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Communication

Can you excite us?¹⁴⁷

Game
Short, Medium, Long
Clarity of Thought, Oral Communication, Pitching

Introduction

In this playful game, students work in groups of two or three (depending on class size) attempting to inspire other students, and the instructor, to gain support for their concepts. But there is a catch: all concepts must be communicated through a gibberish language. Popular vote will decide the winner—the group that most inspires the class as a whole. The instructor will break any voting ties.

Need addressed

Entrepreneurs need to inspire stakeholders to support their endeavors. This exercise teaches a technique for doing so. Speaking in a gibberish language necessitates clarity of thought on the part of the person or people pitching in order to keep the audience’s attention. Many people struggle to maintain clarity of thinking when engaging in public speaking. This said, it is not enough to simply be listened to. This exercise is offered as a way to teach students how to inspire others through their own enthusiasm, passion, energy and clarity of thought.

¹⁴⁷ Most pitching exercises in this book can be found in the Capital section, as pitching typically has to do with the process of attracting capital. However, this particular pitching exercise is more about communication. Thus, I have left this pitching exercise here. One can find the Capital section on page 105.
Learning objectives

- Students can utilize oral communication skills.
- Students have the ability to utilize enthusiasm and clarity of thought to inspire potential stakeholders, especially for fundraising purposes.

Time requirements

This game can take as little as 20 minutes, depending on class size, or up to a full class time or more.

Space requirements

A classroom is used.

Materials needed

N/A

Number of students

Any number of students can participate.

Commentary

For my students, I conduct an annual pitch contest that is judged by experts. Despite these classes being offered across disciplines, time and time again, theatre students win the pitch contest. This does not mean their ideas are necessarily better than their peers’ concepts. Rather, this points towards the actors’ abilities to communicate effectively and inspire. In brief, they act, and do so passionately. Through their passionate and energetic communication and clarity of their thoughts, they inspire.

Actors who perform roles in plays with very difficult language, such as Shakespeare’s Elizabethan iambic pentameter, can help an audience gain a solid understanding of what is being communicated through the clarity of the actor’s thinking—despite some words no longer being used in contemporary society. If the performer unequivocally knows what is said, translating sometimes archaic or extinct wording into imagery in the actor’s mind, the audience will often understand.
A well-spoken entrepreneur (Evangelist archetype)\textsuperscript{148} \textsuperscript{149} must “paint” images in stakeholders’ minds. They can do so via passionate expression and use of imagistic language, just as one might do with friends when telling an exciting story. The entrepreneur should be so clear in their thinking and understanding of their concept that a 12-year-old can understand the pitch. In fact, presenting first before a child can demonstrate if the student cannot only maintain the child’s attention but inspire them as well. Children are notoriously honest about whether they are bored. Such can easily be noted in their body language, expression and ability to sit still.\textsuperscript{150} \textsuperscript{151}

People are attracted to vital people. By bringing this degree of playfulness to one’s pitch, this energy, there is a higher likelihood that those listening will be interested and engaged in what is being said—even though the actual words are nonsensical.

Exercise description

1. Divide students into small groups—perhaps five to eight people each.
2. Instruct students to choose a concept they have developed or engage them in the ideation process to develop one.
3. Tell them that they are to pitch their original concept but must do so in a fake language in gibberish.
4. Help them understand the concept and value of being clear in one’s thoughts about what they are presenting despite speaking in a fake language. They should imagine they are speaking the words of a clearly thought-out pitch, but without speaking actual words.
5. Tell the students that the goal of the exercise is to inspire their peers by being clear in their thinking, but also energetic in their communication.
6. Each student within a group should take notes on their classmates’ pitches.
7. After each has pitched, a group vote is taken as to which student and group most inspired. Popular vote wins.

\textsuperscript{150} There’s a famed theatre director by the name of Peter Brook. He will present his original theatrical productions before grade school children to see if they maintain focus and understand the play. He theorizes that if these children can remain interested, he has been clear in his direction. See next footnote for citation.
\textsuperscript{151} Peter Brook. \textit{The Open Door: Thoughts on Acting and Theatre}. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993: 41–42.
Tips and thoughts

Gibberish is not only energizing for a group of students, funny and playful, but offers a great learning opportunity. To inspire others with a gibberish-spoken pitch, one needs to be clear in their thinking. If a person imagines what they mean with each phrase spoken, it will appear the speaker is quite clear in their thoughts. Other students may not understand the gibberish pitching in detail but can become excited or inspired by the person's energy and intention. To demonstrate this phenomenon, ask students to remember a time they told a close friend or family member a story they wanted the other person to feel excited by. The same process (use of enthusiasm, clear imagery and thoughts in the sharing of information) is what the students are doing.

Supplemental materials

None.

Inspiration and citations

Find your voice

Exercise Long

Blogging, Communication, Efficiency, Personal Style, Insight, Reflection

Introduction

Blogging is an excellent way to find one's voice, with “voice” being defined as one's optimal means of expression. In blogging, one comes to discover what topics they like to speak on and have the skills to communicate regularly about. The objective of this exercise is to help students identify what their voice is. This voice is discovered through reflection, insight, personal exploration, audience feedback, the viewing of statistical data and the process of adapting to an audience's interests, as well as one's own. This process can also aid an entrepreneur in their process of self-branding.

Need addressed

By finding their creative voice, the entrepreneurial creator comes to best utilize their talents, to carve out an identity within the market, to specialize in a unique skill set, area or niche and to potentially become an expert in a subject matter that interests them.

Learning objectives

- Students understand what their personal interests are and how best to communicate about these topics.
- Students can optimally express themselves in the process of communication.
- Students can engage in blogging for communication purposes.
- Students can effectively communicate to amass a fan base.

Time requirements

This exercise is conducted over the course of a full semester. Students should commit to blogging at least two or three times per week, depending upon the instructor’s goals. Students can blog more frequently and, in doing so, can potentially find their optimal means of expression rapidly and identify possible passion-interests.
Space requirements

Students can use any space they deem appropriate.

Materials needed

Students will need a computer or other Internet-connected device. Access to a blogging platform is required. At the time of writing, WordPress (.org and .com)\textsuperscript{152} and Blogger\textsuperscript{153} are two of the most widely used.\textsuperscript{154}

Number of students

Any number of students can participate in this activity.

Exercise description

1. Introduce students to the concept of blogging and the benefits of doing so—namely:
   a. Developing the potential to become an expert in a subject matter.
   b. Potentially amassing a loyal following of “true fans”.
   c. Discovering one’s optimal means of expression through regular action and experimentation.
   d. Developing efficiency in communication.
   e. How becoming clearer in one’s communication style will aid when one speaks with investors and other stakeholders.
   f. How good leaders are effective communicators.
   g. This regular public communication can improve confidence.
2. Ask students to choose a blogging platform to communicate through.
3. Tell them they will need to choose a subject to communicate about.
4. Urge them to research and read others’ blogs so they have models to create from.
5. Encourage students to enable others to subscribe to their blog, so the students amass a following.
6. As they have written posts, urge them to view the statistics offered through the site they are writing on.
7. To establish brand consistency and further attract a readership, encourage them to create similar content to what they have enjoyed writing

\textsuperscript{152} www.wordpress.org, www.wordpress.com
\textsuperscript{153} www.blogger.com
about, or in a style they found stimulating, or one that was easy to communicate through.

8. Urge students to regularly blog, as often as possible, and not less than three times per week.

9. Aid them in understanding how researching a given topic, communicating regularly about it and developing a following can lead to their becoming an expert on the subject they choose. Next, explain how being an expert in a subject matter can lead to future opportunities, including potential future customers.

10. Assign students reading from Seth Godin’s book "Tribes" and teach them about the concept of “1,000 true fans.”155 Help them to understand what having 1,000 true fans brings to the entrepreneur’s potential.

Tips and thoughts

It is challenging to regularly speak about a topic and do so in a way that one wants to put their name on what was communicated. If the instructor wishes to do so, they can offer students the option of using a pen name. Doing this enables a student to mask their true identity, which can give some courage to fully commit to the process of writing and publishing online. If a student elects to write about a subject that is well researched and there already exists a certain degree of information on this, the student will likely need to do more research to speak intelligently about the topic. This process should aid the student in eventually developing some degree of mastery of their subject and potentially becoming an expert.

A bonus to engaging in the process of blogging is that students can learn how meta tags work, how others can find their online content, and how to utilize techniques in search engine optimization. This gives the instructor the opportunity to teach students about marketing, the power of being on the first page of a Google search for their chosen tags and about strategies that might work to ensure the possibility of rising in search rankings.156

Supplemental materials

Seth Godin’s book Tribes.

156 See the exercise Playing with SEO on page 137.
Inspiration and citations


Self-sufficiency or trial by fire

Exercise, Simulation
Long
Self-Sufficiency, Self-Producing, Autonomy, Creativity, Budgeting, Fundraising, Collaboration, Communication

Introduction

Students engage in the act of creation and self-producing (artistic, engineering-based, science, business school-based or another sort) to learn how to be self-sufficient. This exercise is truly one of “trial by fire.” It is one that encourages students to practice their entrepreneurial skills and techniques, to test what they are learning, to enter an environment (the field) in which they can succeed or fail and experience what it is like to act entrepreneurially. Following whatever outcome occurs, they will engage in a debriefing process, reflect upon their experiences and articulate what they may have done differently, what they believe worked and whether they feel they have failed or succeeded.

Need addressed

With the philosophy that there is no learning model as effective as experience, this experiential exercise offers an intensive way to learn entrepreneurial skills while in the field.

Learning objectives

- Students can self-produce.
- Students can use critical thinking skills to make informed decisions.
- Students can budget for developing projects.
- Students can collaborate with others and problem solve as necessary.
- Students can reflect on their experiences to perceive success or failure, and use this knowledge to make wise future decisions.

Time requirements

This process takes a considerable amount of time. An instructor may wish this to be part of a semester-long assignment.
Space requirements

Students may begin in a classroom, but will inevitably need to use their own spaces to strategize and develop their product, performance, presentation or service. In the end, students will need to execute their strategy within their chosen community.\footnote{See community reference on page 27.}

Materials needed

Students will need access to space that is beyond the classroom environment. However, as part of the assignment, students will need to acquire, rent or borrow space or otherwise create an agreement for a space to be used. This is a process that students will need to (likely) fund themselves by way of fundraising.

Number of students

Any number of students can participate. However, they will be divided into groups for this assignment.

Exercise description

1. Ask students to define what success and failure means to each of them.
2. Discuss.
3. Inform students that they are to engage in a process of “trial by fire,” during which they will strategize and develop a product, service, experience for others or performance, which they will share with the public. In this process, they will attempt to make more money than they spend.
4. Tell them they will be graded based on a predefined instructor-created rubric.
5. Assign a deadline for the assignment. Note: As instructor, one may wish to assign a series of deadlines to assess if students are gaining traction and accomplishing milestones.
6. Inform students they are to be self-sufficient in all ways. Whatever it is they devise, they must:
   a. Agree about what they are creating as a group.
   b. Assess what each team member’s strengths and weaknesses are.
c. Engage in an ideation process\textsuperscript{158} to develop a concept they will pursue. Note: The scale of what they set out to do must be such that they can complete their tasks by the deadline date the instructor sets.

d. Strategize a plan of action with deadlines.

e. Assign roles as part of their team.\textsuperscript{159}

f. Create a budget for what they will need and what their project will cost.

g. Create a fundraising strategy and execute it.\textsuperscript{160}

h. Assess whether their fundraising was successful or not and, if not, strategize and execute again or pivot.\textsuperscript{161}

i. If appropriate, have students find an external space, negotiate an agreement with the space provider, sign a contract for its use and arrange for funding to pay. Note: Funding should be paid for out of their fundraising efforts.

j. Students will execute their creative plan. Note: This may require a manufacturing process, experiments, writing/directing/acting/producing. It may entail creativity of multiple sorts.\textsuperscript{162}

k. Students must devise a marketing strategy to attract customers or audience members and encourage them to purchase the students’ product, support their endeavor, engage their service or attend their event.

l. Students will engage, contract, pay and collaborate with external parties when appropriate.

m. They are to charge a fee for their product, service or event.

n. Students do what is necessary to deliver their value to their clients, customers or audience.

o. They are to conclude their plan of action.

p. Following execution, they are to reflect on their process and articulate through a short paper of no more than five pages what insight they have gained.

7. As instructor, attend or otherwise observe all students’ projects. Take notes. These notes will be shared in the debriefing process.

8. Back in the classroom, post the in-the-field exercise and engage students in a debriefing process. Encourage discussion. Ask students to reflect on

\textsuperscript{158} See ideation exercises on pages 31–71.

\textsuperscript{159} See the exercise \textit{Superhero powers and kryptonite} on page 237.

\textsuperscript{160} See fundraising exercises on pages 66, 83, 109, 115, 119, 120, 147, 157, 177, 205 and 218.

\textsuperscript{161} See the \textit{Taking stock} exercise on page 276.

\textsuperscript{162} Note: Students may wish to manufacture or purchase goods abroad and sell via crowdfunding. The instructor should place limitations, as appropriate, or give free rein to do as they please. The institutional policies will likely inform what students can and cannot do.
their own notions of success or failure and whether they reached their goals.

9. Ask students to fill out a pre-created form that asks them to identify if all people in their group participated and to self-assess as well.

10. Ask each student group to articulate, before the class, if they failed or succeeded and what goals they are basing this on.\textsuperscript{163}

11. Ask students what they believe their grades should be and to make a case for the grade they articulate. Note: This can be done in writing or in group discussion.

12. Grade students by the instructor-created and predefined rubric. This will include the paper students created post-assignment.

13. Teach students about their individual tax obligations in the process of doing business. Note: Much information can be found at www.irs.gov or by consulting tax and legal professionals. An instructor may wish to invite a licensed certified public accountant (CPA) into class to speak about tax responsibilities.

14. As the instructor, decide how to handle any funds that may have been acquired, as is appropriate for the assignment and as is in line with your institution, state and government policies.

\textbf{Tips and thoughts}

As the instructor, consider consulting with an attorney and accountant before engaging in this endeavor and potentially throughout. Make sure that all aspects of this assignment are in line with institution and government policies. Consider asking students to consult with tax and legal professionals as well.

This assignment is an intense one. Its impact will likely be felt by the students. Through this assignment, they must collaborate with each other, which may lead to conflicts. Encourage them to resolve any potential conflicts themselves.

This assignment can, in some ways, serve as a litmus test for entrepreneurial wherewithal.

\textsuperscript{163} While an undergraduate student at Southern Methodist University, I studied with Dr. Dale Moffitt. Among many other things, he taught students they do not necessarily need to rely on others to tell them whether they succeeded or not. If students have their own clearly defined goals, they can self-assess. If they achieved their goals, they succeeded. If they did not, the student can learn from this and potentially try again in the future. I found this process to be one that encouraged self-reflection and self-learning and boosted confidence.
It has been my experience that those who “fail” often learn more than those who feel they have succeeded. Failure has a way of quickening the senses. Once one has “touched a hot stove,” they are likely to do things differently in the future to not burn themselves again.

Supplemental materials

Students will determine what materials they may need. Encourage them to consider acquiring materials following their fundraising endeavors. They may decide to acquire goods and services through bartering, in-kind contributions, favors, their networks or other means.

Inspiration and citations

www.artsentrepreneurshipgames.com

A version of this exercise was used at The International Theatre Academy Norway for nearly a decade.

164 See The marble game exercise on page 205.
165 See The networking game exercise on page 151.
The power of stillness

Demonstration
Short, Medium, Long
Communication, Pitching

Introduction

It is common for students to feel nervous when engaging in public speaking. All sorts of nervous habits can manifest. Such include, but are not limited to, playing with buttons on a shirt, awkwardly pacing about, swaying in place, not making eye contact with those they are speaking with and becoming overly conscious about one’s hands and how they are moving while speaking. In this exercise, students learn to communicate an appearance of confidence through stillness even though their hearts may be racing. Through practice, students will gain insight into the power of stillness.

Need addressed

It is important to demonstrate confidence when pitching and publicly speaking. Investors will likely not invest in someone who demonstrates a lack of confidence. This exercise teaches students how to communicate confidence, even though they may not be feeling so.

Learning objectives

- Students can appear confident, even when they do not feel so.
- Students have a confidence-building technique for oral communication.
- Students know how to settle nervous energy when pitching.

Time requirements

Explore this exercise in as few as 10 minutes or over the length of an entire class or more.

Space requirements

A classroom is used.
Materials needed

N/A

Number of students

Any number of students can participate, but one student at a time should serve as an example for others in the class.

Exercise description

1. Ask a student to pitch their original entrepreneurial concept. Note: If an idea is needed, use one of the ideation exercises in this book.
2. As the instructor, look for students’ unnecessary and nervous habits.
3. Encourage them to plant their feet on the ground and not move them while pitching.
4. Ask them to relax their hands, rest them at their sides, and only express themselves with gestures if it helps them better communicate.
5. As nervous actions or habits appear, stop the student and point out the action.
6. Help others in the class note what nervous habit seems to have been demonstrated and communicate that they are not to repeat it, if possible.
7. Discuss.

Tips and thoughts

Stillness can cause an audience to focus attentively on a speaker.

Help students understand that even highly accomplished public speakers get nervous at times. It may serve to watch a video of TED 166 speeches and point out nervous behavior and examples of seeming confidence through stillness.

Supplemental materials

N/A

Inspiration and citations


Also see the footnote in this exercise.