

LEAD INNOVATION DAY / PARIS 2024

# Spontaneity Meets Strategy

Unlocking Creative Collaboration by Applying Improv Techniques

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Lead Innovation Day - Paris, 2024

# About me



Dawid Stronczak

- Wore multiple hats in Telecommunication, Aviation, Insurance, Food Delivery, and Health.
- Transformed a humble gathering of 10 engineers at Glovo Warsaw Tech Hub into a roaring and talented crowd of 100.
- Behind the scenes of a mobile app with over 65 million Monthly Active Users (Flo Health).



# Workshops plan

<b>Scene 0</b> - What is Improv? .....	5 min
<b>Scene 1</b> - “Yes, and...” theory .....	5 min
<b>Scene 1</b> - “Yes, and...” in practice .....	5 min
<b>Scene 2</b> - “Active Listening” theory .....	5 min
<b>Scene 2</b> - “Active Listening” in practice .....	5 min
<b>Scene 3</b> - “Embracing failure” theory .....	5 min
<b>Scene 3</b> - “Embracing failure” in practice .....	5 min
<b>Scene 4</b> - “Adaptability and flexibility” theory .....	5 min
<b>Scene 4</b> - “Adaptability and flexibility” in practice .....	5 min

# Scene 0 - What is Improv?

# What is Improv?

## Key facts

- Improv is form of theatre, often comedy, in which most or all of what is performed is unplanned or unscripted, created spontaneously by the performers.
- Originated from **Commedia dell'arte** in (16th Century, Italy)
- Modern improv evolved in 20th Century in the USA

## Key Principles of Improv

- **Acceptance:** Embracing and building upon others' ideas
- **Collaboration:** Working together to create something new
- **Spontaneity:** Acting and reacting in the moment without pre-planning
- **Support:** Providing a safe space for creative risks

# Relevance to management and teamwork

## Enhances Communication and Collaboration

Encourages clear, positive, and supportive dialogue among team members

Promotes understanding and cooperation in problem-solving

## Encourages Adaptability and Quick Thinking

Helps managers and teams adapt to changes and unexpected challenges efficiently

Cultivates the ability to think on one's feet and make decisions swiftly

## Fosters Creative Problem-Solving

Stimulates innovative thinking and out-of-the-box solutions

Encourages viewing challenges from different perspectives

## Builds Supportive Team Dynamics

Creates an environment of trust where all ideas are valued

Strengthens team bonds and morale through shared experiences and successes

# Scene 1 - “Yes, and...”



# Yes, and..." - theory

## On stage:

- **Core Rule of Improv:** Accept what another player presents and build upon it.
- **Fosters Creativity and Flow:** Allows for an unscripted, collaborative story to unfold naturally.
- **Builds Support and Trust:** Each player's contribution is valued and expanded, creating a safe space for creativity.

## In Your Team:

- **Encourages Openness and Validation:** Similar to improv, accept team members' ideas and add your own insights.
- **Enhances Collaborative Problem-Solving:** By affirming and building on suggestions, teams can discover innovative solutions.
- **Cultivates a Positive Team Culture:** Embracing this principle can transform team dynamics, promoting a culture where all contributions are welcomed and valued.

# Exercise: "Yes, and..." Storytelling

## Objective:

- To practice accepting ideas and contributing constructively

## Instructions:

- Pair up with a partner
- One person start a story with any sentence (e.g. "John woke up and went decided to go fishing").
- The partner adds to the story with a sentence that begins with "Yes, and..."
- Alternate turns, building on the story collaboratively
- If you "fail", just start over

## Scene 2 - Active listening

# Active listening - theory

## On stage:

- **Essential for Improv Success:** Listening is crucial to understand and effectively respond to fellow performers.
- **Builds the Scene:** Actors rely on the details provided by others to build a coherent and engaging narrative.
- **Creates Synchrony:** Ensures the team moves together in a unified direction, preventing disjointed scenes.

## In Your Team:

- **Foundation of Effective Communication:** Active listening ensures that all team members feel heard and understood.
- **Facilitates Better Decision-Making:** Understanding all perspectives leads to more informed and comprehensive solutions.
- **Strengthens Relationships:** Shows respect and appreciation for team members, fostering a supportive workplace environment.

# Exercise: “Yes, and…” Storytelling

## Objective:

- To practice and reinforce active listening

## Instructions:

- Pair up with a partner
- One person (A) will talk for one minute (“Something that worries me…”), second person (B) listens carefully (not talking too much)
- Now, the second person (B) has one minute to refer what was heard
- A gives feedback and correct anything which was not 100% correct or missed
- Switch roles and repeat the exercise - Person B talk about “Something that I love…”

# Scene 3 - Embracing failure

# Embracing failure - theory

## On stage:

- **Integral Part of Improv:** Mistakes are often unexpected gifts that can lead to new directions and hilarious moments on stage.
- **Learning Opportunities:** Each 'failure' is a chance to learn, adapt, and improve future performances.
- **Supportive Environment:** Co-performers support each other, turning 'mistakes' into positive turns in the storyline.

## In Your Team:

- **Innovation Through Risk:** Encourages taking calculated risks without fear of failure, fostering innovation and creativity.
- **Growth Mindset:** Frames failures as learning opportunities, promoting personal and professional growth.
- **Builds Resilience:** Cultivates a team environment where setbacks are openly discussed and overcome together.

# Exercise: “Failure flip”

## Objective:

- To shift the perspective on failure from negative to positive, encouraging participants to view mistakes as opportunities for growth and innovation

## Instructions:

- Pair Up
- **Share a Failure:** First person shares a recent work-related situation in which they believe they failed or made a significant mistake (max 1 minute).
- **Identify the Learning:** The listening partner asks clarifying questions if needed and aims to 'flip' the failure by identifying as many potential positive outcomes or lessons learned from the situation as possible. This could be new skills acquired, insights into personal resilience, or ideas for preventing similar issues in the future.
- Switch roles and repeat



# Scene 4 - Adaptability and Flexibility

# Adaptability and flexibility - theory

## On stage:

- **Improv Necessity:** Being able to adapt to new, unexpected situations is crucial for a successful performance.
- **Embracing the Unexpected:** Improv actors learn to welcome surprises and changes as part of the show's evolution.
- **Flow with the Scene:** Understanding that the direction can change at any moment and going with the flow creates a dynamic performance.

## In Your Team:

- **Business Reality:** Change is a constant in the business world; adapting quickly is key to survival and growth.
- **Flexibility in Plans:** Encourages openness to altering plans based on new information or outcomes.
- **Responsive Leadership:** Equips managers with the ability to lead teams through uncertainties with confidence.

# Exercise: “Word-by-word story building”

## Objective:

- To enhance communication, listening, and adaptability skills through collaborative storytelling.

## Instructions:

- Let's gather suggestions:
  - Name of the main character
  - Their job
  - Their biggest dream
- (In pairs or in a bigger group) We will be building a story together, one word at a time. The story should somehow relate to the main character's, their job and their biggest dream.
- React quickly and not to overthink their responses to keep the story moving. Listen carefully to each other to maintain the story's coherence.

# Additional exercises

# Ice breaker: “Name signals”

## Objective:

- Warming up, allowing participants to share their names.

## Instructions:

- Everybody stands in a circle.
- One of the participants starts the game.
- Each participant, in their turn, has to **say their name outloud** and in addition **perform a gesture or a move**.
- After this is done, **everybody in the group says the name and mimic the gesture**.
- We move on to the next participant, and repeat for each.

# Energiser: “Knife throwing”

## Objective:

- Warming up, energising.

## Instructions:

- Everybody stands in a circle.
- One person mimes throwing a knife at another person, who then claps their hands, as if they had grabbed the knife just before it hit them.
- That person then throws the knife at someone else.

Want to make it more difficult? Add “counting”, add “associations”.

# Energiser: “Samurai”

## Objective:

- Warming up, energising.

## Instructions:

- Everybody stands in a circle.
- One player is the Samurai - they starts by lifting her Katana (sword), making a Japanese- sounding grunt.
- They keep the sword up in the air, and her 2 neighbors "cut" her, by swinging their swords into her sides, again grunting enthusiastically and in pseudo-japanese.
- When the neighbors retract their swords, the Samurai lowers her sword; while doing this she makes eye contact with another player, when then becomes Samurai, and everything starts all over again.

Hint: Start slowly, and then increase the tempo.

# That's it!



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