

DYNAM 692 Innovation in Organizations: Class 2 Summary

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Instructor: Steve Freeman

sff@sas.upenn.edu

Housekeeping

Boston Trip: All Set. We'll be staying at the Kendall Hotel – in individual rooms.

Readings for the next two weeks (handed out):

- Gladwell, "The Televisionary", *The New Yorker*, May 27, 2002, pp. 112-116
- "Change from Within: Roads to Successful Issue Selling." Ch. 13 of *Organizational Behavior & Processes: Managing for the Future* (Southwestern College Publishing, 2006)

Exercise and Case to prepare for class of October 6 (handed out):

- Issue-selling exercise: What should be Chris's major concerns? How to proceed?
- Case: INEX: What should Jones do? How can he get INEX to adopt his proposal?

Supplemental Reading (Available at:

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/Ciow/files/B.CoreTopics/2.InnovatingWithinOrganizations/>)

- Freeman "Three perspectives to understand organizations" (Especially Political perspective), *Management Insights*, October, 1999 pp. 1-8

Improv

Guest, [Cubby Altobelli](#), a performer and teacher at the [Philly Improv Theater](#)

Intro

- Improv is unscripted theatre. Some people talk about rules of improv, but ultimately, there are no rules.
- We're exploring the idea of pure "free form", which typically involves a sense of play.

Games

Enemy-Defender

"Greatest game ever invented"

Zombie Tag

Scott won, but he had his hands misleadingly a little-bit forward. Don't think we didn't notice.

"Hey Fred Schneider, what are you doing?"

Put us on the spot for a second. Important factor in improvising is fearlessness. Jumping on stage not knowing what you're going to say, having something prepared. Game begins to show us that even if our worst fears about this, the outcome isn't so bad.

“Hot Spots”

Person in the center has to sing a song. Think of something, anything that relates to what they're singing. You don't have to have a great reason. And replace them in the center. Kind of scary. This is, for some people, the ultimate nightmare. But it's safe here. If you have a lot of trouble someone will tag you out. If you forget the lyrics, OK, just try to keep singing.

You all did great with this! Thank you.

Word Association

Throw the ball and say any word.

Zip-Zap-Zop

Very important improv warm-up. Reassures people about unscripted behavior. No consequences of failure. Teaches focus and connectivity. It's a form of communication.

Eight things

Person A: Think of a topic. Person B: As quick as you can list eight things on that topic.

Quite challenging

Scenes

Three lines

Two actors: Three lines total, nice and quick. Based on inspiration word.

Good Beginning to Scenes

Advancing the process: A good scene requires good characters and/or an interesting situation. So the task here is to communicate through the first lines who you are, your relationship with the other person and what the situation is. In improv you only need to bring half an idea to the stage because the other brings also brings half an idea. The scene develops as those ideas merge. Who you are and how you feel about the other person.

Good Endings to Scenes

Endings can actually be beginnings. A lot of things we think of as beginnings aren't as exciting or interesting as jumping in the middle of the action. You can actually begin there!

A bit too advanced: We would need to understand more about scene-work.

Scene Games with Rules

Rules give you something else to focus.

Alphabet game: First word of line begins with prescribed letter; next line with the next letter of the alphabet. Keep going with alternating dialog.

Group activities

Improv isn't the work of a single person, but rather two or more people creating something as a group.

Telling a story one word at a time:

Goes around the circle. Generally you don't want to try to be funny, but rather stay

Build a product together ("Yes, and")

"Yes, and" is an important concept in improv, the building block of collaboration.

Not the end-all and be-all, but what is important is accepting what your collaborators have said. If you discount that, then you undermine your collaborators and any relationship.

Activity: Build a product together: An imaginary product with all these wonderful attributes.

Come up with an Activity we can all do together:

Somebody gets in the center of the circle and tries to come up with an activity we can all do together.

If the idea sounds like fun, enthusiastically support it. If not, go sit down.

The idea is that, yes, you want to enthusiastically jump into other's ideas, but it's also important to check in every once in a while to make sure that the ideas are really inspiring and learn whether your ideas really do inspire others.

Usually, the burden is on the idea recipient to enthusiastically say "Yes, and" but it's also important to work hard to come up with ideas that really do inspire.

Circle center person keeps going till he loses everyone.

Closing activity

Zip-Zap-Zop

Why we are devoting class time to Improv:

Breaking down normal patterns of our lives. Education and work, for the most part, are all about "thinking" in certain ways, doing the "right" thing, in short, doing as you're told.

Organizations and institutional life has their basis, literally, in quashing innovation – providing standardized rules and outcomes through routinization, predictability and stability. Of course, quashing innovation has its consequences, and even those responsible for doing the quashing recognize the need for creativity and innovation. But to get there requires breaking down normal patterns of our lives.

Collaborative aspects of innovation. Innovation is not an isolated, individual endeavor. It requires work, collaboration with others – in dyads, groups, and within a larger system.

Discussion

Great class experiences (Continued from Week 1, "research")

- From [Janet Greco's Stories in Organizations course](#): Group discussions based on journals. Very powerful experience. A way of knowing each other deeply

- From a coaching weekend: Introductory 16 Questions about a classmate, or what you would guess about them. Helps you get to know your classmates and reveals biases.

Doesn't have to be an introductory exercise. How well do we know even long-standing colleagues? Even spouses might be surprised.

- Learning probability through poker; generally, learning a subject matter through **fun**.
- Grading based on **classmate evaluations**. Encourages collegiality.
- **Collaborative learning**. Online in [Ana Reyes' Virtual Collaboration course](#).
- Coaching Help-Desk.

What was this?

- From [Janet Greco's Foundations of Organizational Dynamics](#) many guests, **interesting perspectives, war stories**
- Penn library "digital diner"—a useful accomplishment you can see and touch. Can we do this as a class?
- Entrepreneurship class: writing a business plan, i.e., **achieving something**.

We spoke about the possibility of collaborative projects. Each of us can propose projects that others can contribute to.

Action Items

Your Action Items for next class (required):

Get to class on time (I didn't say this, but should have)

First half of class: "*Coordinated Creativity: Lessons from Improvisational Dance*." We will begin promptly with a mindfulness exercise led by special guest, University of Pennsylvania psychiatrist Aurora Casta. The activity will help prepare you for the movement exercises that follow. These movement exercises are designed to illustrate how the arts inform the challenge of coordinating unplanned activity.

"Innovation within Organizations"

Second half of class we begin the topic of "Innovation within Organizations."

- Read "The Televisionary (handed out but also [available here](#)) and "Change from Within: Roads to Successful Issue Selling." (handed out)

Course project and ongoing course design

- Look at Blackboard, in particular the two wikis I set up. Contribute to the wikis.
- Keep a journal about your reaction to the class sessions. (And please advise me on how you would have me handle these journals -- especially those of you who took Janet's course.)
- Think about a course project. Would you like collaboration from classmates? If so, how? Begin to write it up as a proposal.
- If anyone has a proposed guest, field trip, class session or exercise, please advise me as soon as possible.

Reference Notes

Improv

Books

Impro by Keith Johnstone

Improvise: The Scene from the Inside Out by Mick Napier

Web

[Wapedia - Wiki: Improvisational theatre](#)