



**IOBTC 2016 at
University of Winchester
July 8th – 9th, 2016**

Submission Template

SUBMISSION GUIDANCE

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**Submission Template for the 2016 IOBTC
International Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

1) Title of Proposal:

Reinforcing Deep Listening & Team Building Skills through Improv

2) Abstract:

Please include a brief session description (not to exceed 100 words). If your proposal is accepted, this description will be printed in the conference program.

In this highly interactive session, we will use three experiential exercises to introduce participants to the techniques of improv comedy. The “Yes-And” technique of improv, which involves listening and supporting one’s partner (s), can be used in class to develop deep listening skills of students, and help them become better communicators and team players. We will also illustrate how the versatility of improv techniques makes it possible to use them effectively across all levels of students. We believe this session is quite timely because the rise of digital communication is eroding the crucial face to face communication skills of students.

3) Keywords:

Deep Listening, Team Building, Improvisation, Yes-And

4) Format

- Activity or exercise
- General discussion session

5) Time Requested:

- 20 Minutes
- 30 Minutes
- 60 Minutes

6) Planning Details:

If attendance exceeds 15 participants it will be necessary to break the participants into two groups requiring either a large room or an extra room or lounge for break out purposes.

7) Learning Objectives or Goals for the Session:

Participants will leave the session having participated in activities which can be easily transferred to the classroom in order to teach students:

- To improve communication skills by listening
- The use of the “Yes-And” model as a tool to encourage team building and group cohesiveness
- The importance of non-verbal communication cues
- How to positively reinforce team member contributions

8) Management or Teaching Topics:

This session will be helpful both to management educators as well as management practitioners as it is designed to address communication skills development. The activities used in this session will focus on deep listening, the creation of positive support ensembles when building a team, and the use of “Yes-And” instead of “No-But” (Leonard & Yorton, 2015). We believe addressing these communication obstacles is quite timely as classrooms are now filled with students who have mastered the art of digital and electronic communication. Many of these students may be out of practice in terms of developing face to face communication skills. Communication is the key to success for many facets of business so we hope to introduce exercises which are flexible and can be used in many different disciplines (Linder & Fraser, 2006).

In addition to one of the author’s attending improv courses regularly, we have also researched the use of improvisation in the classroom (Tauber & Mester, 2007). The use of improv in the classroom is becoming more common (Huffaker & West, 2005) and while there are many interested in using this tool, many educators are unsure of where to start. Not all management educators have access to professional courses, so we hope to run this conference session for those who are interested in order to share activities which can be easily facilitated in any learning environment.

9) Session Description and Plan:

The session will be 60 minutes in length. During the first 5 minutes an overview of the topic “Improvisation” will be introduced to the participants detailing how improv can be used in the classroom. 40 minutes will be used to engage the participants in 3 short improv exercises. The three activities will be used to focus on three types of communication and double as team building exercises. The first will introduce participants to the use of power poses, the second will focus on the importance of tone in communication, and the final one will give the participants experience with the “Yes-And” model. The final 15 minutes of the session will be used to debrief. We can then discuss with participants how we have used these exercises in our classes at both the undergraduate and MBA levels as well as prompt participants to share with the group their ideas for how they may use these exercises at their own institutions. The activities can be conducted with up to 30 participants or as few as 3 participants. We are prepared to adjust the activities in number or in length depending on the number of participants present.

10) For Activities and Exercises:

No additional materials needed.

11) Implications for Teaching or for Teachers:

Management educators and corporate trainers are continually faced with the challenge of engaging their students in hopes to encourage learning and development of communications skills. We believe this session will introduce improv as a tool to management educators to be used as a unique and interactive way to encourage their students to comfortably express their thoughts and ideas while reinforcing deep listening skills and the creation of a positive team member environment.

12) Application to Conference Theme:

We believe this session aligns well with the conference theme “Elevating Aspirations.” As many participants at the IOBTC conference are educators, we all have in common the want and the need to peak our students curiosity and to encourage their learning by continually offering novel and unique experiences. This session will challenge participants and challenge students in the classroom as we try to create an extension to experiential learning and team problem solving. The activities introduced elevate aspirations by presenting challenging activities which awaken participation from those who may not have otherwise participated. We believe that by using the improv exercises in the classroom, we allow students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses but most importantly the activities encourage self discovery.

13) Unique Contribution to IOBTC:

We haven't presented this work at a conference in the past and this work is not under review elsewhere. We have, however used these exercises in our undergraduate and MBA classrooms but feel they can also be used by faculty resource centers to teach faculty-student engagement. One of the authors has been studying improvisation through attending professional improv courses for quite some time. Her participation in these courses has allowed her to identify improv activities which are most successful when transferred to a classroom atmosphere. While we know that improv-related topics have been presented before at IOBTC, we recognize improv as an area which is very dynamic in nature and we hope to share this workshop in an effort to address communications obstacles in the present day classroom.

14) References and/or Additional Materials:

VIDEO: <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/why-improv-is-critical-to-business-success/>

Berk, R. A., & Trieber, R. H. (2009). Whose classroom is it, anyway? Improvisation as a teaching tool. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 20(3), 29-60.

Huffaker, J. S., & West, E. (2005). Enhancing learning in the business classroom: An adventure with improv theater techniques. *Journal of Management Education*, 29(6), 852-869.

Linder, C., & Fraser, D. (2006). Using a variation approach to enhance physics learning in a college classroom. *The Physics Teacher*, 44(9), 589-592.

Leonard, K. and Yorton, T. (2015). Yes, And: How Improvisation Reverses "No, But" Thinking and Improves Creativity and Collaboration--Lessons from The Second City, Harper Collins Publishers.

Tauber, R. T., & Mester, C. S. (2007). *Acting lessons for teachers: Using performance skills in the classroom* (Vol. 38). Greenwood Publishing Group.

