

Lost in Translation

Introduction

A Cross-functional Team Exercise

Lost in Translation Exercise

- Purpose: To understand and learn how to overcome the challenges of communicating across functional areas within an organization.
- Why important? In 1999 the Mars Climate Orbiter failed because European engineers were using metric measurement and American engineers were using U.S. customary unit measurement. The cost to NASA was \$327.6 million.

Communication Norms

- How knowledge is represented:
 - Blue prints
 - Prototypes
 - Acronyms
 - Equations
 - Units of Measurement
 - Etc.
- Tend to be domain- and discipline-specific
- It is important to ask students for examples from their own experience.

Example

“The U.S. IC is comprised of 17 different agencies who ultimately report to the ODNI and POTUS. Whereas the CIA reports directly to ODNI, other agencies like the DIA, INR and OIA, which have similar intelligence gathering mandates as does the CIA, report first to the DOD, DOJ and DHS, respectively.”

Translation

“The United State’s Intelligence Community is comprised of 17 different agencies who ultimately report to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the President of the United States. Whereas the Central Intelligence Agency reports directly to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, other agencies like the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the Office of Intelligence and Analysis, which have similar intelligence gathering mandates as does the CIA, report first to the Department of Defense, Department Of Justice and Department of Homeland Security, respectively.”

Lost in Translation Exercise

- Goal: help your team guess words by giving clues using your functional communication strategy; then construct the words into phrases
- Learning Task within functional teams each with a distinct communication mode:
 1. Speaking Function: Gives 1 – 2 word verbal clues
 2. Drawing Function: Gives Pictionary-style drawing clues
 3. Acting Function: Gives Charades-style acting clues
- Challenge Task within cross functional teams composed of members from different functions with different communication modes.

INSERT YOUR Team Assignments

		Cross-Functional Team 1	Cross-Functional Team 2	Cross-Functional Team 3	Cross-Functional Team 4	Cross-Functional Team 5
Speaking Function	Functional team A					
	Functional team B					
Drawing Function	Functional team C					
	Functional team D					
Acting Function	Functional team E					
	Functional team F					

Example		Cross-Functional Team 1 (B311)	Cross-Functional Team 2 (B310)	Cross-Functional Team 3 (C309)	Cross-Functional Team 4 (C212B)	Cross-Functional Team 5 (C304)	Cross-Functional Team 6 (C210A)	Cross-Functional Team 7 (C212A)
SPEAKING	Functional Team A (B311)	Amy	Aaron	Ajai	Brian	Eric	Javier	Ashley
	Functional Team B (C212B)	Jose	Brad L.	Arun	Bright	Hallie	Karan	Brad S.
DRAWING	Functional Team C (C309)	Michael	Deepauk	Carissa	Kelsey	Jim	Nash	Daniel G.
	Functional Team D (B310)	Rahul	Feihong	Manuel	Matt G.	Ken	Rashmi	Jeni
ACTING	Functional Team E (C304)	Susie	Ploy	Satiya	Matt S.	Shannon	Rebecca	
	Functional Team F (D303)	Tiffanie	Sara	Vivek	Vivi		Stuti	William

Communication Rules: Speaking Function

- Give verbal clues in 1 -2-word phrases.
- May NOT sketch or mime.
- May NOT include any part of the actual word(s) you are trying to get others to guess.
- May only offer additional 1 – 2 word clues after a teammate has guessed erroneously based on the prior clue.
 - Example: Word is “PLAY.” 1st clue is “theater.”
Teammates guess “show.” 2nd clue is “kid’s game.”
Teammates guess “play.”

Communication Rules: Drawing Function

- Sketch clues.
- May NOT speak or mime.
- Sketches may NOT include letters or numbers EXCEPT to signal particular tense of a word that has been guessed.
 - Example: if the word is “PLAYING” and the teammates have guessed “play,” may write out “P L A Y _ _ _” to elicit the progressive tense.

Communication Rules: Acting Function

- Mime clues.
- May NOT sketch or speak.
- May use props.

How the Exercise Works

Learning Task first; 20 minutes:

- Go to your learning task breakout room (or table)
- I'll bring 2 envelopes.
- Pass around the envelope labeled Phrase 1
- Each person picks a word out of the envelope and then passes the envelope until all words for a phrase are distributed.
- Do NOT show anyone else your word
- Anyone on the team may start by giving a clue using the team's communication mode
- When all the words have been guessed, correctly unscramble the words to make a phrase, and write the phrase on the Solutions Form.
 - You may communicate however you want while unscrambling the phrases
- Repeat process with words in the Phrase 2 envelope.
- Return to classroom after 20 minutes.

How the Exercise Works

Challenge Task second; 30 minutes:

- Go to your Challenge Task breakout room (or table)
- I'll bring 3 envelopes.
- Pass around the envelope labeled Phrase 1
- Each person picks a word out of the envelope and then passes the envelope until all words for a phrase are distributed.
- Do NOT show anyone else your word
- Anyone on the team may start by giving a clue using their function's communication mode
- When all the words have been guessed, correctly unscramble the words to make a phrase, and write the phrase on the Solutions Form.
 - You may communicate however you want while unscrambling the phrases
- Repeat process with words in the Phrase 2 envelope and then the Phrase 3 envelope.
- Return to the classroom after 30 minutes.

Lost in Translation Discussion

A Cross-functional Team Exercise

Discussion Questions

- *What challenges did you experience during the Learning Task? How did you respond to them?*
- *What challenges did you experience during the Challenge Task? How did you respond to them?*
- *What did the top performing cross functional teams do to manage communication?*
- *How did your cross functional team process differ from your functional teams' processes?*
- *How did you cope with the different functional communication norms in the cross functional teams?.*
- *Did any cross functional team generate a communication strategy before beginning the Challenge Task?*

Important to Tie Exercise to Real-World Teams

- Ask students to report experiences they've had on cross-function teams that suffered from the kinds of translation barriers simulated in this exercise.
 - How did they overcome them?
 - What happened if they did not succeed in doing so?
- Typical examples include cross-functional teams comprised of mixtures of
 - marketing and engineering
 - research and finance
 - customers and designers

Lost in Translation Summary

- Cross-functional teams are tools for meeting complex technological, competitive and financial challenges
- Difficult to exchange and integrate information due to distinct communication norms
 - Manage communication challenges by developing shared communication norms

Learning Task Phrases

Phrase 1 (Japanese proverb):

- a single/ arrow/ is easily/ broken/
but not/ ten /in a bundle

Phrase 2 (Althea Gibson):

- no matter/ what/ accomplishments /you make
/somebody/ helped you

Challenge Task Phrases

Phrase 1 (Barbara Glacel & Emile Robert Jr.):

- a team /is more than/ a collection /of people/ it is a process/ of give/ and take/

Phrase 2 (Anonymous):

- teamwork/ is the fuel/ that allows/ common/ people/ to attain/ uncommon/ results/

Phrase 3 (Casey Stengel):

- it's easy/ to get/ good/ players/ getting them /to play/ together/ that's /the hard part/