

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PRODUCING A LEARNING ORGANIZATION:
“PLAYING DICE WITH POLAR BEARS”

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ABSTRACT

This demonstration sets a context for individual and group learning within the group. The sequence is: context, play, reflect, process, re-context, play, reflect, etc. A final document will be produced by the group as a summary of the learning interaction.

Much has been written about learning organizations and the conditions that support them. Indeed, it is a process that evolves over time building on the participant's willingness to engage one another and the perceived successes of the process itself. Given time and experience, the concepts of the learning organization become part of the culture and the organization moves to a higher level of interaction and efficiency. This is the trend of business and organizations in general; that the focused skill of a leader will be the ability to set a stage for collective performance and learning.

This interactive activity sets a context of 'learning as a group'. Storytelling and the recall of a shared experience- learning to drive a car- sets the stage for a review of the four steps of learning- unconscious incompetence (I don't know what I don't know), conscious incompetence (the realization that I have an area for improvement, most often with associated stress levels), conscious competence (the thoughtful and focused accomplishment of the task) and unconscious competence (the habit formed). This review of the four steps is followed by a dice game called 'Polar Bears and Ice Holes' where the participants will actually move through the four steps of learning to become a learning

organization themselves. Finally, a reflection process is used to generate a list of attitudes and behaviors used by the group members to become their own learning organization.

INTRODUCTION

A set of three die are arranged so that a '1', '3' and '5' are showing on top. The facilitator asks, "How many polar bears and ice holes do you see." Few, if any participants will know the answer and eventually, one will hazard a guess. Right or wrong, the participant is celebrated for making the guess. In the 1,2,3 dice structure, there are actually 2 ice holes and 4 polar bears. (The ice holes are the spots 'in the middle of each die' and the polar bears are on the corners of each die.) Another die configuration is arranged and the question is asked again; "How many polar bears and ice holes do you see?" Eventually, all the participants can respond accurately to any dice configuration presented. We then go back to the four steps of learning and reflect on the activity.

Step #1- As the participants come into the room the dice in the middle of the floor prompt a curiosity. However, they didn't know what they didn't know. Are we going to play dice as I know it or are we doing something else? Step #2 is the bulk of the activity as the participants watch the pattern emerge and try to understand the rules. This step is processed fully through the identification of the patterns and, more importantly, how they felt and did they stay engaged while they were experiencing discomfort. Some will not be in emotional stress during this step. Some may be excited and actually having fun. This will also be processed. Step #3 is the

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'learned' stage of the interaction. They are now effective pattern recognizers and will be able to respond correctly to any die arrangement. Step #4 is seldom reached. It is this step #2 that is the keystone in organizational learning- stay engaged and be willing to push through the discomfort.

This 45 minute interaction allows the participants to actually experience the development of their learning organization and they will be able to replicate the session concepts back in their work setting or classrooms.

OBJECTIVES

- Participants will see themselves in the present as successful past learners (recalling a past emotional state).
- Participants will engage in and be aware of the learning process which mirrors their past successful learning experience (bringing the past into the present).
- Participants will generate a list of behaviors and attitudes that contributed to their success by processing the experience for lessons learned (recalling the current experience).
- Participants will identify how this workshop can be used in the future as they 'take it home' (future pacing).

TARGET AUDIENCE

This session will be open to all interested participants seeking a way to set a context for learning in the workplace or classroom.

TIME REQUIREMENTS

This is a 45 minute session.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

20-25 participants

MATERIALS NEEDED

Easel with paper, marker, three large dice with dots, three dice with numbers

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

No equipment necessary

ROOM SET UP

Chairs in a 'U' shape. No tables

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS/ RELEVANT CONSTRUCTS

Adults learn best when they are playing. Playful work allows a different kind of result. This presentation uses adult learning and experiential learning theory.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS/ OUTCOMES FOR THE ACTIVITY

This is a group learning and process experience.

IMPLICATION GUIDELINES/ FACILITATOR NOTES/DISCUSSION POINTS

The room is set up with chairs in a 'U' shape with no tables. The play dice, set in the middle of the room is a focal point of common interest and illustrates the communal 'step 1' of the four steps. This awareness is used in the workshop as a recognizable part of the learning experience. Process points and context are used throughout the experience to identify each step.

The group eventually learns the rules of the game and can recall their experience of learning those rules. More importantly, the group will be able to generate a list of attitudes and behaviors that made them successful.

Further process points may include the identification of individual patterns of learning.