



**IMPROVMINDSET**

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## Workshop Report

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Key issues covered include:

- Creativity and problem solving
- Brainstorming
- Reframing the situation
- Accepting change as opportunity
- Simulating creative thought and vision
- Using the tools of Improvisation to help your leadership practice

### HANDSHAKE

A listening and memory game to help everyday interactions.

Participants introduce themselves to another person. Whatever name they hear becomes their new name. When they meet the next person, they introduce themselves as that new name, and whatever name they hear becomes their new name. If you get your own name back, you step out of the game.

#### Questions:

How hard is it to retain the new name for yourself?

What do you do when you forget?

#### Lessons:

The exercise is focusing on that moment of meeting someone new and asking if we give that moment the importance it deserves. It is focusing on initial introductions and allowing that moment to be fully realized and present for you to remember their name.

### PATTERNS:

This Exercise mimics the stress that can arise with an overload of information, much like most office communications. It helps define the importance of sending specific messages, listening and providing clear communication. It also teaches to ensure that the message has been sent effectively before moving on.

Create a pattern using names. One person chooses someone else and says their name, then raises their hand to show they have been chosen. That person then chooses some else by saying their name and raising their hand to show they have



been chosen. Once everyone is chosen the pattern goes back to the person who began the pattern. Practice this pattern before setting a second pattern in the same method (like favorite foods, or colors, or anything). Practice pattern number two. Then do both simultaneously. Add patterns as needed, taking out the verbal stimulus (a “YOU” pattern) or making a pattern where people move.

### Questions:

What makes it easier for you to complete the exercise?

How does making sure the other person received your offer help? (Taking personal responsibility for communication)

### Lessons:

This exercise mimics the stress of overload. As each pattern is added, participants begin to feel the physical effects of fight-or-flight that can override rational thinking.

Remind participants that they have a choice to be ruled by that fight-or-flight response, or they can use it as a catalyst to propel forward into uncharted territory.

## Introduction to “Yes, And”

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### LISTENING:

Participants find a new understanding of how they listen and how much they think they heard, as well as what physical responses help in direct communication. This exercise also helps to create understanding of how much you are listening, or in your own head thinking of a response before the conversation has finished.

One person tells a story, while the other listens. The listener shuts down all natural responses, nods, affirmations and internal dialogue.

### Questions:

Did it help you to hear the story, or did it hinder you in being able to hear the story and retain information?

### Lessons:

What part of our mirror neurons get in the way of us being present when listening? Each person has their own unique style of listening, so the learning is very personal and based on each individual’s listening style. The exercise brings self-awareness to our personal listening skills.

### RANT AND DEFINE

This exercise is about reframing complaints and using a game to bring emotional conversations to the table. Restating a rant changes the dynamic of the rant from being directed at the listener to creating a feeling of working with the listener.



One person has 90 seconds to rant about something that upsets them; the listener must encapsulate that rant in one sentence when the 90 seconds is over.

### Questions:

Did you feel like the person understood what you were ranting about?  
When you were listening, what did you do differently knowing you would have to encapsulate?

### Lessons:

This exercise is about listening for consensus, not for listening to solve, which is the natural state of humans.

Additionally, it helps to build relationships by defining the emotional state you hear: **“You sound (name the emotion). I heard \_\_\_\_\_, is that correct? Yes, or no?”**  
The practice is to listen to build an emotional connection, rather than jumping to a conclusion, sales pitch or rehearsed proposal.

### Three Styles of Listening:

1. **Sounding board** - For the times when people just need to vent. There is no expected actions to be taken or desired outcome. They just needed to say this out loud to another person, and you are a sounding board.
2. **Solver** - You are listening to help see a solution, or to help solve the problem. An expectation of some advice / solution is expected.
3. **Sympathizer** - You are listening as a friend, to share in the emotional experience of the story. The expectation desired is an emotional commitment to the story teller's point of view.

### Additional Methods of Listening:

- **What** – Listening for the Issue
- **How** – The Proposal
- **Why** - The motivation/ Value
- **Because** – The position/ Role

Most people listen for the 'What,' then go directly to the 'How,' providing a proposal before they understand the motivation/ value (the 'Why') or the clients position or role they play (the 'Because.')

## YES AND

Introducing the concept of “Yes, And” to help teach the idea of building on other people's ideas and providing a positive response, creating an all-for-one approach to communication. It illustrates the lesson of building on the suggestions from your clients, saying “yes” to the direction of the story and adding personal value while maintaining a larger goal. It also demonstrates using “Yes, And” as a way to approach challenges.



Remember the concept of “What’s under the van?” to help use the tool of ‘Yes, and’ to help discover the root of someone’s idea.

Participants begin by going around the circle, asking yes or no questions and the answer is always ‘NO.’ Then do it again, going around the circle asking a yes or no question, and the answer is ‘yes, but...’ Finally end with doing a story where each new person must start with ‘yes, and...’

## Questions

What is the difference between ‘no’ and ‘yes, but..’?

Is there clarity in ‘yes, but...’? (Is there clarity in ‘no’?)

Did the ‘yes, and’ story go in the direction you wanted it to?

## Lessons

‘Yes and’ is a great tool for building consensus. It asks us to accept the incoming offers from others and then build on them to create a more open conversational tone. People are not afraid to bring up new ideas for fear of them being denied or shot down when a ‘yes, and’ method of meetings can be enacted.

## PARTY PLANNING

This exercise demonstrates the difference in ‘yes, and’ and yes, but’ thinking as it may relate to meetings and sales.

The group is tasked to plan a party, and they go around in a circle and add offers. The first person is ‘yes, and’, the next is ‘yes, but.’ Continue around the circle with one ‘yes, and’ and one ‘yes, but’ and attempt to plan a party.

## Questions

Did you get anything accomplished?

Did you feel what it was like to have your offers negated?

## Lessons

The exercise is meant to mimic most meetings. By demonstrating how denying offers with ‘yes, but’ can stop forward progress, the meeting feels like it stalls and wastes time.

## TOOLS

Lessons to help move people from a ‘yes, but’ mindset to a ‘yes, and’ mindset include:

1. **What if** that were not the case? THEN what could we do?
  - a. By asking the ‘yes, but’ person what else would be possible, you move from the definite block to the realm of problem solving.
2. Toyota **Five why’s**



- a. Using the [Toyota Five Whys](#), participants can get to the root of the issue to start addressing the real reasons behind the objection.
3. Self-regulation: **'Here's what I like** about that...'
  - a. This statement of positive affirmation helps to keep the conversation moving without negating the offers on the table.

## DR. KNOW IT ALL

This exercise uses the 'yes, and' lesson to provide a more personal method of listening and group mentality. It also demonstrates the need for the participant to let go of the urge to control.

Three people stand shoulder to shoulder and answer questions one word at a time until it is answered.

### Questions

What was that like?

Did the answer go the way you wanted it to go?

### Lessons

This exercise is the 'yes, and' lesson in a nutshell. It demonstrates the 'yes, and' moment where we are in our own head with our own story, and new information comes in from the outside, and how we adapt to that new information by accepting and building on it.

## STORYTELLING

The Alphabet Pattern is an example of how the human brain can make a story out of whatever it has available – and that we can justify all data points into a pattern. The pattern below is shown, and the participants are asked to place the next letter in the sequence, the letter "H", above or below the line to continue the pattern.

### Questions

Ask participants to give reasons why they would place the letter where they do.

The pattern I was creating was: All letters above have straight lines, all letters below have curves.

A	E F
—————	
B C D	G

## SEVEN LINE STORY STRUCTURE

The seven-line story structure is the basis for all storytelling. It is a standard for all fairy tales and can translate to business communications.

1. **Once upon a time....**



This is the basis, the beginning. It introduces us to what we are about to hear, and whom we are about to meet.

**2. And every day....**

A pattern is being set. We can see the world laid out as it is currently.

**3. Until one day....**

The upset. Something that happens that makes the story unbalanced.

**4. And because of this...**

We see the ramifications of the upset action.

**5. And because of this...**

We see more ramifications of the ramifications!

**6. Until Finally...**

We see how the change has brought about a new balance.

**7. And ever since then....**

Our world is now stable again, and we can see the new order of things.

## Lessons

There are three parts above; The Balance (1, 2), The Un-Balance (3, 4, 5) and the New-Balance (6, 7). Most communication begins at level 3, stating the issue ("This is on fire...") without providing the context, or intended outcomes. By using the whole story as a framework, you can help ensure that others can follow what you are trying to communicate.

## THREE-LEGGED DOG

This game is about inserting your message into the answer, regardless of the question. One person asks a question - the other answers it, and their answer must include the words 'three', 'legged' and 'dog'.

Step two involves taking AIPAC's message and defining the three bullet points that you would use to describe what your do. Then do the exercise again. The goal is to answer the questions with the message you want to convey, even when the question is "what type of tree are you?"

## STATUS – BLIND POKER

This game breaks down the unspoken status communication that happens in everyday situations, and helps participants gain a knowledge of how their actions, either verbal or non-verbal can create a block to building a personal relationship. It



also introduces the concept of “are you bringing everything to the table when you arrive in a situation?”

Players are given a card to place on their forehead, so that others can see other people’s cards but they cannot see their own. Then they must divine their status based on the way that the other participants treat them.

### Questions

Why did you perceive yourself in a low/ high position?

What social cues made you think you were there?

### Lessons

We can always choose our own status. If we need to be an ‘ace’ in the room, we can choose that status.

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# Managing Organizational Change

**Vision + Skills + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan = Change**

+ **Skills + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan = Confusion**

**Vision +  + Incentives + Resources + Action Plan = Anxiety**

**Vision + Skills +  + Resources + Action Plan = Resistance**

**Vision + Skills + Incentives +  + Action Plan = Frustration**

**Vision + Skills + Incentives + Resources +  = Treadmill**