



Improving team cooperation with Improvisation Theater techniques at SPE Unternehmensberatung GmbH

As part of its trainee program SPE Unternehmensberatung GmbH organized an Applied Improvisation team event to increase cooperation within the team of international trainees (*The working language of the team being German, the event was run in German.*) By participating in the playful exercises, the trainees discovered the strengths and styles of their fellow team members. They also had the opportunity to develop their communication and leadership skills, and through the Applied Improvisation activities, participants learned to cooperate with one another and to listen to each other. As a result, their team now functions in a more efficient and effective way.

Overall, the workshop appealed to me and impressed me. It was my first time having anything to do with the methods of Improvisation Theater for the purpose of team building.

I found it an extraordinary and highly interesting experience. But when I first understood that it would be an Improvisation Theater workshop, I asked myself if this was supposed to be a joke. What on earth could Impro possibly have to do with my work or with team building?

In the beginning, the correlation was not clear to me. But after the first activities, I slowly started to see the connection.

For the following reasons, I think this seminar was especially good, not only for me but also for our team:

1. Personally, the workshop helped refine my skills in better adjusting to unforeseen situations and reacting to the corresponding context.
2. The feeling of cohesiveness among the team members was strengthened during the workshop. It showed us that every individual is important to the group, because each person can complement and support the others, and contributes to the harmony within the team.

At the end of the workshop, I was very glad that I had been allowed to participate. I came to the conclusion that it is important – and necessary – for every team to take part in such an exercise. **B.S.**



I liked the Impro activities for team building. This was a completely new experience for me. What impressed me the most was that it is possible to learn – by going through some pretty challenging exercises – how to work together harmoniously without much pre-arrangement, just by adhering to a few guiding principles.

Many important aspects of communication and cooperation were addressed. In my opinion, two of the activities were particularly interesting:

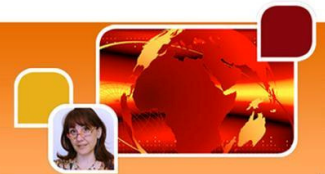
Task 1: Synchronization

This undertaking required the participants to pay close attention and – simultaneously – to listen. The task was focused on interactive, coordinated movement; some colleagues were more “elegant” and seemed able to follow along effortlessly, while others of us limped around awkwardly.

Task 2: The interpretation of body language

This exercise trained both the imagination and one’s professional experience. I watched with great curiosity as a colleague – based on a spontaneously acted-out sketch – interpreted the thoughts and ideas of “his employees”. At times, this activity gave the one interpreting the feeling of being on a roller-coaster: if the players acted out a scene that was easy to figure out, it was much easier for the interpreter to comment on it, but otherwise, the interpreter was left to his own fantasy and the context of “career”. This little kick made the activity quite exciting!

After this training, I’m very sure that I’ll be better able to tap my full potential by taking part in more such challenging activities. Because practice makes perfect! **Y.Z.**



The workshop was very interesting. It had the effect of actually breaking some habits in the way I approach things on a daily basis. Under the workshop leader's guidance, I could spontaneously engage in acting out short sketches or pick up a scene where a colleague had left off.

The spontaneity and inspiration that was cultivated in the various exercises we performed taught me a lot about myself – at a whole new level, as “Impro participant”.

The day was very varied in form, and I laughed, cried, sang, danced and basically just moved around a lot! I completely shut out the stress of daily life.

This workshop really appealed to me, and I hope to have the opportunity someday to intensify my experience with Impro, and to develop my skills even further.

It was just great, and my thanks go to Frederique, who made this terrific workshop happen and created such a fantastic atmosphere within the group.

I could even imagine getting my son excited about Impro in the future! **F.S.**

Overall I really enjoyed the day. Mrs. Thiriet-Smith started with simple activities in order to develop trust within the group; she was quite successful in that. After the introductory exercises she raised the bar a bit and challenged the group with her “emotional exercises”, in which the participants had to express their emotions more strongly than usual. That was a great experience for me.

It was interesting to see on the one hand, that I could express emotions even when the situation was quite contrived and on the other hand, how my colleagues expressed their emotions.

My biggest challenge was to sing in front of the group. But once I got over my inhibitions, I enjoyed the experience. I also learned to make mistakes, without facing any consequences. Even though we did so many exercises, this day was a real benefit for me.

I can heartily recommend Mrs. Thiriet-Smith's workshop format as a good way to practice team building. **T.B.**

The Improvisation Theater workshop was made up of a variety of activities which aimed to increase the participants' perception of themselves and others. Emphasis was placed on observance, attentiveness and acceptance of the unexpected.

After each exercise, the references to daily life were drawn. In my opinion, this workshop was so useful because, in comparison to traditional team events, one works at a very different level: what counted were creativity and spontaneity. In the same vein, the role that emotions play in our day-to-day interactions with others was tangibly demonstrated. One very simple exercise – counting in a group – clearly illustrated the “group process”.

One important thing that became clear during the course of the workshop was the fact that you cannot plan out every detail in advance, and that everyone has his own views and preconceived notions to which we must react spontaneously. Exactly this point is what is so applicable to our consulting jobs. **L.E.**

The workshop was comprised of several exciting and varied exercises. Basically, this was the structure of the course:

First there were easy warm-up activities which slowly and playfully introduced the techniques and got us to show emotions and react spontaneously.

I really liked the trainer's approach to switching everyone's attention from the single person to “the group”. We practiced goal-oriented observation and listening skills, so that we could make it as easy as possible for the others and actively support them.

The results we achieved as a group confirmed this approach: I think that, over time, the experience will continue to prove its value, not only for each individual, but also for the dynamics of the group as a whole. **N.H.**

FTS Training Consulting,

Frederique Thiriet-Smith has worked in multinational companies for over 25 years, as project manager and education specialist, successfully leading multicultural teams with various reporting structures. What drives Frederique is a love of facilitating change and improving corporate communication while focusing on the human aspects of business.

Some years ago, she started to play Improvisation Theatre, which she now uses along with other playful activities as a tool for intercultural awareness, personal development, leadership, change management, team building, creativity, and communication skills development. She promotes the use of experiential learning techniques to develop and improve those competencies at international companies.

fts@fts-training-consulting.com, Burgstrasse 22, D-69121 Heidelberg, Germany Tel +49 6221 654600 Mobile +49 162 9170468