

Problem Solving Activity (Workshop): "Can you count up to 30?"

Date, Time: Tuesday, 28.09.2010, 11:00-14:00

Trainer: Tibor Škrabský, SKok, Ltd.

Workshop content/theme

A powerful exercise for learning how to work together, communicate and seek to improve performance in medium sized groups. The workshop was designed for both students and teachers and aimed at discovering the different ways in which people solve problems and how they communicate with each other.

Initial set-up:

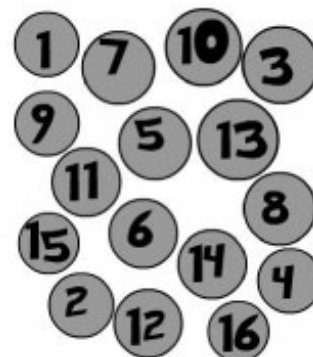
A computer virus has infected the entire network of the school and your team has been called to destroy the virus. You will try to save your school computer system. You have to do it quickly. However, the most important thing is that you can be a part of the team only if you can count up to 30. No problem? Come and try! Solve the problem and save the school! You will also learn how people solve problems in bigger teams.

Aims

- to present the ways of solving the problems
- to communicate in a group to find common solution
- to listen to each other and co-operate

Method(s)/Approach

- Randomly lay out up to 30 numbered markers or spots on the ground in a set area. This forms the keypad.
- Task for participants: Your computer system is infected by a virus. You can heal the system only if you quickly, as a group, touch all the 30 numbers that are placed on the ground. The members of the group must touch all the numbered spots as fast as they can. The whole group is outside; the trainer will distribute the numbers in the room. Then the trainer calls the participants. They have to stand on each number (one participant on each number) and when it is done, they have to shout their number in the order from 1 to 30.
- Give the team 15 minutes to plan, then call the group, and then start the timer for the first attempt. Time each attempt as soon as they say they are ready to start.
- The team will eventually arrive at a variety of solutions including giving each member of the team a number (or several numbers) to step on in sequence as they run through the set area. After several attempts this 'ordering' will become more fluid.



Debriefing questions

- What was the initial reaction of the group?
- How well did the group cope with this challenge?
- What skills did it take to be successful as a group?
- Which creative solutions were suggested and how were they received?
- Did everyone listen to each other's ideas?
- What would an outside observer have seen as the strengths and weaknesses of the group?
- What roles did people play?
- What did each group member learn about him/herself as an individual?

- Which key factor led to an improvement over time?
- How motivated were participants to continually improve after their initial success at the task?

Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

The participants enjoyed playing the game. During the playing phase and during the debriefing phase some participants realized the parallels between the game and real life situations. During the debriefing the most heavily discussed questions were how to listen to each other, how to ensure that the best possible solution is heard and not ignored, how to give the word also those who are more silent. Participants were able to draw conclusions for their own life and practice.

