

TAKING AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO COMMUNICATION IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

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What makes a company or corporation great? What is it that makes them truly stand out among their competitors?

It is by using an innovative approach to the way they communicate with the clients and with each other during the day to day inner workings. And that innovative approach is found in the principles of improvisation to promote a simpler, more effective way to work as a team. Improv is more than stand-up comedy. At its foundation, improv is about leadership.

INVITE PRODUCTIVITY BY HOLDING AN IMPROV WORKSHOP

The foundation for effective leadership is active listening. When leaders are listening to their employees and engaging them using the skills learned from improv, growth happens.

Improvisation promotes cooperation and with greater cooperation, productivity goes up. The principles of improv fundamentally create productive interactions because they force people to truly listen to one another.

Many companies are discovering the powerful effect this has on the way teams work together. It also has a profound effect on the way clients feel. It shifts the atmosphere of the entire corporation into feeling more energized and in sync.

“Yes, and...” is the glue that holds it all together. It is the basic skill used when two people stand on stage to improvise. They are not allowed to tell each other no.

An innovative approach to the way companies communicate will offer them a distinct competitive advantage.

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Do buzzwords create a clear direction and purpose for your company?

Replacing the words 'No' and 'yes, but' with the phrase "yes, and..." any chance you get will invite active listening and valuable input in return. So much is communicated by that phrase. It is supportive and respectful. It focuses the conversation rather than shutting it down. It shows you are listening to the other person and trust what they have to offer. "Yes, and..." ties all the fundamental principles of effective communication into a practical and productive two word tool that will cause companies to stand up and out.

In today's dynamic market, companies need to be adaptable and improv training is great for business. The next generation wants to have fun. It has really struck a good nerve amongst the millennials who have been more exposed to improvisation classes in business schools and the popular show *Whose Line is it Anyway?*. They are driving the face of corporate solutions by sparking creative thinking and ending the corporate jargon that has left innovation stale.

DEATH TO JARGON

We all have some of our favorite "buzz words" we like to use, and some we can't stand. They are great at creating imagery, but is it the kind of imagery that allows everyone to be on the same page? Think about a few of these common corporate buzz words used in a lot of meetings and emails during the day to day. Do they create a clear path or is there just a buzz in the room? Here are some common buzzwords and what I think of when I hear them:

- Benchmarking: my photo on a bus stop bench
- Back of the Envelope: we need more legal pads
- Go the Extra Mile: a sweaty dude
- Best Practices: a Hallmark card

None of these buzz words mean anything anymore. Too many of them in the conversation and the listeners, if they are even that anymore, tune out. They are empty words and provide very little clear direction and no focus that employees can rally behind. With no clear direction, stress increases and productivity goes down. It becomes everyone doing what they think 'best practices' means.

What if we replaced the jargon with simpler and more precise speech? A company that states the customer service policy as "we strive to provide top notch service to all of our customers" can be replaced with "we listen to the customers and meet their expectations."

"Yes, and... lets hold a quarterly brainstorming session with all the employees to think of ways we can show the customers we are listening."

Improvisation promotes innovative thinking by taking the conversation and pushing it forward into the future. That is what a good leader does. Ed Herbstman, who is a cofounder of the Magnet Theater, a New York based theater conducting corporate training, has even helped teach courses for companies like Google. He said, "When you're the person saying yes to other people, they start to bring you their best ideas. When you're meeting things habitually with 'yes, and,' with an energy of agreement, you transform the way people perceive you."

When there are more people willing to speak up with their ideas because they know they will be heard, employees take a more vested role in the job they have. Their performance goes up. People get excited about seeing their vision, no longer just the "head hancho's" vision, begin to take shape. It is what sets companies up on the stage while others are left looking for a chair in the audience.

