

Word at a Time Story

September 2019

ACTIVITY CARD

Description

A group collectively co-creates and tell a story without preparation, with each person contributing a word at a time.

A group exercise to illustrate the application of Improv principles in how they act with each other so their collective work appears seamless even when it wasn't planned or pre-scripted. The exercise provides a context for people to explore and try different levels of commitment, engagement, ownership, creativity and fun with their colleagues.

Source

Originally http://improvencyclopedia.org/games/Word_at_a_Time_Story.html - variations made by Questo

Objectives

- Increase ability to pay attention to another's action in a group activity and contribute accordingly
- Increase ability to deal smoothly with transitions between self and another's action so it appears seamless even when it wasn't planned or pre-scripted

Application Context(s)

- Change-of-pace activity: after lunch; when group energy needs lifting
- Closing activity to demonstrate how group has calibrated together
- Warming up before commencing collaborative planning or designing activities

Time

15-20 min + 5-10 min debrief

Audience

5 – 60+ people; in group with minimum of 4 people

Resources and Props

- Explanation of Applied Improv Principles
- Space for people to sit in circle(s)

Method

1. Invite small groups to form up in a circle. (Can be around a table; also, good to have people sitting facing each other without anything in between them for a good group dynamic.)
2. Ask whole group for a theme.
3. Advise people they are to create a story together using the theme as a starting point. Each person can contribute a single word, or piece of punctuation.
4. Remind people of Applied Improv principles: "Relax your clever"; "Let go"; "Accept offers"; "Make your partner look good" in how they conduct themselves. (e.g. Sometimes the most appropriate contribution for the flow of the story is "a" or "full-stop".)

Round 1

1. Choose a person in each group to start off a story based on the theme, and name a direction (i.e. clockwise)
2. Let the group compose for 3 minutes.
3. Ask: How was that? What can you do differently next round to improve the quality of the flow?

Word at a Time Story ~ cont.

Round 2

1. Ask the group for a new theme, choose a new person to start and change the direction of the flow.
2. Invite people to listen to and adjust the cadence of what they say, so the story sounds like natural speech not stilted contributions; plus to contribute emotion in what they say.
3. Let the group compose for 3 minutes.
4. Ask: How was that? What made it work/not work?

Round 3

1. Ask the group for a new theme, choose a new person to start and change the direction of the flow.
2. Remind people to listen for and influence the cadence and emotion of the story.
3. As Facilitator (or if there are more than two circles, appoint a member for each circle to), randomly point to a person when they are speaking, giving that person the power to say as much as they want before releasing the story back to the flow of the circle, which continues at one-word-at-time. Prepare to repeat this a couple of times.
4. Let the group compose for 3 minutes.
5. Ask: How was that? What made it work/not work?

Debrief as a whole group:

1. How did that feel after multiple rounds?
2. How did you see the Improv principles operating?
3. How does this experience compare to real life?
4. Invite people to discuss in pairs: How might this mindset and behaviour be applied to your everyday work?

This is one Activity in the **Questo Team Activities Collection**.
Another good idea from Questo for shaping a great team.