For example, management guru Chris Argyris speaks of Model 1 and Model 2. The main ingredient of Model 1 is maximizing winning and minimizing losing. Model 2 is based on trust. We prefer to use the words of Elain Aron, which are Ranking and Linking. When we are ranking, we are comparing ourselves with others, looking at who is better or worse than we are. When we are linking, we are treating the other person the way we would like to be treated; we are empathizing with them. What happens to them, we can feel and understand as well.

Now we will experiment a bit with these mindsets, playing an old game called rock, paper, scissors. Who knows it? It's a game where you count to three and then show one of three gestures:

Rock is a fist. Paper is a flat hand. Scissors are your middle and index finger

The winning order is like this (show these steps with two hands):

Scissors beat paper because they cut it. Rock beats scissors because it crushes them. Paper beats rock because it smothers it.

So find a partner, hold your hand behind your back, count to three together, and on three show one of the gestures. If you have the same one you play again. Eventually one of you will win and one will lose. The loser will probably experience negative ranking feelings. Be aware of them, register what it feels like, and then switch to linking. You can do that by becoming the winner's biggest fan and accompanying them, while cheering them on, to their next opponent. When the two of you lose, together you'll switch to linking and become fans of the new winner. We will play until there is one

winner and a crowd of cheering fans left.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to play?

Fun!

Why is that?

To play this old game again; to cheer and be cheered; it was very uplifting.

So what are the symptoms of negative ranking? What kinds of feelings or behaviors go with it?

Head down, disinterest, walking away, energy drain, feelings of irritation towards my opponent.

What was it like to switch to linking and cheer for your 'opponent'?

Weird, fake, funny, it got easier; I got rid of the ranking feelings pretty quickly, even though the cheering seemed fake at the beginning.

What's required to do that?

You need to let go of wanting to win, realize your position in the world is not under threat, be happy for each other's success ...

Can you force yourself to go from ranking to linking? What does it take to do that? Where in our work/teams could we benefit from going from ranking to linking?

VARIATION

Get people to list three people they can easily work with and three people they struggle with before the exercise begins. Afterwards you can ask them to look at those lists and see whether ranking plays a role in the people they struggle with.

HUMAN LEGO

1. *When prototyping, trust your impulses and following your feet and hands.*
2. *When prototyping, add ideas without being attached to them, it might not be an end result but just a step in the iterative process to get to a great end result*
3. *When prototyping, trust the process and add ideas to create more ideas.*

AT A GLANCE

Ideate and iterate in a physical way to get different kind of information into the process

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 9 - 20

HOW TO PLAY

We will play a game that helps us wake up and exercise our prototyping mind and body. We will first do a warm-up to get into it, and then play the actual game. For the warm-up, make groups of three. You will build statues on the spot using your bodies, without talking. I will name an image and you will build it as quickly as possible. First image: the Eiffel Tower.

Give them up to 10 seconds to build the image.

Second image: airplane. Third image: table, chair, and parasol.

Encourage them to work quickly, without talking, and with almost no thinking. Praise the group that works fastest.

Now stand in a circle. One person stands in the middle and says, "I am a tree."

Have someone do that and stand like a tree.

Someone else comes in and adds something that has to do with a tree: for example, "I am an apple."

Have someone do that, and prompt them to take a bodily position like an apple.

The third person comes in and adds something that has to do with both tree and apple – for example, "I am a basket sitting under the tree."

Have this third person position themselves like their object.

Person one now repeats what he is, and then names what other object he takes back with him to the circle. For example: "I am a tree and I'm taking the basket with me." Tree and basket rejoin the circle. The apple remains in the center and repeats, "I am an apple." Someone else comes in and adds something to the apple that has nothing to do with the previous picture. For example, "I am Snow White's belly," etc. Always make statues with three people in them.

You will need to guard the process carefully in the beginning. Make sure the participants repeat what

they are and say who they're taking back to the circle with them. Play this variation as long as you want, or add a theme that's related to a work topic that you want to explore (for example the life of a user of your product). However, do note that, when you body storm with a theme, the flow of the game can stall because people become concerned with being correct.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to play?

Fun, easy; sometimes I didn't know what to add.

What made it fun, easy, or difficult?

Fun because it inspired me to add fun things. Easy because it was so easy to inspire each other and come up with stuff. Difficult when you did not quite understand what the person in the middle was doing, or I was afraid my addition would be stupid. I was not quick enough.

When did you go in?

When I had an idea. When I felt inspired.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In this game, just like in prototyping, it works best when you are quick and dirty and don't wait until you have a perfect, finished idea. Your idea will be changed very quickly anyway. So it's best to attach and detach very quickly without any ego involved. If you're trying to be good, correct, or clever, you can block your inner stream of ideas and block the creative process. If you see the thing you add as a trigger to create more ideas, it's easier to just add whatever comes to mind without forcing anything.

In this game, the key is to react on impulses and follow your feet. Our bodies store lots of information, and if you move quickly enough, you might manage to bypass the brain and the critical thinker within you. It's a way of brainstorming or ordering information that involves not only our brains but also our emotions and our whole being, which makes it rich.

WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?

When you share control, your creative output is higher. When you try to steer the process too much because you cannot let go of your own idea, your collaborator becomes an employee instead of a creative partner.

HOW TO PLAY

We will do a drawing exercise. Pair up and each grab a different color marker. Together, you and your partner will draw a face without talking. Alternate adding one line or a feature at a time. When you begin to hesitate, stop drawing. Add a title/name, one letter at a time. It's OK if the title is a nonsense word. When you both hesitate to add anything, the title is done. Let's have a quick demonstration. I need two volunteers... who are not good at drawing.

Coach the demonstration so that the volunteers alternate turns, stop drawing when they hesitate, create a title, and stop when they hesitate on the title. Once they are done, give them some applause and let everyone else begin. Most people finish within a few minutes. Ask each pair to hold the pictures so that others can see them, or make a little exhibition on a wall. You can do a more difficult variation by having each pair draw an unknown object one line at a time.

AT A GLANCE

Sharing control and creating together

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 2 - 50

DEBRIEF

What was this like to do?

Fun, hard, annoying, amazing results, inspiring.

What made it hard?

Giving up control; the other person; I had something specific in mind and the other didn't help achieve it; I didn't know how to help the other.

What happened once you let go of your own idea?

I felt more space in my head, like anything could happen, and any outcome would be fine; we drew something that I would have never drawn by myself; it was more fun.

What did you discover about being innovative together? (See key takeaways.) How can you apply this in real life?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Often it's hard for people to work together in a productive way because they have trouble sharing control. In this game most people experience a more creative outcome when they share control. This outcome is not always prettier, but it's more original. Together participants draw things that they would have never drawn by themselves. If you truly co-create with your partner, you feel that the lines you are drawing are getting you closer to your unknown outcome. If you have a set outcome in mind, the other person's lines will be mostly seen as disruptive, and you will try to 'correct them' with your lines, trying to get them closer to the picture (outcome) you have in your head. In this case, you are blocking co-creation.

An original exercise by Keith Johnstone called 'Eyes.'

PUSH AND PULL

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Different situations require different and flexible responses. In innovation, we need to know when to put on the pressure, and when to create space for others or take a step back.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

A good team keeps each other off balance in a pleasant way. If you push too hard, you push each other into panic zone. If you don't push or pull at all, you keep each other in comfort zone where we often don't learn much. When you have the right balance and timing between push and pull, it gets your team in the learning zone. It's not falling, it's not standing still, it's being on the move.

HOW TO PLAY?

Find a partner of similar will power. Stand facing each other with your feet shoulder-width apart. Both of you will put your hands up so that they are touching in front of you. The objective is to bring your partner off balance by either pushing them away or pulling your hands away when they push. If they lose their balance and take a step, you get a point.

Alternatively, you can demonstrate this first with a participant.

Find a new partner and see if it helps to try a different strategy.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

Fun, hard, impossible if my partner was a lot bigger.

What made it fun or hard?

It was fun once I got the hang of it. It was hard anticipating any moves or when the other was stronger or more aggressive than me.

What strategies worked best for you?

Pushing hard to keep the other off balance. Pulling my hands away whenever the other person was on the attack.

What can we learn from this exercise when it comes to creative processes?

AT A GLANCE

Allowing for flexibility in creative processes

Time: 15 mins

Participants: 2 - 500

Conducting/Building the Creation Skills

Suggestions for use: Prototype testing, pitching, convergent visioning.

Sometimes we need a soft touch or no touch at all. Other times it is necessary to push harder to achieve our objectives. Being aware of what the situation requires, gives us flexibility to adopt different styles.

How can we apply these learnings to our work/projects?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In creative processes, as in many others, different situations require different responses from team members. Sometimes it is necessary to push to avoid an impasse or to get one's point across. Other times the situation requires a lighter touch or perhaps even removing ourselves from the equation to either create space for other team members to be creative or to enlist open and honest feedback from stakeholders. Being aware of our dominant style allows us to adopt other styles when the situation requires it.

FROM THE ASHES

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

When you are willing to “kill your darlings”, you allow for the brain to come up with new creative solutions. New visioning is therefore required and can help come up with big new concepts, keep what works, discard the rest and add new elements to the concept. Taking random points that are very far away from each other can help create very original thoughts. Playing a role that is not your own helps you to kill your darlings and brainstorm big, without losing face.

HOW TO PLAY

In the next 10 minutes, we will create a new service or product from slightly random elements. Please grab a pen and a piece of paper. Write down, in big letters, three of your favorite things. These could be favorite foods, activities, countries, co-workers, or something else – the category doesn’t matter. Your piece of paper, for example, might say: biking, sci-fi, autumn. Got it? You have one minute.

If people hesitate or are in doubt, encourage them to just write something down or offer some categories they can choose from. Just make sure everyone is done after one minute.

Now walk around with your piece of paper held out in front of you. Read what others have written on their papers.

Let them walk around for about a minute.

Now randomly form circles of three. You will read the paper of the person on your right and cross out with a big X one of the things they wrote down. You will all do that, so in the end everyone has one item left over that was not crossed out.

Check if everyone has only 1 thing left on their papers.

How did that feel to have your two of your favorite things in the world crossed out like that?

Let a couple of people react. Usually they will say something negative.

Now, your job as a group is to combine those three circled items to come up with a new product or service. And you won’t do that as yourselves, but as the sales team from a cheap infomercial program. This means you should talk in short sentences, build on each other, and absolutely love whatever

AT A GLANCE

Pivoting requires you to kill your darlings. Coming up with big new concepts helps you to forget fast.

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 3-50

Exploring/Seeking Inspiration
Broadly

Suggestions for use: Before enlisting
user feedback, before pivoting.

your partners are saying. Make sure to say, “Great idea!” before you add something new. You have three minutes.

Walk by the different groups, especially the groups that seem quiet, and encourage them to think out loud so others can add things and they can build on each other. Tell the participants when there are 30 seconds left. Ask a few of the groups to share their new services or products. Encourage them to do it with pride.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

Fun, easy, hard, etc.

What made it fun, easy, hard?

It’s fun to build on each other; we were inspired, so it was easy; I immediately see why something wouldn’t work, so it’s hard for me to build or step into an enthusiastic role. Having two of my favorite things in the world crossed out like that was painful. But I recovered quickly and like the new idea we came up with.

How did it feel when your partner encouraged you?

It felt great when he liked my ideas, it made me come up with more; it was hard because I knew he had to say it and might not mean it; we laughed a lot and our ideas became more ‘wild’ because of the role we played and the encouragement.

How did it work to use three random words?

Some were hard to combine; we had to be creative to combine them; we came up with things that we would have otherwise never thought; it worked well because we felt a connection with at least one of the words because it was a personal favorite, and that made it inspiring.

What do you think is important for moving on after losing your favorite things?

Not being too attached. Seeing it as a game. Killing your darlings so that we have the freedom to discard stuff and move on.

What does that tell us about pivoting?

It is hard to give up an idea or concept that you are enthusiastic about or love. But sometimes you need to, so that you can move on and make something that people actually like or want. Coming up with new big concepts can help us quickly forget and get enthusiastic about something new.

What aspects of this exercise would you like to take into your project?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When we look for creative solutions, many of us tend to become attached to one or more aspects of our concepts. This is perfectly normal and even beneficial during most parts of the process. But once we start testing concepts, prototypes or pilots in the real world, users can quickly burst our bubble. If the market doesn't like our concept, there is no point in pursuing it further. Then we have to "kill our darlings", keep what does work and discard the rest.

It then helps to do some big visioning, aiming to build new concepts out of the elements that were upheld.

This game works well because it uses two very powerful elements: serendipity and team encouragement. Often when teams brainstorm, they don't build on each other's ideas, meaning that it is basically useless to brainstorm in the same room. Another problem is that the ideas are often not big enough. Big ideas are often out of the box and might sound weird at first, so popping them in might seem risky if you fear losing face. Playing a role can take that obstacle away.

Finally, serendipity helps us to draw the creative line through disparate ideas. Our brains are primed to make connections. If you take random points that are very far away from each other, the line the brain wants to draw between them is often the path you would normally never take and is therefore original.

GIBBERISH, MESDAMES ET MESSIEURS!

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Non-verbal communication plays a huge role in how we value a speaker and their story. Awareness of what and how we communicate with our voice and body language is the first step in using our non-verbal communication purposefully.

HOW TO PLAY?

Who here speaks a language that no one else in the group understands?

Ideally, ask a participant beforehand of whom you know speaks a language that no one else in the group understands, to tell the group a story in that language. The content of the story is (obviously) unimportant but for our purposes it might help if he/she chooses a subject that they are passionate about.

Please tell us a story in your own language. We as an audience will stand in a wide circle around the storyteller while he/she is telling the story and react to the story by moving towards or away from the speaker when we feel drawn to the story or the person. Please imagine you have antennae that react to the speaker's story very sensitively.

If you are not getting a lot of movement from the group, you can ask the storyteller to do more of what might draw them in. You can also move in yourself. After a couple of minutes, give the storyteller a round of applause for their efforts.

DEBRIEF

What was it like for you as a speaker?

Fun, exciting, made me anxious.

What was it like in the audience?

Interesting how much you can pick up of the story. It's fun to tune into the non-verbal communication.

When were you as an audience inclined to move away from or towards the speaker?

Towards: When his tone of voice showed passion, when he was using his hands, increasing the volume, speaking loudly and clearly, smiling and when he made eye contact. Or when there was that one English word in that whole story that I did understand.

AT A GLANCE

Becoming aware of the role of non-verbal communication during pitching or storytelling

Time: 15 mins

Participants: 5 - 50

Directing/Telling a Story that Moves to Act

Suggestions for use: Pitching, storytelling.

Away: When the volume was low, he seemed unsure or insecure, looking at the ground or the ceiling, looking at other people, etc.

What can we learn from this exercise?

That there are many ways to engage an audience other than the content of the story you are telling. When I liked him, I felt drawn towards the story. When there was that one word we all understood, we all moved closer.

How can we apply these learnings to storytelling/pitching?

Be aware of body language, tone, volume, and who you look at. Often the content is new for you as well, which can make you come across as insecure, closed or intimidating. Try to find your passionate, happy self while telling your story, because your audience reacts to you like a mirror. When you feel happy and at ease, they will mostly feel the same.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Body language and other non-verbal communication accounts for 70% of communication. When we speak in front of a group we have a broad array of tools we can use to communicate. Becoming aware of the power of non-verbal communication is the first step in allowing us to use it purposefully during storytelling or pitching. Often when we pitch an innovative concept, the content is like gibberish to the audience, some of them might have a hard time understanding what you say. Therefore it is extra important to make that eye contact, draw them in and use that one key word that they do understand or make an analogy of something they already know to describe your concept so that they can relate.



SCALING:

VIRAL TRIANGLES: ONE TOUCHES ALL

You can cause a system-wide effect by touching only one person, if you know who is best connected and propose something that is easy or very appealing to follow.

HOW TO PLAY

This game will help us understand how you can set a whole system in motion in a surprising way. First, you need to secretly select two people from this group. Do not reveal who you picked!

Ask if everyone has selected someone ...

Now, when I say “go,” try to make an equidistant triangle with those two people. That means you should stand so that there is an equal distance between you and each of the two people you selected.

Show them by making an example triangle yourself.

For example, if I picked you and you, I would stand somewhere around here; if the two of you start moving, I also have to move with you to keep the equidistant triangle intact. You will need to do the same to keep your own triangle intact once your chosen people start moving. However, make sure you stick to the original people you picked. Keep the triangle intact. No talking. No touching. Go!

Let them walk for a few minutes and observe the process.

You have 5 more seconds to finish your triangle...3,2,1 ... and stop. Sit down exactly where you are standing right now. From where you are sitting, make sure you can see the people you were following – in the next step, you will need to react to them. What will happen is that I will tap one person on the shoulder. That person will stand up. When one of the two people you were following stands up, you should stand up as well. In this way we will see how our system is connected.

At this point it's important to check that everyone understands the instructions. Otherwise the 'experiment' will not make any sense. Raise your hand if you understand what to do. Please explain it in your own words to the people who haven't raised their hands.

When it's clear to everyone, tap someone on the shoulder. It helps if you repeat the assignment:

If one of the two people you were following stands up, you should stand up as well.

Count how many people you need to tap to get the whole room standing. Often it's only one or two.

AT A GLANCE

How small moves can set big things in motion

Time: 30 mins (5 mins intro, 10 mins play, 15 mins debrief)

Participants: 15-100

Dynamic Focus/Directing

Suggestions for use: Triggering the Tipping Point

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

Interesting, annoying, fun; I'm amazed by the results.

So, what happened?

People with some knowledge of system dynamics will say 'ripple effect' or 'network effect.'

How did it feel to be part of a bigger movement with such a big impact?

Empowering, inclusive, powerful.

Do you have influence on how others move?

Often people say no, but that's not true – let them think a bit longer. Some people say that you only have influence on the people that follow you. They move when you move. However, those people are also followed by others – so, when you find someone that is well connected and moves on your behalf, the whole system moves. The more links this connector has, the more moving power they have.

How many people did I tap on the shoulder?

Most often one or two.

How many people did this cause to stand up?

If it worked, they will say "everyone."

How is that possible?

Because we are all connected.

Would it have mattered who I tapped?

A well connected person will be more effective than a less connected person (someone who was not part of anyone else's triangle).

Would it have mattered what I asked you to do (i.e., stand up when the person you follow rises)?

People may say no. Have them think a bit more and come up with an example that would have been hard or less appealing to follow – e.g., if the person tapped is asked to stand on their head, and all followers are asked to stand on their heads as well, and so on. Would the whole system be standing on its head in the same time it takes everyone to just stand up?

How does this change your thinking about the scaling possibilities of a small startup?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

We have much more power to impact a whole system than we may intuitively think. There are two key conditions to making an impact: we must start by picking well-connected people to act on our behalf, and whatever we ask them to do must be relatively easy and/or appealing to do. As a small start-up in a big world, we actually have more potential to scale for a system-wide impact than we realize – if we are able to pick the right people, the connectors, to make a move on our behalf and make it easy for others to follow. If you touch one person who is highly networked, you can cause a system-wide effect. If you touch someone who is not connected, you only move that single person. This is true both in this game and in real life. In this game the networks are equally divided, and everybody has the same amount of connections, but in real life that's almost never the case. So to understand how to trigger a system-wide impact, it is critical to understand the underlying network structure. You have to know who the key players are and understand that what you ask them to do can be followed by others in their network and beyond. The action has to be low effort or appealing, otherwise the movement will stop, no matter how well connected your chosen connectors are.

THE CHAOS OPPORTUNITY

It is important in this quickly changing world to have an eye for the unexpected opportunities around you, or even behind you. This requires both awareness and focus as well as the agility to grasp opportunities.

HOW TO PLAY

For this game I need everyone to stand in a circle with one person in the middle. This person will need to pitch a project. They will go up to someone in the circle saying, "I am here to pitch my project." The person they face will reply, "Go see my neighbor," and point either to the left or to the right. The person in the middle then goes up to someone to the left or to the right and repeats, "I am here to pitch my project." Let's see this in action real quick before I add the next step.

Have them practice these steps once or twice until this part of the game is clear. The person in the middle does not have to go to the person immediately to the right or left; they can skip a few people.

Now we will add a new dynamic for everyone else in the circle. While the person in the middle is asking if they can pitch their project, others have to make eye contact. Once they make eye contact with someone in the circle, they wordlessly switch places with each other without talking. When the person in the middle sees a space in the circle open up, they can quickly step into it before the other person gets there. Now the person still crossing the circle becomes 'it'. It's important not to create new spaces. Let's play!

With many groups you will have to verbally encourage them to start changing places and lead by example. If you see participants avoiding eye contact in order to avoid crossing the circle, this risk-aversion is a good topic to discuss in the debrief.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to play this game?

Fun, boring, exciting.

What made it so?

Boring because nothing happened; exciting when there were a lot of cross-overs; fun while running to another place.

AT A GLANCE

Chaos holds opportunity if you are flexible enough to see it.

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 15 - 30

Directing/Mastering Resilience

In what moments did you have to deal with uncertainty/unpredictability?

Deciding to cross; waiting for a gap will open up.

In the circle, did we see different styles in dealing with unpredictability?

What were they? What effect did they have? What about the person in the middle?

In the circle: Some avoided eye-contact (avoiding risk altogether, making them less fun and less attractive allies), went across in a panic (quicker but clumsier, drawing more attention to themselves and causing less successful exchanges). In the middle: Some were so focused they didn't notice what was going on behind them (they missed opportunities), some kept looking around for gaps (so controlling they didn't allow opportunities to emerge).

What style would you want to have in dealing with unpredictability in the real world?

What mindset or thinking is needed to have that style?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The world changes quickly and the field we are working in is often chaotic and unpredictable. If we focus too much on how we want to achieve something (getting a place in the circle, only from the person you are facing), we might miss other opportunities. People make eye contact, form new bonds, or make new deals and we don't see it because we are too focused on our goal.

For the ones standing in the circle: if you wait until it's totally safe to cross, you might wait forever. You just have to go for it and adjust along the way. An effective way of dealing with unpredictability is staying aware of both your goal and the emerging situation around you, then gracefully incorporating that into your pursuit of a goal. You can boil this down to the idea: every unexpected event is a gift, if you choose to unwrap it. Chaos is a re-ordering of things in which you can try to fit yourself. It can hold a space for you.

IS IT A MOVE OR A MOVEMENT?

You can create a movement when you seem to have fun with what you are doing, are easy to follow, and pay attention to your first followers.

HOW TO PLAY

We will do a simple exercise whose purpose we will discuss after we have done it. Please walk around the room in a neutral walk. Don't speak. Pay attention to how others walk. Now I want you to develop your own unique walk. Maybe you want to swing your arms, skip, or crawl. Any kind of walk is fine, so go ahead.

Encourage people to walk their silly walks; sometimes people can feel shy or awkward doing this.

Now when you see another walk that you like, let go of your own walk and walk like that person. Go ahead. Walk behind the person you are following. Very good. If you see another kind of walk that seems more fun, you can switch again. You can switch as often as you like. Maybe you can set a new trend!

After a while you should see small groups of people and some individuals. Keep an eye on how they change. If you see trends, pay attention to where they start, and how they change and disappear, for the debrief. When you feel there is a natural high point, stop the exercise.

VARIATION

Come and stand in a circle, this will be our sound circle. One person starts a sound that he loops, so he repeats it. Some one else, starts a different sound that he repeats as well. After a while, we have all kind of different sounds.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

Fun.

What made it fun?

Other people adapted my move, so I felt like a trendsetter; it was easy because you didn't have to come up with something, you just did what looked fun.

AT A GLANCE

The power of the first follower in creating a movement

Time: 30 mins

Participants: 10 - 50

Directing/Dynamic Focus

Suggestions for use: Before scaling frame 'balancing control'.

What happened?

The trends changed the whole time.

How did that happen?

We all adapted what we liked.

What was a trend you saw emerge?

Skipping.

Was there a tipping point?

Someone started and then someone else joined. And before I knew it, there were six people joining.

What made some things go viral and others stay small or disappear?

I joined when the people doing it looked like they were having fun; some things seemed too hard to follow.

Are there similarities to viral trends in real life?

They come and go as well; first they are small.

What can we learn from this? Remember what we said about what made a move grow into a movement? How can we apply that to our product/service?

For a three-minute demonstration (with commentary) of how moves become a movement, you can also show the movie of 'dancing guy.'

KEY TAKEAWAYS

If you want your move to become a movement, you have to be visible and easy to follow so others can join you. When you get your first follower, it's key to nurture that person and treat them as equal. The fact that they decide to follow you makes you into a leader. When you get more followers, your move will probably change a bit. If you let that happen, your group grows in an organic way. If you try to keep controlling the movements, your followers will probably leave. After this eye opener, watch the Youtube clip: 'Leadership lessons from dancing guy'.

TELEPHONE GAME

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

When we prepare a story or a pitch, it is important to formulate our key message carefully. The right wording can make all the difference if we want our message to stick.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Messages that stick travel faster. They are easily retold, talked about and shared, and therefore easier to scale.

HOW TO PLAY?

Please take one minute to come up with a brief description of your concept that is no longer than three sentences.

Check if people need more time.

I will give each of you one playing card. This card belongs to the story of your concept. You will exchange stories a few times, and when you do that, you will also exchange cards. The card will always accompany the story.

When I say “Go”, walk around the room. When you meet somebody, use only this description to tell him or her about your concept. Both of you exchange your descriptions and you exchange cards. Once you have done that, continue walking around the room until you run into someone else. This time you will tell them about the project you just heard about and give them the card you have in your hands. That could go like this: “Hey, let me tell you about this cool project...” and then tell them what you heard and give your card. You will keep doing this with everyone you meet up with, exchanging each new project that you have just been told. Keep going until I tell you to stop.

It is important to check for clarity before the group starts so that everybody knows that they are supposed to share the project they just heard.

So what do you do when you run into a new person?

Let them do this for about 2 minutes. Then have everybody stand in a circle and have a few people summarize the last story they heard. Ask the group if any one recognized their story. Then ask the person who just told it, to reveal what card they have in their hands right now, so the original ‘teller’ of the story can recognize his story. Do that for a few people and notice for yourself what the elements were that stuck with people and which ones were forgotten.

AT A GLANCE

Some messages stick better than others – careful wording can help your message stick

Time: 15 mins

Participants: 10 - 100

Directing/Telling a Story that Moves to Act

Suggestions for use: Before a storytelling block or pitching, or as an eye-opener when scaling.

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

Fun, hard to remember what I was told, good to hear about all the different projects this way.

Which descriptions do we remember?

Field a number of answers.

What was it about these descriptions that made them memorable?

Catchy, funny, sexy, short and distinct, rhyme, very original, lots of emotion, something I never heard before. It sounded like something I have heard of before.

What can we learn from this when it comes to packaging our message?

It's how we architect the content, what the "sticky" elements we add to it make it stand out and be remembered.

Discuss in your team how you can apply these learnings to your project.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Memory is selective for each individual. We remember things that matter to us. Careful packaging of your message can help people remember, and messages that are remembered can be shared and scaled.

There are a number of ways you can help your message stick. Invoking emotions is probably the most powerful one. Touching them, shocking them, surprising them or making them laugh, are all ways to help your audience tune in and remember your message better. Creating an "Aha!" moment, is another powerful tool. Learning something new or discovering an eye-opening fact can really make a message stick. Our brains are always on the lookout for new information, so the best ads open our minds to new thoughts and ideas. But here's where it gets tricky: people understand and can reproduce stories better if they are familiar to them, if they trigger neural pathways in the brain because of their familiarity. New things that we do not understand or do not seem at all familiar, we tend to discard immediately as irrelevant. Unless you are so original that it has an emotional Aha! effect, its often wiser to package new messages in ways that your audience can relate to. And simple is better: longer, more detailed messages can dilute your point and confuse your audience. Short, distinctive points can make your message more memorable.

FLIPCHART ISLANDS

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

When we are too focused on our objective or a desired outcome, we run the risk of missing opportunities lying outside of the box.

ALTERNATIVE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

When we are too competitive, we miss opportunities for collaboration. / When we are too focused on our own concept, we do not learn from other influences or initiatives.

HOW TO PLAY?

Preparation: lay one sheet of flipchart paper on the ground for each team of three (or four) people. This exercise does not work for teams smaller than three. The sheets should be close to each other so that it is possible to step over to another sheet of paper from your own.

As you can see, I have laid down one sheet of flipchart paper per team. As a team, please stand on your sheet. When I say go, your objective is to flip your sheet so that the bottom is facing the top. The only rules are that your feet are not allowed to touch the ground outside the paper and that your paper must stay whole.

Participants will try different strategies and techniques, usually focusing solely on their team being able to flip over the paper. They might ask you questions as to what is allowed. You only have to remind them of the two rules. Everything else is allowed.

Most groups will not see a solution outside of their own “box”, but the only thing that really works is to use their neighbor’s paper. If one or more team members step over to the sheets of paper next to them, then the sheet can easily be flipped. They they can aid their neighbors to do the same. After letting them fail or struggle for a couple of minutes, you can help them by making a suggestion.

What if you help each other? Why not see if your neighbors could be of any help?

DEBRIEF

What was it like to do?

Fun, hard, frustrating.

What made it fun, hard or frustrating?

AT A GLANCE

Literally thinking and acting outside the box

Time: 15 mins

Participants: 6 - 50

Suggestions for use: Start of a visioning block / after a break / as a lead up to Scanning the Landscape, Steal like an Artist.

We had no idea how to get it done. But we had a lot of fun doing it. Once you pointed out that we could ask our neighbors for help, the solution became obvious.

Why was the solution so hard to find?

We were so focused on the assignment that we did not see the opportunity around us.

What can we learn from this exercise?

In innovation we have to find a balance between focus and remaining open to new opportunities. Sometimes too much focus can get in the way of creative thinking.

How can we apply these learnings to our work/projects?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

When we are too focused on our objective or a desired outcome, we run the risk of missing opportunities outside of the box. It is very easy to look for solutions within the parameters you have self-constructed, or that are created for you. But innovation requires that we remain alert for new opportunities that arise during our process or that we are willing and open to incorporate elements from outside our current thinking.

