Zoom & Re-Zoom

Description of a Group Problem Solving & Communication Exercise

Zoom & Re-Zoom

This engaging group activity helps develop communication skills, perspective taking, and problem solving skills.

- Based on the intriguing, wordless, picture books "Zoom" and "Re-Zoom" by Istvan Banyai which consist of 33 and 24 sequential "pictures within pictures". The Zoom narrative moves from outer space to a farm to a ship to a city street to a desert island. Zoom has been published in 18 countries.
- Hand out one picture per person (make sure a continuous sequence is used).
- Explain that participants may only look at their own pictures and must keep their pictures hidden from others.
- Encourage participants to study their picture, since it contains important information to help solve a problem.
- The challenge is for the group to sequence the pictures in the correct order without looking at one another's pictures.
- Participants will generally mill around talking to others to see whether their pictures have anything in common. Sometimes leadership efforts will emerge to try to understand the overall story.
- When the group believes they have all the pictures in order (usually after ~15 minutes), the pictures can be turned over for everyone to see.

Facilitator's Notes

- Works with any age group, including corporate groups.
- Can be done indoors or outdoors.
- Once the challenge is finished, allow everyone to see the pictures and encourage participants to sort out any mistakes in the order (can be done on a table or the floor), then let everyone walk around view the pictures in sequence so they understand the full story.

Variations

Use as a novel icebreaker by handing each participant a picture on arrival. When everyone has arrived, explain that each person is holding part of a story and that the group task is to find out what the story is by putting their pictures in sequence.

- Use a time limit to increase difficulty and enhance focus on teamwork.
- Team performance can be measured (e.g., for a competition) by counting how many pictures are out of sequence.

Summary

A group tries to create a unified story from a set of sequential pictures. The pictures are randomly ordered and handed out. Each person has a picture but cannot show it to others. Requires patience, communication, and perspective taking in order to recreate the story's sequence.

Group Size

20 to 30 ideal, but can be done with fewer (see variations)

Time

Total time~20-30 minutes
~5 mins set up and brief the group
~15 mins active problem solving
~5-10 minutes debrief

Processing Ideas

- There is usually much potential for debriefing and discussion.
- Why was it hard to get the story together? (everyone had a piece, but no-one had the big picture)
- What type of communication was used in attempting to solve the problem?
- What communication methods might have worked better? e.g., Iimagine if, at the outset, the group had taken the time to let each person describe his/her picture to the rest of the group. What would have happened then? Would the solution have been found faster? What prevented such strategies from being considered?
- Did you try to "second position" (i.e., see one's communications from the perspective of others)?
- What kind of leadership was used to tackle the problem?
- Who were the leaders? Why?
- What style of leadership might have worked best?
- If you were to tackle a similar activity again, what do you think this group should do differently?
- What real life activities are similar to this activity?

- For smaller groups, try disallowing talking. This increases the difficulty and creates the need for expressive sign language. In general, allow large groups to talk because there is enough complexity sorting out all the pictures.
- Another way to increase complexity with small groups is to give each person more than one picture.
- To reduce complexity for young groups (e.g., pre-school), allow a small group to look through all pictures and organize the story from beginning to end.