

## *Warp speed continuous improvement*

### *Objective*

To demonstrate that we can achieve the seemingly impossible tasks we are sometimes faced with, if we use our team to its best effect.

### *Materials*

One soft juggling ball for each group of 6 - 8 people.

### *Timing*

Exercise: 15-20 mins

Review 5-15 mins

### *Process*

- Get the participants into groups of 6 - 8 people standing in small circles.
- Check that each group has a person with a watch that can measure seconds. Appoint these people timekeeper/coordinator for their group.
- Give each group a ball.
- Explain the aim of the exercise is to throw the ball so that it passes through everyone's hands once.

#### First attempt:

- The aim is to establish a sequence - time doesn't matter.
- The ball
  - starts with the timekeeper
  - passes through everyone's hands once without being dropped
  - finishes in the hands of the timekeeper
- Remember the sequence - no need to time it.

#### Second attempt:

- Same process.
- Timed.
- Ask each group to shout out their times. (Note: most groups take 6 - 8 seconds.)

#### Third attempt:

- Same process but looking for a 50% improvement in operational time!
- Time to discuss and plan - achieve in own time.
- Ask each group to shout out their times. (Note: most groups manage the task.)

#### Fourth attempt:

- Ask for another 50% improvement on time
- Take timings again

Fifth attempt:

- Do it as fast as you can
- Ask for final timings. (Note: usually less than a second as they often come together, put their hands in a vertical line and drop the ball through!)

*Questions and LearningPoints*

- How did you feel when asked to keep reducing the time by 50%?
- What principles/values/techniques did you use to achieve a 50% improvement each time?
- Were there some quantum leaps in performance?
- What actually happened in your group?
- What other improvements could have been possible?

*Possible responses/learning points*

- Listen to each other's ideas.
- Encourage each other.
- Internal service - encourage good passes and catches. This lifts morale.
- Try out every idea.
- Were given specific measurable targets.
- How do most teams in organisations respond to measurement?
- Learned from our mistakes.
- As the task hadn't been done before there was no need to "un-learn" anything - no previous mindset.
- Broke out of what our paradigm is (the circle) - probably thought this was a "rule".
- Benchmarking/ competition against other teams & impact.

### *Additional questions to pose*

- Was it “cheating” to look at another group’s ideas?
- Where does the idea of “cheating” come from?
- Who made it competitive?
- Why did you feel energised?
- Who took responsibility for re-organising?
- Were there any responses such as “I was recruited to do this job, in this way and you need to consult my shop steward if you want me to change”?
- Each change was a major change - was it practical or paradigm?
- If there had been a team leader, what would their role have been:
  - to measure, critique, control?
  - to encourage, praise, reward?
- Was the ball the best possible tool?
- Who else could have been involved? the supplier?
- New inclusive/shared destiny of all stakeholders - managers, staff, suppliers etc. all being involved and wanting to be involved. Old adversarial approach would have all suppliers lined up making a pitch for the business based on cost.
- What would have been the reaction/result if, from the start, the manager had set a target of 1 second?
- What stopped the group achieving the goal - real or mythical factors?
- How does this relate to your work?
- What do you learn that will help you confront problem situations or projects when asked to work as a team?

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