

LEGO Serious Play CASE STUDY: *Improving Team Communication*

This Case study is showcasing how LEGO Serious Play improved communication between two teams by helping to point out at “The elephant in the room” and how this led to clarification of expectations, regular feedback and follow ups and overall improvement of communication between two teams in one company.

We have been approached to prepare “Workshop” with a short brief, that two participating teams have “occasional issues in communication and improvements can be made”.

Both teams were part of one Group producing sophisticated industry controlling components, but both teams (R&D and Production) were based in different countries.

Agenda has been approved by both team directors and consisted from various team building activities to give teams opportunity to work and communicate together in a safe environment (off site).

LEGO Serious Play has been a clear candidate as the main vehicle throughout the day with a support of our facilitators and senior trainers.

After initial “warm up” where each participant built simple objects, to get familiar with LSP approach, in next stage both teams (as a group work) were asked to build from LEGO bricks and blocks:

1. Anything which would the best characterizes their team and nationality (two teams from two different countries with a different cultural background). Teams were asked to explain then what each structures/builds were representing and were asked to provide examples from their work life to document it. Other team was encouraged to share their point of view about the model.
2. This has been followed by the brief to build anything what would best characterize OPPOSITE team and nationality.

At this stage R&D team built Production team as Lego figure with a plenty of tools attached and described their colleagues as very crafty multitaskers, which can overcome many technical issues and barriers. On the other hand, Production team built a structure which looked like a big field with a big elephant (real Lego one) walking through and carrying another person covered with small jewels.

R&D team couldn't decipher the meaning of this description and asked for explanation. And while Production team was a quick (and have fun) to build it, it was apparently very inconvenient to describe it vocally. After a bit of hesitation Production team explained, that they see R&D teams and their country as “Conquerors”, who ignore the needs and habits of the Colony, do not want to engage, do not communicate and do not understand needs of their “local” people and consider them just as a production facility without any own ideas or initiatives.



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After a moment of an embarrassing silence and a shock for R&D team, it became obvious there is a clear misunderstanding between “How we think we are effectively briefing” and “How do we see you are just bossing us around”.

At this stage teams were encouraged to lay out factual issues and their current communication system and tools (almost nonexistent apart direct emailing with technical blueprints). This lead further to identifying “Speeders” and “Blockers”, which are LSP signals for activities and events helping to improve the situation and those who are causing current issues.

With a several breakout sessions with mixed teams, at the end of the day both teams prepared Action plan with timed details of the new communication components introduced during pre-production and specifically defined follow ups covering critical production stages. And that includes unsophisticated steps like weekly mandatory Friday morning status telco, Outlook shared Task management etc.

After the Workshop, both directors sat down with our representatives to share their feedback. Both of them were extremely satisfied with the approach and while the inconvenient message (literally elephant in the room) was strong, it was done in a professionally safe environment to lay out current issues bothering both teams. This has led to clear Action plan, which both teams could return to and successfully followed up during next weeks and months.

What is your story and how can we help you to identify your Elephant in the team? We are here and ready to facilitate your next workshop, ideation session, innovation event or team building.

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www.developien.ch/lego-serious-play