

# SAMPLE

**Leadership 1“O”1  
Creativity Development Plan &  
Curriculum Takeaways**

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# How to implement this curriculum

Perform exercises weekly at every meeting. Do the ones that even seem silly to you! You'll be surprised at how the most uncomfortable/silly ones help your team grow in innovation, teamwork and communications.

Provide your team time to do the self-guided exercises. Most are an hours' commitment or less. But it is important that the exercises are part of the work week and perceived as being encouraged and supported by leadership.

Encourage team members to practice creative skills on their own. If budget allows, include some or all reimbursement of classes or materials as part of your encouragement of the practice.

## Meeting exercises

Institute one of these exercises every week for three weeks. Feel free to craft exercises of your own! Use your team's talents to develop custom exercises.

## Self-guided exercises

Assign one of these exercises each week for three weeks.

## Assessment survey guide

Please complete all surveys. They are under 10 questions each, so will take less than five minutes. Thank you for helping us measure the success of creative skills implementation!

- **PROVIDED INDIVIDUALLY FOR EACH CLIENT**

# Team exercises

Perform one of the following exercises in a team meeting setting for every week for the next eight weeks. Most should take no more than 15 minutes, but some are longer. Feel free to create your own using the resources of your team. Or customize the exercises to suit your time frame. But remember, the benefits will be greatest when creative skills development is treated as important and team members feel the commitment from leadership.

Discuss the exercises individually or at a weekly staff meeting. Most exercises have self-contained questions, but some of the following questions may be added to each exercise.

## Questions for discussions about team exercises

- What emotions did the exercise bring up for you?
- Can you apply elements of the exercise to a situation/problem you are having at work?
- Did any part of, or conclusion from the exercise add value to your work, the company's products, any area where you or the organization is struggling? How can we use the exercise to better relate to our stakeholders?
- Did any parts of the exercise make you vulnerable or uncomfortable? If so, can you grow from the discomfort? How?
- Did any parts of the exercise make you feel better about yourself? If so, how can you maintain that feeling? How can you share that feeling with your team?
- Did you enjoy the exercise? Did it inspire any similar creative exercises or processes you'd like to practice more often?
- From the exercise, did you develop a better appreciation of the work required of/done by your supervisor/colleague/team member? How?
- From the exercise, did you get to use parts of your creativity you don't typically use at work? Which ones?
- What skills do you think the exercise was intended to develop? What skills did it develop?

## Team Takeaway Exercise #1: Creative storytelling, in a nutshell

### Activity

Write a complete story – no more than a page – about your last vacation. Include the five traditional elements of “plot.” Introduction, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.

Now, rewrite the story – but in just three sentences.

Now see if you can write the story in one sentence.

Share just your shortened stories with the team. Discuss “the bigger picture” of the story? How much was left to the imagination, but easily filled in correctly? How much could be gotten wrong? What elements of storytelling had to be sacrificed? Did they ultimately matter – or was it absolutely necessary to hear from the author to understand the entire piece? Could you write it better and keep the brevity?

### Skills development

- Decision making
- Business storytelling
- Clarity of communications
- Writing skills
- Resourcefulness
- Thinking outside the box
- Troubleshooting
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Team Takeaway Exercise #2: *What's in a buzzword? A R.O.S.E. by any other acronym would stink as badly!*

### Activity

Write down all of the buzzwords (and acronyms) in a meeting that are unique to your organization and industry. Tick off the number of times you and your teammates use them.

Ask yourself and your team the following at the end of the meeting:

- Are these words that have morphed to have a new meaning in the context of your organization?
- What was their original meaning – find the etymology of the word?
- Is there a better word?
- Are some overused to the point of ridiculousness?
- Are you using them in ways that confuse your stakeholders? Do they have other meanings in ordinary English that are potentially confusing?

### Skills development

- Listening
- Presentation and public speaking
- Verbal communication
- Writing skills
- Clarity of communications
- Customer service
- Thinking outside the box
- Troubleshooting
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Team Takeaway Exercise #3: Shoulders down, elongate your neck

### Activity

Read this to your team:

*In the world of dance, the classroom is a sacred place. There are rules of respect, demeanor and appropriate behaviors that are taught as a child from your first ballet class in pink leotard, tights and pink shoes that continue on even as you move into post-career adult classes just to keep your feet in the craft, so to speak.*

*It is also a place of high expectations. You are expected by the teacher to put your entire effort forward during the hour or more you're there. And the dancers have an expectation of the instructors in return.*

*You see, in the dance class, you are hopeful that the teacher will correct you at some point during class. If you're lucky, he or she will offer several corrections. Unlike most workplaces, being corrected is revered as a good thing. A correction means the teacher has enough respect for your attention to your craft that he or she notices your mistakes, offers advice, and tries to help you grow as a dancer. To be called out or corrected – “shoulders down, elongate your neck, work completely through your feet, watch your turnout” and the like -- are words you **want** to hear. To have a teacher actually come over and physically correct your form is an even greater gift.*

*Because in dance class, being offered a correction means a chance to grow. And it means the teacher has enough respect for your talent, or at least your dedication, to want to help you improve.*

Now go through these questions:

- Do we offer that kind of experience in our office?
- How are corrections presented to our team members by management?
- Do we think employees see corrections as a chance to grow, or as demoralizing?
- How could we make the act of correcting someone in our workplace a good thing?

Now, practice some role-playing between managers and employees. Reverse roles and offer each other corrections on fictional scenarios like “how to do a better job making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.” Think of things like:

- Is it expected at your workplace to cut the crusts off?
- Is the bread to be toasted?
- Are there things that are done – like cutting the sandwich in half, that could be improved, like cutting the sandwich into fourths? Why are the fourths better? Why will or won't they work?
- Can the employee innovate by adding ingredients? Did he or she and if so, why was that good or bad?
- How can it be made clear that the employee is being given this information for the purpose of helping with career development while at the same time achieving the company's goals?

## Skills development

- Listening
  - Verbal communication
  - Clarity of communications
  - Supervising, team-management & delegation
- Giving clear feedback & managing difficult conversations
  - Mentoring, motivating, coaching
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_



# Self-guided exercises

Perform as a leader and assign to your team members one of the following exercises for completion every week for the next eight weeks (we gave you a few extras! Feel free to create your own as well). Discuss the exercises individually or at a weekly staff meeting.

## Questions for discussions about self-guided exercises

- Can you apply elements of the exercise to a situation/problem you are having at work?
- Did any part of, or conclusion from the exercise add value to your work, the company's products, any area where you or the organization is struggling? How can we use the exercise to better relate to our stakeholders?
- Did any parts of the exercise make you vulnerable or uncomfortable? If so, can you grow from the discomfort? How?
- Did any parts of the exercise make you feel better about yourself? If so, how can you maintain that feeling? How can you share that feeling with your team?
- Did you enjoy the exercise? Did it inspire any similar creative exercises or processes you'd like to practice more often?
- From the exercise, did you develop a better appreciation of the work required of/done by your supervisor/colleague/team member? How?
- From the exercise, did you get to use parts of your creativity you don't typically use at work? Which ones?
- What skills do you think the exercise was intended to develop? What skills did it develop?
- What emotions did the exercise bring up for you?

## SG Takeaway Exercise #1: Character development, a day in the life

### Activity

Pick a human subject germane to your organization like a customer, a board member, a member of the media, a vendor or a service provider, etc. Put yourself in their shoes for a typical day and ask questions like:

- What time do they get up? What do they do first after getting out of bed? What do they eat for breakfast? Is it prepared for them by someone or do they get it themselves?
- How long do they spend getting ready and where? At the gym? At home? On-the-road? What do they dress in/wear?
- Do they have a commute and if so, what do they do on their commute? Do they have to drop off kids on the way? Where do they stop for coffee – a coffee stand, are they a Dunkin Donuts type, a Starbucks type or an independent roaster type?
- What time do they get to their first destination? Is it an office? How is their morning at the office spent? In meetings? Writing software or proposals or examining spreadsheets?
- Where do they go for lunch? Do they eat at their desk? Are lunches social?

Keep going in this vein for the rest of your human subject's day. Be detailed. Always ask what the most likely, consistent answer to the questions above and others about your subject, don't get bogged down on what they *might* do, but focus on what they typically are most likely to do.

Now, turn the details into a story. Make changes to the day, but always tell what a typical day for Bob would be like. Give your subject a name – it can be tongue-in-cheek like “Always on-the-go Annie” if your subject is a busy soccer mom type or “Bob, the big-cheese” if your subject is an executive you company works with. A start might be: *“Today, Bob got up at his usual time, 6:30 a.m., and found that Betty, his wife, had NOT prepared his eggs and bacon while he read the morning stock-reports, like she typically does. This threw him into a mood and as he mixed up a power smoothie instead. Wondering where she could be, he thought to himself how unfair it was that he worked 60-hour weeks to make sure their kids got into the right schools, while she lunched with her girlfriends most days. Of course, what Bob didn't realize was...”*

Use the story to examine the pains, fears, prejudices or the highs, joys and benefits of your subject's life. Now – how can understanding this typical day better help you understand your subject? What insights does it provide into your subject's needs and how you as a member of your organization can engage with them?

How does the story impact the way you do business? How does it optimize how you work with those types? Does it alter how you might communicate with them? Your brand? Your product specifications? Customer service hours and staffing? What types of promotions you do?

How does the story allow you to empathize with your subject's fears? With their goals? Will this impact how you interact with them?

## Skills development

- Decision making
- Business storytelling
- Business trend awareness
- Customer Service
- Troubleshooting
- Planning
- Emotional intelligence
- Empathy

- Writing skills
- Resourcefulness
- Thinking outside the box
- Troubleshooting
- Values education
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## SG Takeaway exercise #2: X-factor assessment

### Activity

Pick a segment from a video of “bad” X-factor (or similar talent show) auditions like the ones here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCXEHuGJgU>

Assess the performances as if you are correcting someone who reports to you.

- Can you be direct and appropriate while not crushing the person?
- Should you be direct or is this a place where a “white lie” is kinder? Are you challenged by that ethically?
- How do you tell someone with heart and passion for their performance that this may not be the skill they are best at?
- What if they don’t believe you and push back? How do you handle that?
- Do you need to correct them? Is it germane to future performance or can they be allowed to practice with joy and without needing correction?

### Skills development

- Mentoring, motivating, coaching
- Decision making
- Respectfulness
- Empathy
- Observation
- Giving clear feedback
- Managing difficult conversations
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## SG Takeaway exercise #3: *Bad earworms*

### Activity

Make a playlist of 10-15 songs in a genre **you don't like**. Enough to get you from home to work and back. Ask friends who do like the genre to give you recommendations of their favorites, but don't let them tell you why they do or don't like the genre, yet. Before listening, make a list of the reasons **you** don't like the genre. Be descriptive, like *"I find country music has a "twang" to the sound that doesn't appeal to me. The lyrics are usually not things I am interested in. I don't feel I can dance to it, etc."*

Then, listen to your playlist on your commute for three days. Each day, when you arrive, think about and write down to the following:

- Were there any things that surprised you about the songs (be descriptive)?
- Are you able to find any traits in the songs individually that you find appealing (be descriptive)?
- Did one of the songs stick in your head (even if you don't want it to)?
- Do you find yourself tapping your toes or bobbing your head to the beat in spite of yourself?
- Did the lyrics surprise you? Did you like them more or less than you expected?
- Was every "dislike" you have for the music verified?
- Did you like the music even less after the first commute, or more?
- Did you discover *new* things that you don't like about the genre?
- Can you see why others might like the music?
- Can you be open to trying certain artists' interpretations of the genre, if not all of them?
- Will you be adding some new songs in the genre to your playlists for work, working out, dinner parties or road trips?

Now, repeat the exercise with other genres. Have discussions with your friends who do like the genre, even if you still aren't a fan. Find out why they like this type of music and see if any of their reasons were similar to your likes or dislikes. Are they so passionate about the genre, they try and change your mind?

**BONUS:** Reverse the process. Ask your friends and colleagues to listen to a genre you like that they don't. Have them make the lists. See how the conversation about their experience goes.

### Skills development

- Adaptability
- Critical observation
- Desire to learn
- Negotiation
- Persuasion
- Thinking outside the box
- Tolerance of change and uncertainty
- Willingness to learn
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_