

Matrix – breaking down ‘silo working’ by using an experiential learning activity to powerfully demonstrate the advantages of working collaboratively

Outlined below is an overview of how and where an RSVP Design Consulting Client used Matrix to help provide a powerful emotional experience to help people engage with an abstract concept and relate it directly to their own organisation challenges.

Background:

Client Request

In Oil & Gas Businesses a large number of different departments must work collaboratively to unlock value for the enterprise. However Operations Excellence, Geologists, Rig operators etc. tend to work in silos and escalate decisions / requests for information up the hierarchy. This results in slow decision making and a lot of re-work. The client wanted a means to demonstrate the value and benefits of collaboration experientially.

Consultant Response

Approach: We decided the best way to do this was to actually recreate the organization structure using Matrix cords.



When the activity got underway the group began problem solving in silos. It took about 15 minutes before one group they realized that they didn't have any white clips in their department! That led to the group discovering that they only way to success was by sharing resources. Their starting assumption had been that they could solve it individually!

Once they determined they needed to share resources, they embarked on a very painful process of sending all the information up the network, to the 'boss' who would speak to the other 'bosses' and then send other information down. After 30 minutes they concluded that this was very painful and almost impossible to achieve. I asked for an estimate, and they said it would take – '4 to 6 hours!'.

At this stage I offered them 4 additional cords which they willingly accepted and used to connect the teams at the lowest level in the organization. Once those connections were in place, information and resources started to move rapidly. Teams that had been a foot away from each other that hadn't talked in the preceding 45 minutes were now engaged in heated problem-solving debates. In 15 minutes the task had been successfully completed.

Matrix Activity Debrief

The de-brief brought out a number of wonderful realizations from the participants:

1. When you escalate things to your boss, you actually make his / her life more complex
2. A lot of communication lines exist and are easy to use, but the ones that are formally established are the 'safest'
3. Listening for what other people need can help you get what you need!
4. Even though you might have all the resources you need to complete your task, you can still be a critical cog in connecting other people who don't have the same comfort you have in terms of task completion
5. There is real value to collaboration in terms of speed, trust and greater engagement

