IMPROV PROTOTYPING
Develop effective solutions to chronic challenges while having serious fun

Improv prototyping is a method that helps groups explore new behaviors for challenging scenarios in an entertaining, creative, and improvised way. The method is based on rapid rounds of suggestions to solve an identified problem through shared tactics. The issue is addressed by finding simple solutions to small elements of the problem, which build up incrementally into an innovative problem-solving tool. Four key roles guide the dynamic of this method: creative director, actors, observers.

Purpose: Development

Group size: < 20

Duration: 1 - 2 hours

Multilanguage fit: no

Level of interaction: high

USE THIS METHOD:

- Turn theory into practice: improv is a rehearsal for real-life situations.
- Break up a daunting task into smaller segments.
- Engage and focus everyone's imagination on solving confusing challenges.
- Create a fun alternative to dry or less productive training.
- Work across functional and disciplinary barriers.
- Learn from peers who have behaviors that solve the problem.

STEPS TO APPLY THE METHOD: ━━━━━━━━

Preparation

1. Define the purpose of the learning activity and the main topic for the online session—for example, challenges at work.
2. Identify themes within the main topic in which challenges could be experienced. Examples of themes could be meetings, in the cantine, tricky colleagues, etc.
3. Describe the four roles: stage manager, creative director, facilitator, and actors.
   ○ For the evaluator role, create a guideline specifying the focus when evaluating the scenarios.
4. Define the technological tool that you will use and familiarize yourself with its functionalities.
   ○ Design and prepare the online space for participants to work in small groups of 4 persons. Create breakout rooms.

Delivery

1. Brief participants on the purpose of the learning activity and present the roles.
2. Explain the procedure of the learning activity:
   ○ Participants are asked to think about a frustrating chronic challenge (a scenario) in their workplace.
   ○ In a poll, the facilitator presents possible themes where the challenges can be classified and asks participants to cast their votes. Based on the votes, small groups are built for the respective themes.
   ○ In small groups, participants are invited to present and describe their individual scenarios. After listening to all, the group decides on one scenario to enact and present in the plenary.
     ▪ Roles are assigned. The person whose challenge was elected gets to be the creative director, and the rest of the group are the actors.
     ▪ Groups practice their scenario thinking about possible variations.

○ All participants gather in the main room, and new roles are assigned. Then, groups perform their scenarios while observers watch and evaluators write notes, such as questions, comments, or ideas, based on what they see.

○ After each presentation, evaluators share their notes, and the scenarios are discussed. Note: Consider the following variations depending on the available time: groups get to perform once again after receiving comments from the evaluators (variation 1), or groups present up to 3 variations of the same challenge, and then discuss with the whole group based on comments received from the variations.

3. Share your screen with an empty poll, where general themes can be seen.

4. Invite participants to think about a frustrating chronic challenge in their workplace and to cast their vote in the theme where the challenge classifies best (2 minutes).

5. Distribute participants per theme in small groups of maximum 4 / 5 persons and move them to breakout rooms. Consider naming the rooms as the identified themes.

6. Allow groups 5 minutes to present their scenarios, 2 minutes to choose the scenario that they want to enact in the plenary, and 20 minutes to practice the scenario either in 1 variation (variation 1) or more variations (variation 2). Remind participants of the roles and their responsibilities.
   ○ **Note:** Check on each group during this time.

7. Bring all participants to the main room and assign new roles. The facilitator is the stage manager, the groups presenting have their own actors and creative director, voluntary participants are evaluators, and the rest of the participants are observers.
   ○ Note: The role and the moment during the learning activity define whether cameras or/ and microphones should be enabled or disabled.

8. Explain the order and procedure for groups to present, and what follows next.

9. Start the presentations. Determine the timings required for the rest of the learning activity based on the time available and the chosen variation (1 or 2).
   ○ Before/After each presentation, briefly debrief the action.
10. Conclude the learning activity by inviting all participants to vote on their favorite scenario and to talk about the learning activity.

TOOL TIPS:

The "Yes, And" principle of improv explained https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DphjhudlZis&ab_channel=BigThink

Improv warm-ups https://www.learnimprov.com/warm-ups/

Playful learning https://medium.com/the-liberators/playful-learning-with-improv-prototyping-18dc4ab4a304 (already on the site)