

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 60

With the right climate in place you can make your workshops outstanding...

Create Meeting Climate Better...

“Away from home our fans are fantastic, I'd call them the hardcore fans. But at home they have a few drinks and probably the prawn sandwiches and they don't realise what's going on out on the pitch. I don't think some of the people who come to Old Trafford can spell 'football' never mind understand it.”
Roy Keane, ex Captain of Manchester United. (Type “Prawn sandwich” and “Keane” in to Google for some more Keane rants, if you don't mind bad language!)



“Craven Cottage, Fulham FC”

Are prawn sandwiches spoiling your workshops?

Have you ever walked in to a workshop room and your heart has sunk? Mine hit the bottom of the Atlantic recently. The room I entered had no natural light, barely any space around the tables and a ceiling so low I have a picture of a delegate with his hand through the tiles during an exercise! The temperature fluctuated hot and cold and the artificial lighting was dim enough to make me stand under a bulb to read my notes. I put on my music, put some cheerful posters on the wall and made the best of it for the two days.

The most constant complaint I see on feedback forms is about the environment. A bad one tends to make energy slump and demotivate people. The other side of the coin is to pay for a fantastic hotel and pack so much into the schedule that people can't use the fancy Jacuzzi,

spa pool and four poster bed. See the complaints flow then!

But my recent workshop in the darkened grotto wasn't difficult, the group worked enthusiastically for two days, we achieved the tough outcome and at 16.45 on Friday afternoon, the energy and motivation was high.

SO

A good workshop arises from a combination of factors and for each factor that we include, we increase our chances of making it outstanding. That does not mean that if one factor is missing it will be a disaster.

A highly motivated team will overcome a lot, but a missing factor will increase the risk of it going wrong.

In my experience, the way to increase your chance of having an outstanding workshop is to:

- Have a clear purpose and firm outcomes
- Design the workshop with pace that maintains energy through involvement and interesting exercises
- Brief people properly on the workshop and detail the contribution you expect
- Give people the opportunity to vent their frustrations and concerns before or very soon in to the workshop

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- Have natural light, fresh air, plenty of water and get rid of the board table! Give people space to think! I appreciate you can't always control the environment but if you do have the money to go off site, do check out the facility
- Use music to alter the state of participants (Beethoven's Ninth Symphony seems to work well with many groups)
- Use a facilitator with no stake in the outcomes

ACTION

If you have a workshop soon, consider how you might increase the chance that it will be successful.

TO CLOSE

I find interesting the whole subject of environment and its impact on people. Last week, I took my children to see my team, Fulham, play a Cup match. Normally we sit with the rowdy Fulham supporters just behind the goal where it is noisy, passionate and exciting a lot of the time but the view is of only one penalty area.

This time I managed to get excellent seats at the half way line with a great view of both penalty areas.

Despite Fulham winning 3 – 0 there was absolutely no noise or passion in our area of the stadium, we rarely got excited and we came away feeling quite flat.

I suspect there were a lot of spectators around us who did not support either team (Roy Keane's "prawn sandwich brigade").

If we relate that to workshops, I think another factor is to invite only people who have some

kind of stake in the outcome. I can't guarantee that having prawn sandwiches at lunch will add to the workshop ratings!

Have interesting workshops this week.

.John Brooker | Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.



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