exaptive

Sticky Note Exercise

2019

exaptive

The Sticky Note Exercise

How do you pick who works together, who reports to whom, and who exchanges information with whom? Teams are typically organized around some common expertise or function in order to be productive. To be innovative, it turns out we should focus on our differences a bit more.

Complementary differences create new perspective. Co-workers have complementary differences when they can offer each other useful perspectives, but they have enough in common that they can communicate effectively with each other.

We created a 20-30 minute exercise that demonstrates the concept, using paper, pens, and sticky-notes. Paper and pen will not scale well. But if you want to experiment with the idea of complementary differences in your organization or prove the concept to others, this exercise is a brief but immersive way to do it.

For a more indepth look into the theory behind this and how software can support it, check out our CEO's TEDx talk: "Using Technology to Facilitate Aha Moments."

The Materials Required

Participants	Time	Materials
25+ recommended	**20** minutes	> one worksheet per participant > one sticky note color per answer category > writing utensils

Preparation

Understand who is attending. You will need to know the basics about who is attending so that you can design questions and an array of answer that suit them.

Decide what two questions to ask your group. The questions will be multiple choice, as if the players are selecting a response from a drop-down menu. The first question (Q1) should ask the players to categorize a characteristic of a project they work on. Question two (Q2) should ask them to identify a skill or method used in the project.

Decide what the available responses should be and assign each a color. When creating the possible answers, assign each a different color sticky-note. No two answer possibilities should be assigned the same color.

The Sticky Note Exercise

Here are two sample question sets:

Example 1

Q1 What topic best describes the subject matter of the activity you led?

Science / STEM	Yellow
Language	Light Blue
History / Government	Green
Culture	Orange

Q2 Which of the following was the most important component of the activity?

Group Learning / Social	Purple
Experential / Project Based	Pink
Presentation of Content	Dark Blue
Integration of Technology	White

Example 2

Q1 What is the focus of your project?

Finance	Yellow
Engineering	Light Blue
Sales / Marketing	Green
Science	Orange

Q2 What kind of software did you use most during the project?

Data Analysis	Purple
Communication	Pink
Design	Dark Blue
Project Management	White

At the end of this document there is a worksheet template. You will fill in the question, choices, and colors for your exercise and provide a copy to each participant.

You will also need to provide sticky-notes of each color within reach to the participants.

The Sticky Note Exercise

Running the Exercise

The game has three phases. In the first, each person works on their own. In the second and third, they interact.

Phase 1

Each person in the group thinks of one project they have worked on. They answer Q1 and Q2, and put the corresponding color of sticky-note in the appropriate space on their worksheet.

Next, they write a few sentences about what was successful about the project and what could have gone better.

Phase 2

The participants move about the room until they find a partner with only one color in common on their worksheet. Both colors in common? Not a match. Zero colors in common? Not a match.

Phase 3

Set a timer for ten minutes. The matched pairs discuss their projects briefly, including the characteristics they identified on their sticky-notes. They identify what they have in common and the differences between their projects.

Results will vary. In our experience, mixing complementary but different perspectives inspires new ideas. Go ahead, give it a try!

Have questions? Need help designing the exercise for your group? Email sticky@exaptive.com and we'll help you get unstuck.

Q1

Q2

Q1
Sticky Note
Here

Q2
Sticky Note
Here