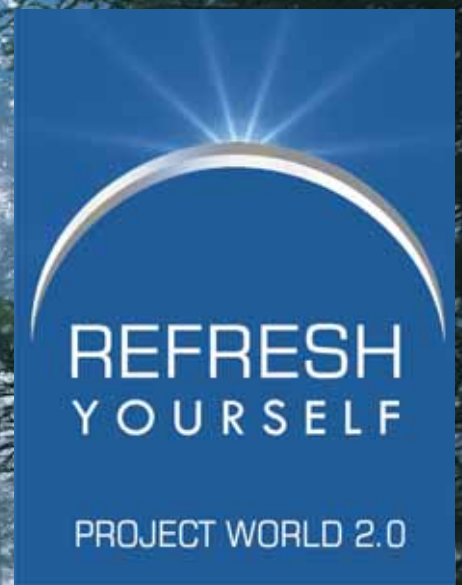


Projektitoiminta

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Projektityhdistys ry:n jäsenlehti
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STOP AND REFRESH!

Projektipäivät 2009 = IPMA World Congress 15.-17.6.2009

Vuosikymmenen merkittävin projektialan ammattitapahtuma Suomessa - yli 100 puhujaa yli 25 maasta.

Monissa pienemmissäkin tapahtumissa maksat vähintään 1200 euroa, meillä alkaen 650 euroa koko ohjelma!

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Ultimate Route™:

Experiential Learning in Project Management

Bruce Miller
Igor Osipov
PM Learning

Learning by Doing: Acquiring Critical Business Skills in the Time of Change

Real life is complex. You never have perfect information. You never have enough time and you must make immediate decisions to resolve issues you face. We often fail and learn by our mistakes, becoming much better at the decisions we make the next time, even though the next time the specific situation may be quite different.

The business world isn't easy, especially in the time of change, when processes, strategies, and budgets are being reconsidered. A powerful approach to learning, business games, is a refreshing, time- and cost-effective way to help people learn concepts and immediately apply them in a controlled environment where there is no adverse consequence with making mistakes. A team-based experiential business simulation game (*not computer-based*) replicates reality. It compresses time and allows participants to experiment

and experience that reality.

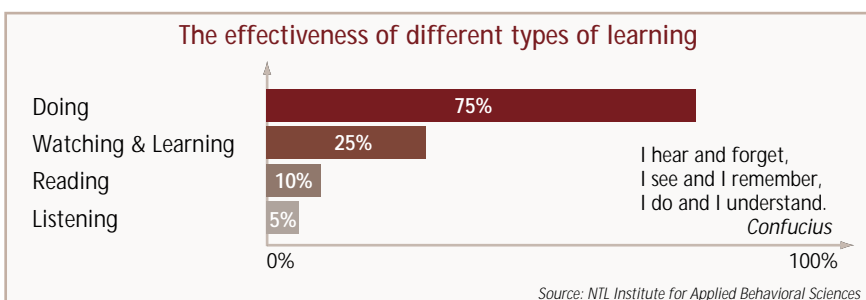
Industry think tanks, such as Forrester and Accenture, already noted the effectiveness of innovative learning approaches, such as experiential simulations, with their ability to show-case and reinforce the business value of newly implemented processes in organizations, building cross-level communication, and implementing change (Gliedman et al 2006, Fitzpatrick et. al. 2006). These learning tools are indispensable in optimizing existing business processes within a shorter period of time by quickly introducing key concepts to all stakeholder parties for subsequent buy-in.

Paul Wilkinson, one of UK ITIL standard authors provides an example. "You can give a trainee pilot hours of classroom training and theory which the trainee can demonstrate their understanding of, by passing exams. But without simulation training to experience the theory in action, to translate the information into real knowledge the Pilot is unable to fly the plane" (2007). The same applies to Project Management theory – where attending lectures and preparing for and passing PMP certification (PMI or IPMA) exams does not necessarily imply that an individual will succeed in completing a project in a real-life situation or being an effective team member.

Exploring the ways that adults learn the most significant factor in not only learning a skill, but also retaining that learning over time. The best way to do so is by doing – something quite obvious, yet as effective as in Confucius times.

The techniques of reading, listening or watching someone else pale in comparison to the impacts associated with experience (Mullaly 2008).

Team-based simulations, which are not based on software or computers, but on *interaction* founded in workplace scenarios and best practice, can help participants gain realistic managerial experience.





Business Simulations: Real World Learning

In early April, Project Manager Richard McKenzie gained firsthand experience leading a cross functional team with a multi-million dollar budget in building a highway. During the project, some workers went on strike, the road was rerouted due to a landslide, and Richard faced last minute cost overruns. Still, he and his team forged ahead. Experts say adults absorb information better when they use it, not just hear it. Deep learning almost always requires some struggle, mental energy, and some hands-on experience. This is accomplished by challenging participants to solve a problem on their own during the simulation. Whether their outcome is correct is less important initially than the thought process they went through.

Business simulation games can be applied to a wide variety of subject areas. In this particular game, the focused learning is around Risk & Project Management in rapidly changing environment. Richard and the other participants were not only challenged to apply and learn risk management concepts, but also experienced the human dynamics of teams. The team dynamic is important because making effective project management decisions in organizations requires input and experience from multiple people.

To be successful, participating teams must understand project, change & risk management concepts and demonstrate strong interpersonal skills in interacting effectively with their co-workers within a rapidly changing business environment. In the Ultimate Route game, Richard's team and the competing teams tasked with building a road had to choose from among five different route possibilities. Based on which route Richard and his team chose, unforeseen risks occurred that his team needed to quickly respond to with each successive round in the simulation. As each change was introduced, team participants could accept, avoid, transfer or mitigate each risk. Each decision resulted in either enhancing or reducing the team's overall performance and progress in building the road. Participants experienced tradeoffs as a result of any decision, as in the real world.

Richard's team did not know this, but there was no one pre-determined pathway that led to success. It was possible to "win" the simulation game by doing a good job of assessing the information provided, performing effective project planning and making sound decisions by working effectively with your team. In each round, Richard and his team were given more information, and had to make more decisions, trying to manage risks along the way. There was time pressure to make the challenging decisions quickly. Each new experience each team faced along the way was influenced by the decisions they made previously.

The group periodically took a step back and reflected upon

Experts say adults absorb information better when they use it, not just hear it.

their experiences and lessons learned, led by a facilitator. The facilitator focused on asking questions rather than giving answers, which allowed the participants to think deeply themselves in solving the problems faced and improving their risk management strategy and process between successive rounds. At the end, the "winner" was determined by how well the team planned for and identified certain risks, while adjusting plans and taking counter measures as new risks were introduced throughout the game. By the end of the game, Richard and his team were enthusiastically on their feet as the road construction project reached its completion.

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