GAMES IN MEETINGS - FUN, FOCUS & INVOLVEMENT

Maybe you frequently participate in this kind of meeting: A big, wide table in a much too small room, everyone is well seated in their chairs. There is no space to move around and hardly enough room to stand up and stretch your legs. In this physical setting a very important (that means long) agenda is now to be carried out.

It can be a struggle to lead or just to survive a meeting like this. Here are three ways you - in a short time - can create change, enhance focus, exercise parts the body and give the participants a chance to reflect on the meeting.

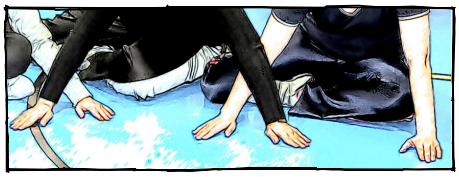
These games can be introduced quickly and have a good chance of laughter and increased energy.
In addition they have the positive effect of giving the participants an opportunity to 'digest' what has happened in the meeting so far.

Perhaps you are not used to using games when you facilitate or manage in your work. Perhaps you will want to practice first with your closest colleagues or at home with your family and friends. Make sure to try this the first time in a setting where you feel comfortable.
Be careful! It is contagious, and you are running the risk that people will want more!

At the end of the games I have written some remarks that I find helpful when using games in my work.

1. Pitch Patch

The participants place their hands flat on the table in front of their neighbours so they cross hands similar to that illustrated in the picture.



The hands now clockwise take turns in patting the table once. Be aware that the order refers to the hands, not the people! When you have patted with your left hand, next is the right hand of the person to your left, then the left hand of the person to your right, and then your right hand.

Just let it run some rounds first until you can see that the participants have gotten used to it.

The next step is to introduce a change of direction. If a person chooses to pat twice with a flat hand, the direction of the patting of hands changes and is counter clockwise until the next person chooses to pat twice.

Variation: If a hand pats at an incorrect time it has to go behind the back. This increases the demand for coordination as there is gradually less and less hands. The awareness then shifts from the person next to you out into the room.

Keywords: Speed, overview, laughter, energy, movement, awareness, chaos.

To play is: "To gain a good experience and wanting to repeat it."
Hans Fluri, Switzerland.

2. Detective

1) Find a partner opposite of you. Both take a position and 'freeze' for a moment, so you have time to study the posture, clothes, jewellery and other details of one another. Remember to memorize your own posture too. (time: 30 seconds).

2) Turn around and change two things about your own posture and three things about your own clothing and accessories (time: 1 – 1 ½ minute).

3) When the signal is given, you turn around and pose with the changes.

4) Starts guessing what your partner has changed (time: 1 minute for each person).

If there's time for it repeat the round with the announcement that the same changes are not allowed, but copying each other partially is.

Keywords: Focus, laughter, movement, energy, increased awareness, attention.

Jesper H Christiansen · mail@jesperchristiansen.com

3. Snap!

You play against the person sitting across from you. Illustrate how the game works by using one of the participants as your opponent. You set a theme for the game.

Example one: "Key words from second topic on the agenda that we already have covered." If second topic was planning next week's branch meeting, the game could look like this:

A. Each player holds out one hand with the palm facing up as if they have a deck of cards lying in their hand.
B. With the other hand, they take an imaginary card and throw it in front of one another. As the card is thrown, they say their key word out loud: "Innovation!", "Agenda!", "Powerpoint!", "Coffee!" etc. Both parts can repeat the words.
C. When the opponents eventually say the same word at the same time, it becomes a competition about speed. The fastest person snatches the imaginary stack of cards while saying out loud: "SNAP!". Only if the word "Snap!" is said is the player allowed to keep the cards.
D. The game continues for 2-3 minutes.

Example two: Snap! Can also be played on a meta-level with themes like "key words for elements of a good meeting", "highlights of the meeting so far" etc. You can experiment with the content of the themes. What's important is not so much that the participants hit the same words often, but rather that they get to think about the meeting. If you play Snap! again in the same meeting, let the participants choose their own theme.

Keywords: Focus, association, energy, laughter, competition, movement, reflection, increased attention

Maybe it's helpful to keep in mind to...

✓ do it because you think it's fun!

Commitment and passion is often driven by a desire to achieve something specific. This also applies to you when you introduce a game. Activities are most infectious when a person leads through his or her own passion and commitment.

✓ do it because you are certain it will make a good contribution to the meeting

Games are much more serious than we think. We have a boring, grown up tendency to dismiss games as something only kids do. But games are about training our ability to cooperate, to set goals and to handle chaotic situations (practice our stress tolerance). They are also about learning where your own boundaries are, and to allow others to set theirs.

✓ always give distinct and short instructions!

"There is no true understanding. Only more or less useful misunderstandings."
- Steve de Shazer.

Make it clear that you are giving instructions, and then leave the rest to the participants' own interpretations. This is where the true nature of the game surfaces – through personal interpretations. It surprises me over and over how a game evolves because of so called misunderstandings (or more truly: individual interpretations).

(illustration of a set of Snap! cards)

✓ let go of the game! Let others take it over or even share another game

Let the participants take responsibility. Let them organize themselves. Support the situation rather than controlling it. The desire to take responsibility and drive something forward is the best and most durable fuel in a person and a group.

About using games

I often experience someone telling me, "I know that game, I just experienced it in another way." Yes – of course it's the same game! Games are universal. They contain types of challenges and ways to experiences success that we feel like repeating. Games also give us the opportunity to experiment with rules and settings, which forces us out of our routines (something I think we should do more often). You can start by exploring how these games can be adjusted exactly to meet the needs you and your peoples. Experiment with the themes, length of time, no. of participants etc.
And don't forget: let go!

I would like to thank:
Hans Fluri, Switzerland
Kati Hankovszky, Hungary
Paul Z Jackson, United Kingdom
for introducing me to the games.