EXTENDING THE MARSHMALLOW CHALLENGE: TEAM BUILDING EXERCISE BASED ON DESIGN THINKING

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Extensions for Online Learners/Virtual Teams

1. Use the Marshmallow Challenge and Similar Challenges for Face to Face Learners/Teams by asking online learners/virtual team members to try them on their own or with a (another person(s)). The challenges can be timed and occur either in a synchronous format or in an asynchronous format. Online learners/virtual team members report their results to the team.

2. Virtual whiteboards have emerged to help distributed teams collaborate online. Some provide features such as ‘mark’ on which users can use virtual sticky notes or add images, videos, symbols, labels, and text. All of these elements can be dragged, dropped and clustered, just as they would on a real wall. It allows multiple users to collaborate simultaneously and it includes templates for many design thinking exercises.

Benefits: CHALLENGES ARE STILL FUN AND ENGAGING!

Challenge Lessons

- Don’t waste time seeking power or over-planning/talking about the problem
- Learning opportunities involving multiple (and sometimes simultaneous) iterations/feedback/trial and error usually outperform the commitment to searching for best answers or making the first idea work
- Different mind-sets/perspectives and skills colliding often produces better results
- Foster a ‘beginner’s mind’ to unleash ability to be creative and curious
- Try working in parallel teams to learn from others and enhance productivity

Other Similar Challenges

Index Card Challenge: Create tallest index card tower that is free standing and remains self-supporting for 10 seconds. The tower must hold a stuffed animal.

Paper Airplane Loops: Create a paper airplane using scissors and tape. Make modifications to your airplane so it can perform the most loops before hitting the ground.

Kinetic Sculpture Challenge: Make a sculpture that is at least six inches tall and has two parts that move in the wind or withstands blown away by a fan.

Building Challenge Activities using Lego bricks or other building blocks (beyond “Serious Play Kits”) such as:

Basic Tower Challenge: Build tallest structure that stands.

Tower Challenge with Profit: Monetary value given for the height of the tower, but planning time, construction time, materials cost money.

Lego Challenge with individual instructions: Group builds structure with bricks but each person has an assignment not shared with others — e.g., you are the only one allowed to build in the first three layers of the building; you have to make sure that the first layer of the building consists of exactly 10 bricks.

Squiggly Birds: Draw squiggles and then try to add a head, eyes, feet, wings, tail.

Selected References