



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Corporate Coaches

Second City Communications (SCC), a branch of the 40-year old The Second City Theatre, Chicago, trains and entertains corporate clients ranging from J.D.Power to Motorola. They organize and facilitate at least 400 interactive business-theatre events and roughly 200 seminars or workshops a year.

The 30-member staff of SCC teaches corporate groups how to integrate creativity and humor in their business thinking. Their training methodology includes game shows and murder mysteries to bolster skills like communication, creative management, and team-building abilities.

According to Joe Keefe, co-founder and executive producer of SCC, theatre and business have a lot in common. Rules for stage performances translate into smart business presentations, and rules for building outstanding casts of characters apply to managing talent effectively in the organization.

Hyperactive listening

Keefe defines 'hyperactive listening' as listening emotionally and physically in order to understand rather than react. Before the session starts, the trainees are made to play a nonsensical game such as 'Zip Zap Zop,' an unorthodox form of communication that relies on finger snaps and strange sounds, or 'How do you like your neighbor?,' an adult form of musical chairs, as a warm up activity.

Accept

To stretch the comfort levels of trainees a little further, the next exercise for the team is 'Create a Story.' The exercise requires the participants to generate a spontaneous story, with each person adding a sentence and passing around the plot.

This game demonstrates to the participants the second principle of improvisation: role acceptance. A player, whether on the business stage or the theatre stage, must accept his role before he can own it.

Initiative

The next exercise for the trainees is nonverbal in nature. One participant strikes a pose for which another participant has to react with either another pose or interaction.

Contribute

Business, like theatre, requires team spirit, and the mutual energy of team members is obviously visible in seamless problem solving, better brainstorming, and more effective teamwork.

Bringing a sense of fun and humor to training can help companies greatly by making their employees more open and bringing more creativity and team spirit into the company.