

Why is Experiential Learning so Effective?

A level playing field

Experiential learning provides a common and yet novel experience where all participants are equal in their knowledge about the tasks that will confront them. A level playing field with unique challenges requires people to draw upon genuine team process skills as opposed to just functional ones based on their role or title in the workplace.

Accelerated development of strong relationships

Participants interact in close proximity whilst working on unfamiliar challenges. The communication and collaboration required to meet these challenges develops relationships quickly. People often get to know each other better in a single day within this environment than they would over an entire year of normal working conditions.

Rattling the cage

The unfamiliarity of challenging experiences places people in a state of perturbation. They can't easily stand behind their normal status, roles and defences. Prior experience isn't as relevant in this environment. This can allow emphasis to be placed upon both task and process related themes as the group has to organise itself around the challenge.

Projection

In organising the instability created, the group projects their problem-solving skills, project management abilities and leadership styles onto the experience. The experience provides a unique opportunity to catch participants doing what they typically do. The experience becomes a mirror and the learning arising from this can be profound and revealing.

Compressed learning cycle

The time space between the experience and its outcomes is compressed, so the consequences of organisational decisions can be easily examined and improved on. Typically in an organisation, there is more of a time lag and more variables to consider, so any review or learning from experience risks being diluted or delayed.

Intensity of learning

In the experiential learning laboratory, as the projections and simulations shed light on the team's process, the group is asked to step back and evaluate their performance. The review is about themselves, their leadership, problem-solving skills, teamwork, communication and managing change. The intensity with which these issues can arise and be discussed in this environment, is superior to that which normally occurs within the organisation.

Chaos in a safe, non-business-critical environment

Teams are able to experience chaos, disorder, crisis and changing requirements for success, in a safe and non-business-critical environment where the consequences for failure are limited. The team can develop strategies and best practices for managing these issues both in this environment and back in the work place where results are more critical.

Common experience

The experience provides a common language, experience and story, which can be related to the work environment. Learning through unique challenges and business simulations helps team members to see each other in a different light.

Encouraging risk taking

The experience allows participants to take new risks, try on new roles and make mistakes with no danger or cost. Risks are perceived rather than actual. Each person taking a risk inspires others to take on something outside of their comfort zone

From the experiential learning research of corporate Psychologists Dr John Lucner and Reldan Nadler

*“ I can learn more about myself and others in 1 hour of play,
than I ever could in a lifetime of conversation”*

Plato