

incorporate the

PRINCIPLES OF IMPROVISATION

to improve



LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Many people are unaware of their own potential. Day in and day out we operate under the auspice of maintaining a level of control and predictability to our routine. In fact, if you had a script for how your day would go, I'm willing to bet you would be revising it by the time you left the house.

By the end of the day, your script might bear little resemblance to what you had originally intended. So much changes so fast, and life is all about reacting, adapting, and improving.

When things do not go according to plan, stress can take over. I have a solution.

Exploration of Improvisation

Improvisation involves the ability to understand that some things won't work out. You have to accept the fact that you will fail—but through failure, you grow. While traditional comedic improv can certainly leave you gasping for air in between gut-wrenching laughs, the principles that make improv so hilarious are also what make us better leaders in our daily life; able to handle the stress that gets thrown our way. What if you don't consider yourself a leader?

Even if you are just one of many partners in an accounting firm or staff accountant in your organization, you can influence the growth of people; making

for better communication skills, higher productivity and that competitive edge over other businesses by incorporating the following principles of improvisation:

- **Support**
- **Trust**
- **Respect**
- **Focus**
- **Listen**
- **Adapt**

Defining Success Through Support, Trust, & Respect

Layering improvisational skills with your technical accounting talents can create positive changes within all of your relationships. Whether you define success as

happiness, closed deals, or adding zeros to your accounts, success is ultimately arrived through the creation and cultivation of relationships.

SUPPORT

Whether you are an established leader within your firm or a contributing team member, support for your colleagues' work, ideas, and priorities will foster an environment where all can be successful. Improvisational techniques teach us to support other actors in the scene and that translates directly into the workforce.

TRUST

Trust is the foundation of relationships, whether personal or professional. In order to reach success (no matter your particular definition) there must be a level of trust and commitment between all parties.

RESPECT

To be successful, you need other people and those people need to feel that they are valued. Utilizing improvisational techniques to communicate with your coworkers will help you identify ways that you can demonstrate your respect for their abilities and ideas therefore facilitating open communication and growth.

Focus, Listen, & Adapt to Minimize Missed Opportunities

Missed opportunities happen when we are so focused on our own agenda, other ideas can't penetrate our shield of superiority.

Improvisation thrives when both individuals turn their focus on the other. The first rule of improvisation is to never deny the other's reality. If they say we are driving down the road, the minute you say otherwise, you kill the scene and miss an opportunity for great contribution. While it is impossible to implement everyone's ideas about everything, don't hold your hand so close to the vest no one else wants to play.

FOCUS

Common goals lead to better solutions. When teams focus on a common goal, the collaboration becomes more productive and negotiations can arrive at the best possible outcome. Negotiations aren't necessarily just for closing business deals around a conference table. We negotiate every day of our life in meaningful conversations.

LISTEN

Truly listen instead of listening to respond. The latter requires you to put your agenda to the

side, listen to what the other person is saying, and pause to gather your thoughts or let the other person reflect. Then you can ask a question or perhaps say something more pertinent to the conversation.

ADAPT

Problem solving skills are where the left-brained accountants thrive. And that is what adapting is, solving a problem. When it comes to the bottom line not adding up, we look for ways to adjust or adapt so that it does. Practice channeling those problem-solving skills into the power of effective communication skills.

Remember, improvisation is not about being the office comedian. It is about using focus, listening and adaptability to build support, trust and respect to be a better leader in the firm and with your clients.

*Peter A. Margaritis, CPA is a speaker, educator, trainer, humorist, and self-proclaimed chief "edutainment" officer for The Accidental Accountant™. His firm helps accountants and other business leaders to increase their profitability by strengthening their business success skills and improving morale through better communication. He is a member of the American Institute of CPAs, Georgia Society of CPAs, National Speakers Association, and the Ohio Society of CPAs. Peter is also the Author of *Improv Is No Joke: Using Improvisation to Create Positive Results in Leadership and Life*. www.theaccidentalaccountant.com*