

DOCUMENT C:

TEAM-BUILDING WORKSHOP

Session 1

Part I: Preparatory Work

Shoe size (7 minutes)

- Participants silently form a circle. They find their place around the circle based on their shoe size (from smallest to largest). Repeat until all participants find their correct place.
- This is a classic theatre game which I often use as an ice-breaker. Within the context of a team-building exercise it introduces the idea of a group working together on a shared task where everyone's involvement and contribution is required.
- Possible follow up question: Within your organisation, which tasks require working together in a team or as a group?

Group stop (8 minutes)

- Participants walk around the room. At any given moment, one of them stops. This is the impulse for the whole group to stop as well. When another participant moves the others also restart walking.
- This is another classic theatre game. In it there is a clear leader – the person who stops or who initiates the movement – but this is not pre-assigned. There is the possibility, in other words, for multiple leaders and for different participants to take initiative.
- Possible follow up question: Is this understanding of leadership possible in your organisation?

Human Machine (10 minutes)

- One participant starts a simple and repeatable movement with a sound. Another participant joins in by connecting to the movement and sound. Other participants contribute to create one machine where all movement and sounds combine together to create a whole.
- The exercise can be repeated with smaller groups. Encourage participants to observe and discuss each other's machines, e.g. What do you think this machine makes? What might this part of the machine do? What makes you think that?
- A version of this classic drama game can be sourced here: <https://www.dramanotebook.com/drama-games/machines/>. It is described as a 'great [game] for creativity and awareness'; used in the context of a team-building workshop, the game introduces the key idea that a group works well when its various members combine or coalesce together, even if each is focusing on a separate task.

Building Shapes (15 minutes)

- Divide the group in pairs. Physically and together, without talking, create the shape of an aeroplane. Repeat in groups of 3, 5, 7, 10, and finally the whole group. Repeat with other shapes, like a car, chair, house, dragon. Move around the room when a shape suggests movement – let the dragon fly, for example, but do not break the shape.

- In the blog of Vcomply, a company specialising in compliance management, Eric Dates has the following to say about small vs. large group team collaboration: ‘In the current fast-paced business environment, the ability to collaborate effectively is crucial for success, but the dynamics of collaboration can vary significantly depending on the team size. Small groups often benefit from agility and direct communication, while large teams bring diverse perspectives but may struggle with coordination.’ (Dates 2025) The game allows participants to experience some of Dates’ concerns, including direct communication in smaller groups and how this leads to immediate results. The challenge of coordinating action within larger groups is also experienced.
- As a possible follow up discussion you may ask whether the community is organised on these smaller/bigger group interactions and the channels of communication operating in between.

Vending Machine (10 minutes)

- In a circle, participants continue the following prompt: ‘If I was a vending machine, I would sell...’.
- Two rounds are carried out. In the first round, participants ‘sell’ an important object; in the second, they ‘sell’ an emotion, a condition, an attitude which they would like to see more in the world around them.
- This is another classic theatre game. Participants speak out in the group and start gaining a voice. The second round, in particular, allows participants to start sharing relevant themes, ideas, anecdotes, or situations. These can be recalled when devising scenes. In one striking case, a very shy participant said: ‘I would sell more confidence.’ This simple line told me everything I needed to know about that particular participant. It was a great help to me during all the work we carried out together.
- ‘The world around them’ can be understood either as the world at large or as the more contained world of the community.

Part II: Scene Creation

Building on the last point of ‘the world around them’, these activities in scene creation can either involve scenes from the world outside the community or, if pertinent and in discussion with the community’s leaders, scenes that hit a little closer to home and which are based on the experiences of the community. I cannot stress enough the importance of discussing the latter with the community first, so as to make sure that the scenes remain within acceptable boundaries.

In pairs: Before-time and After-time (20 minutes)

- The group is divided in pairs. Each pair is given a picture of a strong dramatic moment, like a scream, getting wet in the rain, an argument between two people, a pleasant encounter, the throwing of an object, at the coffee shop, etc. Discuss what may come before this moment and what may come after. Write these down. (Templates for note-taking are provided at the end of this document.) Improvise a short scene featuring the before-time, the dramatic moment, and the after-time.

- This is an adaptation of Stanislavsky's character-building technique where the actor identifies what happens to the character before and after their scene on stage (Benedetti 1998).
- Ask the group to show at least some of these scenes, depending on the time. Leave time for discussion, questions, and feedback. Consider giving theatre-related feedback, on the clarity of the scene, characters, logical conclusion, etc. However, in the context of a team-building workshop, it might be more fruitful to give feedback on the joint effort needed to create the scenes. Use prompts such as 'shared vision', 'sense of unity and purpose', 'active listening', 'compromise', and so on to stimulate this discussion. (These prompts are relevant for all devising exercises here.)

In groups of three: Object Work (20 minutes)

- Participants are divided in groups of three or similar. Each participant should bring a simple, everyday object they feel comfortable sharing with the group...a copybook, book, plastic cup, jacket, shirt, bottle, keys, wallet, etc. They can simply use objects available in the room.
- Place the objects on the floor. What scenes or dramatic moments do they suggest?
- Write these down. Improvise a short scene around the objects.
- It is important that all three objects are used, even if a link between them is difficult to discern. Use this difficulty to discuss inclusivity. Content Writer Rebecca Mattina has the following to say about inclusion: 'You don't need a brand-new playbook to build a more inclusive culture. It starts with the people you already have — and the everyday behaviours that make your workplace more connected, supportive, and real.' (Mattina 2025) The game helps all participants feel included through the object and, consequently, empowered as real contributors of the scene.

In groups of five or six: Character Ranges (20 minutes)

- Merge together the pairs or trios of the previous two exercises to form groups of five or six. Share the following character ranges. What short stories or scenes are suggested?
 - Characters range 1: The spendthrift Parent 1; The miser Parent 2; The worried Child 1; The happy-go-lucky Child 2; The nosy Grandparent(s)
 - Characters range 2: The new person at work; The popular worker; The quiet worker; The manager; The caretaker
 - Characters range 3: The Good King; The Worried Queen; The Messenger from the Gods; Soldier 1; Soldier 2
- These character ranges are pretty generic and this is where your initial research of the community hosting your workshop would prove invaluable. Again, you can wish to bring the character ranges closer to the hosting community or clients. Participants can also suggest their own ranges.

Conclusion (10 minutes)

Bring the session to its conclusion by reflecting on the following question: based on the exercises carried out, what helps a team or collective to function properly? What hinders it?

Session 2

Part I: Preparatory Work

Pass the clap (5 minutes)

- Participants form a circle. Two turn to face each other and clap at the same time. The clap is then moved around the circle in the same way. A fuller description of this classic theatre game can be found here: <https://www.dramanotebook.com/drama-games/pass-the-clap/>
- The game sounds simple but several attempts are always required to pass the clap across the whole circle. Eye contact is necessary, as is a moment of communication between the two participants where they acknowledge responsibility for the shared task.
- A possible prompt for discussion might be: which tasks in your community require joint action? How does communication take place in these moments?

People to people (7 minutes)

- Participants walk around the room. They partner up with another person when the leader calls 'People to people!'
- Participants walk again around the room. Two body parts are called next, such as 'nose to knee'. Repeat, calling out different body parts.
- The game can be made more difficult. For example, ask participants to walk around the room while maintaining contact. Or, while in contact, give another prompt which they execute with someone from another pair.
- The game helps people to get comfortable with one another. It invariably always gives rise to laughter. This activity is placed at the beginning of Session 2 to give the workshop leader a sense of the group's dynamics. It allows them to gauge the participants' comfort level with each other and with the game's use of touch.

Last Candy Bar on Earth (8 minutes)

- This game is adapted from this source: <https://www.dramanotebook.com/drama-curriculum/improv/improv-warm-ups/>
- Players form a circle, sitting down on the floor or on chairs. In the middle there is an object like a candy bar. One might wish to choose an important object to the community.
- One by one, participants leave their circles and rush to the centre to take the candy. Once in hand, they explain why they need the candy bar or why it is important to them. The more imaginative the answers, the better!
- The aim of the game is to make quick decisions. Emphasise that participants should be running to and fro their places and that they should answer clearly but quickly and concisely. The game therefore needs to be played at a high tempo. Music can help with this.
- To play the game quickly give each participant a number and call these out randomly.
- Another level can be added to the game by calling out prompts like: 'Who has a pet?', 'Who has an older sibling?' 'Who has been married for 20 years?' 'Who is scared of heights?' Relevant questions to the community can also be used. This transforms the

game into a getting-to-know-each-other exercise, which is an essential part of any team-building activity.

- What happens when more than one person rushes to take hold of the candy bar? How is moment of conflict resolved?

Part II: Scene Creation

Each participants brings a newspaper item or article. The criteria for choosing can vary and may include: items of a general nature on a broad theme; more specific pieces about some local issue; a text sourced from a local gazette or even the community's newsletter, webpage, or online media, if available. Give these criteria some thought and discuss them with the group leader to ensure valid choices.

Participants are divided in groups of 5 or so. Ideally, the groups featuring at the end of Session 1 are brought forward here to guarantee continuity.

The process delineated below is divided in 7 steps. Duration: 90 minutes, although there is flexibility depending on both the workshop leader and the group.

The understanding behind this second part of the workshop is that devising a theatre scene is a microcosm of effective team-building. It needs a group of individuals to come together, to respect each other's contributions, to communicate effectively, and to work together towards a shared (artistic) goal. The process itself helps to build a strong, trusting, and creative team.

Step 1: Share the themes (10 minutes)

- Each participant shares the theme with their group and discusses briefly the newspaper item. The newspaper headline helps to identify the theme.
- Each theme is written down in the allocated space in the template below.

Step 2: Process the themes (10 minutes)

- The group bring the themes together, creates subdivisions, identifies connections. In other words, process the themes until the group manages to come up with one, overarching theme.
- Transform this into a headline and write it down.

Step 3: Silent scene (10 minutes)

- Create a short (e.g. 30 seconds), silent improvisation based on the shared theme. You can use instances, actions, situations, and ideas from the various newspaper articles.
- Focus on 'something that happens', on an event taking place in the scene and the simple reactions of the characters.
- Write this main event on the sheet. It is important that the whole group agrees on this main event.

Step 4: Add a line (10 minutes)

- Each participant adds a line to their character. The line can be invented or taken from a newspaper. Write these lines down.

Step 5: Add 2 more lines (10 minutes)

- Each participant adds a maximum of two more lines, for a total of three. The lines can be invented or taken from a newspaper.
- Write these lines down. A short, basic script is thus created.

Step 6: Refine the piece (20 minutes)

Improve or refine the scene by clarifying or adding any of these:

- Who is the protagonist? What are they trying to do? Why are they trying to do it? How?
- Who is the antagonist? What are they trying to do? Why are they trying to do it? How?
- Who are the supporting characters? What are they trying to do? Why are they trying to do it? How?
- What is happening in the scene?
- Where is it happening?
- At what time?
- Is the resolution clear, logical?
- Rehearse the scene.

Step 7: Presentation (20 minutes)

Each scene is presented to the whole group. The aim here is not to perform polished pieces but to acknowledge and celebrate the milestone of having worked together to accomplish a task. Provide feedback accordingly. This can again take two forms. You might wish to discuss the piece itself, the performance choices involved, characterisations, etc. However, in the context of a team-building exercise, a discussion on the team-building processes involved might be more fruitful. Sharing feedback about both is also possible.

Conclusion (10 minutes)

Conclude the workshop by drawing attention to the team-building ideas experienced during the two sessions. Team-building activities such as this workshop help foster a sense of community among a group of individuals. However, a one-off workshop can hardly be seen as the ultimate solution. The workshop can be concluded by asking participants how they plan take the skills, ideas, and practices forward. How can these be implemented? How can they become part of the day-to-day life of the community? What small but concrete changes can be made?

References

Bendetti, J. (1998) *Stanislavski and The Actor* (London: Methuen)

Dates, E. (2025) 'Key Differences: Small vs. Large Group Team Collaboration'.
<https://www.v-comply.com/blog/small-vs-large-team-collaboration/> <accessed 26 June 2025>

Mattina, R. (2025) 'Diversity and Inclusion at the workplace: Key benefits, real challenges, and strategies for success'. <https://www.achievers.com/blog/diversity-and-inclusion/> <accessed 4 August 2025>

Appendix A

The following points can assist the group to create more polished pieces intended for public performance. Such polished work is beyond the rationale of a team-building workshop, but I am including these points as possible suggestions for further development. The methodology presented above can be expanded to create theatre in celebration of the talents, achievements, and milestones of a community.

- Improvise further on the short scripts developed above to create longer pieces. For instance, identify before- and after-times. What other scenes are implied? Can other characters be included to introduce more conflict?
- Music: Identify a piece of music that goes with the scene. When will it be used? Why? What does it contribute?
- Costumes: What costumes are the characters wearing? Why? What do the costume choices say about the characters?
- Light: Which light choices are appropriate for the scene and plot and the atmosphere or mood required? How do the light choices ‘comment’ on the overall scene?
- Set: Sketch a possible set. Include ideas for backdrop, props, and any furniture. Are these available? Can they be transported to the space?
- What skills do the participants bring with them? Can anyone sing? Dance? Play an instrument? Draw? How and when will these skills be used to improve the scene?

Workshop Notes

Before-time and After-time

Strong dramatic moment: _____

What happens before: _____

What happens after: _____

Object Work

Object 1: _____

Object 2: _____

Object 3: _____

A brief scene involving these objects.

Working with newspaper articles

Step 1: Share the themes

Theme 1: _____

Theme 2: _____

Theme 3: _____

Theme 4: _____

Theme 5: _____

Step 2: Process the themes (identify an overarching theme)

Step 3: Short description of the silent scene

Step 4: Add a line

[illegible]

[illegible]