

Tearing a piece of paper

Objective

To demonstrate how communication can be received and interpreted in different ways

Timing

Activity: 5 mins

Review: 5+ minutes

Process

- Ask all participants to take a sheet of paper
- Tell them that they must do exactly as asked, without asking any questions
- Ask them to close their eyes and not to open them until the exercise is over (if relevant make the point that many organisations communicate by E-mail from remote locations and in different languages where you cannot see what someone else is doing)
- Ask them to fold the paper in half and tear off the **bottom right** hand corner
- Ask them to fold it in half again and tear off the **upper right-hand** corner
- Ask them to fold it in half for a third time and tear off the **bottom left** hand corner
- Ask them to open their eyes, unfold their paper and compare with others on their table

Learning Points

- Why did people have different shapes?
- What words caused ambiguity and how could they have been better phrased?
- What could have helped ensure all produced the same shape?
- How can we encourage questions for clarification?
- How does this relate to our organisation/team?
- How often do things get lost in translation? What examples can we come up with? (you may want to draw the parallel between this and email where we must rely on the written word alone. Other examples are VC and working cross cultures)
- What do we need to do to ensure communication is effective? What would enhance our communication?

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