**Adaptability – 40 Challenges Project**

Successful initial implementation and ongoing maintenance of process improvements requires overcoming the resistance to change.

Managing change resistance and adaptability is often covered in training, yet a primary learning issue facing most organizations is the lack of engagement and motivation in lecture-based training. By using simulations, exercises or games, practitioners can enliven their learning environments and improve knowledge retention, skills and applications. This will keep the audience members interacting with each other and with the content.

Games are a great way to illustrate teaching concepts for several reasons. First of all, games are intrinsically motivating. Standing up and moving around also provides variety and can save a long class from boredom. Finally, traditional classroom activities cater to visual and sometimes audio learners, but kinesthetic learners benefit from more physical activities. Overall, games can make a fun and helpful addition to class.

The following two exercises and games were designed to increase participant understanding of the emotional barriers that are part of resistance and how to deal with them. In addition, they increase participant understanding of the support needed to keep changes in place.

**Adaptability Game 1: Cross Your Arms**

Duration: 5 minutes

Number of participants: unlimited

Materials required: none

Description/Process: For practitioners facing a large class and not a lot of time, this exercise really gets the point of change across. After the introduction of the “adaptability” subject, ask the audience to “cross their arms.” My operational definition of “crossed” is folding their arms together, as if they were bored or waiting for something. Once they have completed this task, ask them to “fold their arms the other way,” reversed of what they just performed. I guarantee that 90 percent of the class will struggle with it.

**Discussion Questions:**

-How did it feel when you were asked to cross your arms the other way?

-Did it come naturally or did you have to stop and think about it?

-Were you comfortable with doing this differently from your normal process?

-What are some things that make people resistant to change?

-What can you do to make it easier for people in your organization to accept changes?

-What kind of support is necessary to maintain the changes?

**Facilitator Notes**

When people cross their arms, they do so naturally, without even thinking about it. When they are asked to fold them the other way they, for the most part, stop, refold their arms again and then try to figure out which arm was on top, which arm moves first and so on. Try this yourself and see. Encourage participants to consider and share their own personal emotions related to making changes.

**Adaptability Game 2:** **Change Your Look**

Duration: 30 minutes (depending on debrief)

Number of participants: pairs of two

Materials required: none

Description/Process:

Tell participants that they are going to assist in an experiment about making changes. I would not mention that it is a game. Obtain their buy-in ahead of time with their agreement to live with the changes made until the experiment is over. Reassure them that the experiment only lasts 30 minutes, and they will not have to do anything that they feel uncomfortable with.

Number participants off in groups of two and have each pair stand facing each other.

Ask the participants to determine which one will observe and which one will make the changes.

Tell the observer to study their partner closely because their partner will be making a few changes.

Next, the observer from each pair should turn their back (or close their eyes) and ask the other person to make five changes to their physical appearance. This could mean moving their watch from one wrist to the other, removing a shoe, taking off jewelery or a tie, or removing their glasses. Give participants 30 seconds to complete the changes.

Participants may face each other again, all eyes open and ask the partner who did not make changes to identify as many changes as possible. Allow about 30 seconds for this.

Do a couple more rounds of steps 5 through 7.

Finally, ask participants to make 10 changes in 20 seconds. You will likely get some resistance at this point. When you start to get verbal resistance, stop and move to the discussion questions.

**Discussion Questions:**

-How did it feel to be asked to make so many changes?

-What are some things that make people resistant to change?

-Begin with the preceding questions. At some point participants will begin to refer to the changes made during the exercise. When this starts to happen, ask the following questions:

-Why is it difficult to maintain changes once they are made?

-What kind of support is necessary to maintain the changes?

**Facilitator Notes**

When providing instructions for this exercise, obtain agreement from the participants that they will maintain whatever changes are made until the exercise is over. Prompt the group to think about and share their own personal emotions related to making changes.

Some participants may make the point that these changes are not like changes being made in the organization. If this happens, acknowledge the validity of the statement, but ask how these changes – and people’s reactions to them – are similar.