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The Group Creativity Exercise
Getting MBAs to Work and Think Effectively in Groups

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This experiential exercise is designed to engage participants in a process of group creativity that helps students lead or be a part of a creative team. The challenging and tangible nature of building a room-height tower provides a heightened experience that elicits many issues and strong emotions. The exercise provides a robust platform from which the instructor can choose which of many group creativity subtopics to emphasize. In addition to exercise instructions, guidance is given on how learning goals related to creativity techniques, group development, interpersonal dynamics, and leadership—can be addressed in a debriefing discussion. Both "pre-taught" and "retrospective" teaching approaches are discussed, although a retrospective approach in which the instructor makes connections with theory during debriefing discussions is recommended. The experience of learning by doing should yield more realistic and memorable understanding of group creativity than could be accomplished with readings and/or lecture alone.

Key Words: Experiential, Exercise, Groups, Creativity

Introduction

Human resources departments and recruiters have not only acknowledged the need for a creative workforce, but also recognized the need for business-building skills (Merritt, 2004). Operating excellence and cost cutting are no longer sufficient. Sustaining competitive advantage requires near continuous development of new and unique products and services. Creativity and innovation in all parts of a company are important to generating new products and services, as well as significant improvements to existing products and methods.

Despite the fact that creativity is considered by many companies today to be critical for sustaining competitive advantage, MBAs receive little training in this area (Driver, 2001). Creativity is often thought to be an individual characteristic that is difficult to teach. Because the range of expertise required for significant innovations often extends beyond what an individual can offer, a workforce capable of participating in creative teams is becoming indispensable.

This exercise is designed to engage participants in a process of group creativity that can show students how to lead or be a part of a creative team, and how to deal with the obstacles to group creativity. The challenging and tangible nature of building a room-height tower out of a supple material (newspaper) provides a heightened experience that elicits many

issues and strong emotions. The exercise provides a robust platform from which a wide range of subtopics of the group creativity process can be emphasized to varying degrees by the instructor. The experience of learning by doing should leave a student with a more realistic and memorable understanding of group creativity than could be accomplished with readings and/or lecture alone.

Background

A commonly accepted definition of workplace innovation is "the intentional introduction and application within a role, group, or organization of ideas, processes, products or procedures, new to the relevant unity of adoption, designed to significantly benefit the individual, the group, the organization, or wider society" (West & Farr, 1990, p. 9). Creativity is typically viewed as an important subset of innovation, the idea generation and selection without operational implementation (Anderson, De Dreau, & Nijstad, 2004; Ford, 1996; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffen, 1993). Individual and group creativity does not entail organizational complexity and can be thought of as the process of creating new, unique, and valuable solution options to the problem considered.

Creativity has by and large been studied on three levels (Anderson, De Dreau, & Nijstad, 2004). Research on individual creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1982) looks at the characteristics of "creative" people, preferred cognitive styles, and stimulants for individual creativity (McAdam & McClelland, 2002). At the macro level, organizational or corporate creativity (e.g., Robinson & Stern, 1997) concerns how organizational structures, systems, cultures, etc., interact to generate creativity within an organization. The perspective of this exercise lies in the middle, the creativity generated by a group or team.

We have chosen a group level perspective for its feasibility as a class exercise and its importance to organizations. Corporate level creativity does not lend itself well to classroom exercises. While exercises in individual creativity are feasible (see Thompson, 2003; Verberne, 1997 for examples), group creativity is increasingly important as organizations turn to teams in order to increase responsiveness and innovation (Mohrman, Cohen, & Mohrman, 1995). With respect to entrepreneurship, Yan and Sorenson (2003) contend that creativity and entrepreneurship in family owned firms are often not the products of one lone entrepreneur, and thus a shift away from the individualistic view of entrepreneurship to a collective view is needed. The owners of businesses can be viewed as leaders or potential "organizing geniuses" of the family team (Yan & Sorenson, 2003).

Leonard and Swap (1999) provide a model of the process of group creativity that we believe is useful to teach students to effectively lead a group creative endeavor (see figure 1 below). The process begins with preparation; selecting group members (step 1) for the reservoirs of knowledge and cognitive approaches that each brings to the creative process. Innovation opportunity (step 2) is clearly identifying the problem requiring creativity. Groups then generate a wide range of options through divergent thinking (step 3). These options are refined through a period of incubation (step 4), followed by a selection of the best option (convergence step 5).

Figure 1

The Creative Process

(Leonard & Swap, 1999)

1	2	3	4	5
Preparation	Innovation opportunity	Divergence: Generating options	Incubation	Convergence: Selecting options
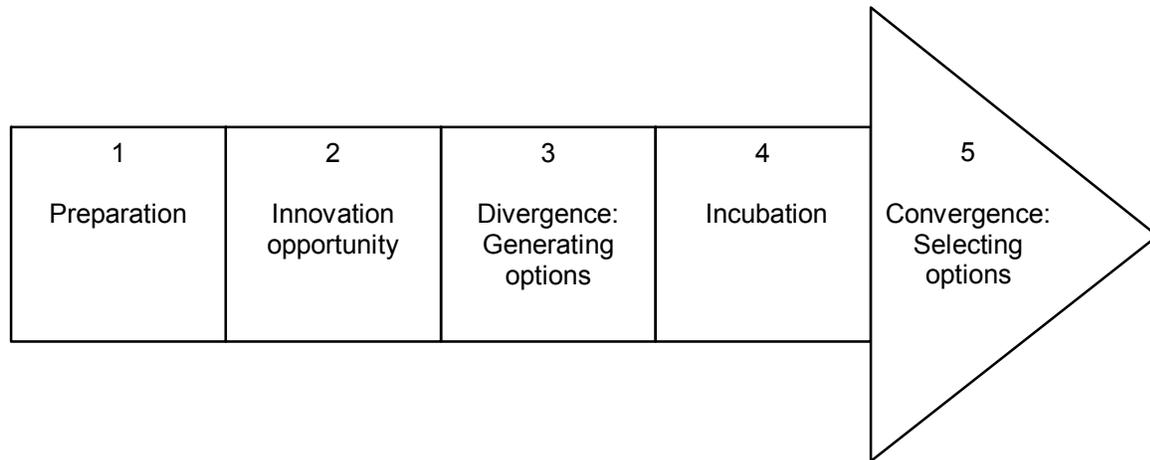
Target Audience

This workshop is designed for faculty members who want to demonstrate the process and issues of group creativity by means of a relatively simple exercise in MBA level entrepreneurship, leadership, managerial skills, or innovation management courses. Although this exercise can also be used for undergraduate students, their lack of practical experience might limit the impact of the exercise.

Learning Goals for Participants

By actively engaging participants' creativity, this exercise seeks to develop a deeper experiential understanding of what creativity is, the techniques and processes by which groups can best be creative, how individual differences interact in complex ways to affect the process, and how leadership can influence this process. For this exercise, the instructor has great leeway in choosing what aspects of group creativity to focus on as learning goals.
As noted earlier, we believe Leonard & Swap's (1999) five-step model of the group creative process is a useful organizing framework. Although the creative process is often an iterative process where one learns by experimentation and subsequent trials (Austin & Devin, 2003), the *group* process can still be thought of as having an initial organizing event that includes experimentation, the generation of ideas, and the choosing of an initial approach (corresponding to both the "divergence" and "convergence" steps of Leonard & Swap's

model). After starting a chosen approach, moderations or changes to the chosen approach can still take place due to continued experimentation and/or inadequacies of the initial approach.

We find that an instructor can choose to emphasize different facets of the creative process as well as take different teaching approaches. While the facets of creativity are clearly interrelated, the instructor can choose to focus more on creativity techniques or more on the behavioral or "group dynamics" aspects of creativity, such as group formation, interpersonal dynamics, and leadership. In addition, the approach to teaching these topics can be either a "retrospective" or a "pre-taught" approach.

In the retrospective approach, the instructor makes connections during the debriefing discussions between events that took place during the exercise and creativity theory, much as one might do in a case discussion. In the pre-taught approach, the instructor teaches on each/any of the topics prior to the exercise, and instructs students to try and apply these pre-taught techniques and behaviors during the exercise. In this mode, the instructor can purposely vary group composition, and/or have different groups try different techniques and behaviors. The strengths and weakness of techniques/behaviors might result in different outcomes, possibly adding richness to the debriefing discussion. However, we favor the retrospective approach as the pre-taught approach is a bit more cumbersome and students tend to attribute undue merit to the techniques or behaviors that "won," not recognizing the complexity and interaction of the many contributing variables. The instructor might not get the win that he/she had hoped for to demonstrate preferred techniques or behaviors!

Different techniques of group creativity can be addressed by using the group creativity process model as an organizing framework. Lessons on team makeup (Step 1, e.g., sex, cognitive style, training, communication abilities, etc.) can be illustrated by assigning participants to groups based on select criteria (pre-taught approach), or by making connections during the debriefing discussion with these criteria and the contributions of specific individuals (retrospective approach). Similarly, many techniques for generating a wide range of options—Step 3, e.g. brainstorming (Osborn, 1957), problem reversal, freewheeling, etc.—can be illustrated by having different teams use different techniques, or by relating these techniques to happenings in the task during the discussion. The balance of time spent on the different stages is also important (i.e., going to convergence too soon or not soon enough). This issue is especially interesting given the short time frame of the exercise. Creative decisions often have a shorter than ideal time constraint in the real world.

Another very fruitful area of learning is *group dynamics,* which includes issues of group development, interpersonal dynamics, and leadership. Leadership (Yukl, 2002) spans the steps proposed by Leonard and Swap as a group leader guides the creative process. Leaders could be appointed based on some criteria, but it appears that allowing leaders to emerge provides many valuable lessons. Differentiating between the various types of leadership behaviors (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988), as well the assorted sources of power (French & Raven, 1959) and skills (Yukl, 2002) that emerging leaders exert during the group development process (Tuckman, 1965), highlight what leaders can do the foster the group creativity process. In our experience, leaders often emerge through referent power, expert

power, or by strong personality/traits (Yukl, 2002). Group conflicts are often the result of gender and/or personality differences.

The Exercise

Pre-exercise Preparation:

▪ Students should be cautioned in the preceding class to come casually dressed. They should not be told the nature of the task itself, only that they will be doing a class exercise.

▪ Two main supplies are required for this exercise, with an another two optional:
  o Masking tape (or duct tape)
  o A pile of newspapers (approximately 10 – 12 inches per group). Collecting that much paper might take some time, require calling upon your colleagues to assist you, or entail a visit to your local recycling center.
  o (Optional) You might consider bringing a couple of large plastic bags or a large, institution-issued recycling container to clean the room after the exercise.
  o (Optional) Providing baby wipes might help curb complaints from students about ink residue from handling newspapers. Giving students a break to wash their hands after tower building also works.

▪ Outline a 3 feet by 3 feet square for each team on the floor using masking tape (a yardstick is handy for this), far enough apart so that the participating teams will not interfere with each other. Squares could include a number in the middle made with masking tape so that students would know which group area is which.

Exercise Activity: (30-40 minutes)

▪ Split the class into groups. The activity could be described before group formation (see below), but we recommend forming the groups first to prevent discussion of the task outside of the groups. We recommend groups of 5 or 6, but group size might be governed by practical considerations such as room size and/or the amount of newspaper on hand. Groups seem to need at least a 9 x 9 foot working area centered on the building square, such that a typical classroom can accommodate four groups *if* the chairs/desks can be cleared. We have on occasion used a vacant room across the hall to allow for extra groups and space when we were able to get a cofacilitator. Use of another room is also useful to prevent students from copying other groups or for the instructor to try different techniques on different groups. At this point, team composition can be varied if this was a chosen learning goal. We recommend having students count off to form groups because it is simple and generally breaks any cliques or preformed groups.

▪ Select the observers: We recommend that you select at least one observer per group to conduct an Interaction Process Analysis (Bales, 1950; Bales, Cohen & Williamson, 1980). The analysis is designed to classify the behaviors of individuals engaged in a group activity in an attempt to depict which behaviors support or

detract from group performance. Students that have previously done similar structure building exercises should be the first to be made observers so that they do not affect the outcome of the exercise. More than one observer per group is ok if you have an uneven number of students in the class. Observers should be given observer instructions (Appendix A).

- Script for creating groups: *"Starting with Joe Student and going this way, count off by threes* (the number of groups to be formed) *to form groups. That is 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, and so on. When every one has a group number, each of you should go to the square designated for your group."*

- Script for starting the exercise: *"Your task is to build a free-standing tower from newspapers that reaches, but does not touch, the ceiling of this room. You will use the newspapers in the pile next to the square taped out on the floor. The base of the tower must not go over the tape of the 3 X 3 ft square. No materials other than newspaper are allowed; no tape, no staples, no paperclips, no string, etc. If you find a section of newspaper with a stapled section, please discard it. The project will start in a few minutes, and you will have 40 minutes to finish. Do you have any questions before we begin?"*

Reflecting: (40-50 minutes):

- Reflection survey (5 minutes)
  Ask students to complete the experience feedback form (attached Appendix B) when they are done building their tower or when the time has ran out. This causes self-reflection by the students, preparing their minds for the discussion period. We have historically had students go to a class break once they have completed the feedback form. This is often about an hour into the class and allows students to wash their hands. If the instructor did not want a break at that point, wipes could be used as noted earlier.

  During a break, the instructor can glean information from the responses to make learning points in the ensuing discussion period (20-30 minutes). It also serves as permanent record. We find that additional learning points can also be raised in the following class after a more thorough reading of the student responses.

- Class discussion about the process (20-30 minutes)
  In our debriefing, we ask the students to comment on how they approached the task and what they discovered by engaging in the exercise. Group dynamics is typically a rich area for leaning and discussion. The discussion should be directed by the instructor toward the chosen learning outcomes. Details on how to approach the debriefing discussion follow in the general debriefing section.

Measuring Team Creativity

We often begin the debriefing by discussing how to measure team creativity as many of the teams have a tendency to focus on being the first team to finish. Teams often ask what the

incentives will be for "winning." You might want to tell students that there will be a "prize" for being the first to finish, but that a "prize" will also be awarded to the "most creative team." Students might ask for some clarifications, especially later in the process when they come to realize that they might not be the first team to finish. Some observers report that competitiveness seems to cause some trailing teams to alter their strategy mid-exercise and focus on becoming the "most creative team" instead. So how can you measure team creativity?

Team creativity can be measured using Guilford's (1967) three-factor model that highlights not only originality (often used as a synonym for creativity), but fluency and flexibility. Fluency is measured by the number of ideas that a team generates. Although one can argue that you only need one successful idea to build the tower, this might be important if a team takes a trial and error approach to the task over a planned approach. We know that the "solution" to this exercise might very well be a combination of ideas generated by the team. We often see teams break into sub groups early on in the exercise with the charge of finding different approaches.

The flexibility factor highlights the variety or different types of ideas generated. This is apparently important if a team struggles to get its tower built. Thompson (2003) reports from experience that teams have a tendency of focusing on one or two types of ideas. We have seen teams get stuck on only one idea type (i.e., blocks, tubes, triangles, or even balls) and persist in making small adjustments to that one idea (unless they pick up ideas from observing other teams).

The last factor, originality, assesses the uniqueness of the ideas. We have found the dominant and most successful approach to be tubes of rolled paper tied together by "strings" made from strips of paper. A main floor-to-ceiling tube is propped-up by supporting tubes.

Thompson (2003) finds remarkable correlation between three measures of creativity (e.g., the groups who do the best on originality also do the best on flexibility and fluency.). Guilford (1967) believed flexibility (variety in types of ideas) to be the driver of the other two. Unfortunately organizations often reward "quality" and not these drivers of creativity. Thompson argues that the question should be "How can we set the stage for team creativity? The following debriefing questions allow us to identify a framework and techniques for dealing with obstacles to team creativity.

Debriefing Discussion

The following debriefing illustrates how the instructor can use a combination of participant self-reflections, observer comments, and class/group discussion to process this exercise. We have used three general questions in an attempt to measure both the students' perceived approach to the task as well as explore issues of group dynamics in the process of building the tower.

As noted earlier, we recommend the "retrospective" over the "pre-taught" teaching approach, especially with respect to behavioral learning goals. Allowing leaders to emerge creates

interesting group dynamics, and more importantly, rich feedback on group development and task accomplishment techniques. While our debriefing questions are written with a retrospective teaching approach in mind, they could be adapted to a more structured process in which the main learning goals were to illustrate pre-taught creativity techniques.

Question 1 Describe the process your team used to generate an initial approach to the task.

This first question focuses more on the techniques used to generate creative options than group dynamics, which is more directly addressed in the second debriefing question. However, the topics are very interrelated. Issues arise unpredictably in the discussion such that the instructor has to be very adept at directing discussion to accomplish the desired learning outcomes.

This topic relates fairly well to the steps of the Leonard and Swap model of group creativity. Issues related to preparation (step 1), divergence (step 3), and convergence (step 5) are most relevant to this exercise. The task (step 2) is clearly defined by the instructor and an incubation period (step 4) is not within the time frame of the exercise. The instructor could have a transparency or power point of the basic model that could be shown quickly to the class at an appropriate time to provide an organizing framework so that learning points are made clearer.

Issues of the team composition will often arise and can be related to the preparation step. The advantage of an engineer on a team (most of whom have had a class on structures) can illustrate the importance of prior training or deep reservoirs of knowledge (Leonard & Swap, 1999). Students often bring up gender differences, although cognitive style may be the more important issue (Driver, 2003). We have seen an all female team win, with a female engineer playing a leading role. Was it gender, or the cognitive style and training of the engineer? The diversity of the group can beneficially contribute to the creative "abrasion" of a group (Leonard & Swap, 1999), in contrast to a stifling effect of high cohesiveness. However, too much diversity can cause a team to become dysfunctional as it expends too much energy trying to bridge the gap between different perspectives, or some members withdraw as they fail to identify with the team (Austin, 1997; Sethi, Smith & Park, 2002).

Most teams will spend some time generating options before proceeding too far. This will often involve hands-on experimentation by various members of the team. Even after investing quite a bit of time in an approach, some teams will make significant changes to their approach such that idea generation and convergence is more of an iterative process (Austin, 2003). Teams that jump too quickly to one approach, perhaps due to an assertive team member, sometimes produce spectacular failures as they stubbornly stick to a flawed initial concept. This allows the instructor to contrast this with successful teams who did more up front experimentation from a wider range of team members. We have also witnessed solitary team members working alone come up with great solutions.

Discussion of how teams arrived at a tower building method approach is a good point at which to talk about the differences between individual and group idea generation. Thompson (2003) finds the literature to be very clear that individuals working alone will

generate more and better solutions than will groups. Groups are better at convergence on a solution. "Brainstorming" (Osborn, 1957) tries to overcome "group think" with principles [in the idea generation phase] of freewheeling, no criticism, and combining/improving upon others' ideas. However, nearly all laboratory studies have found brainstorming to generate fewer ideas than comparable numbers of people working alone or in nominal groups (Thompson, 2003).

Thompson (2003) identifies four obstacles to team creativity: 1) "Social loafing" is when team members slack off and rely on others in the team to perform. 2) "Conformity" is the tendency of team members to generate similar ideas or go along with others' ideas because of the human need to be accepted by the team. 3) "Production blocking" is a decrease in good ideas because team members have a hard time concentrating, holding a train of thought, or getting their ideas heard in the group interchange. 4) "Downward Norm Setting" is where the least productive members can be more influential in determining team performance than higher performers. Thompson proposes ten "strategies" for dealing with these major obstacles to group creativity (see Table 1 for a summary).

Not all of these strategies or techniques are relevant to this exercise (e.g., "create a playground" or "electronic brainstorming"), but the instructor can probably talk about any one of them if he or she chooses. As noted above, team diversity is a natural topic for this exercise.

The "brainwriting" and the "nominal group technique" strategies (Delbecq & van de Ven, 1971) are topics that the instructor can address that follow from discussions about individual versus group generation of ideas. "Brainwriting" is group members silently writing down their own ideas at key points during brainstorming. "The nominal group technique" starts with individual brainwriting, followed by group discussion and clarification of the ideas, ending with each person rank ordering the ideas. The Delphi technique or the use of a devil's advocate might be discussed by the instructor if desired, but these techniques are less directly related to this exercise as they tend to be for situations of greater complexity and duration.

"Analogical thinking" or "metaphorical thinking" is applying concepts or ideas from another domain to the problem at hand. Satzinger, Garfield, and Nagasundaram (1999) suggest that individuals tend to generate ideas that match the paradigm-relatedness of ideas provided to them as stimulation. These are useful techniques to generate good ideas, but Thompson (2003) notes that the challenge is getting people to think analogically. Discussions about these concepts can be done if students volunteer a source of inspiration. We have had students claim they were inspired by the vision of a radio tower (a successful design) and by a house of cards (not so successful). Bamboo as a natural metaphor, and the Eiffel tower as a manmade structure would also seem useful.

Leonard and Swap (1999) recommend rotating roles to aid idea generation. We have seen this more as an emergent process where the leadership role shifts to different members as the exercise progresses (See debriefing question 2).

At some point, teams will converge on a chosen approach. Convergence as a distinct event is a little harder to capture and relate techniques to. More group dynamics issues tend to emerge as various members with strong personalities assert themselves (See debriefing question 2), as opposed to convergence "techniques" per se. The observers will more likely witness convergence as it can happen fairly quickly while the instructor is observing another team. Much of what Leonard and Swap (1999) suggest with respect to convergence relates to broader organizational or external criteria (e.g., congruence with organizational mission and culture as selection criteria), both of which don't really apply to this limited exercise. The instructor can make references to the Delphi technique, but more as a contrast to show its appropriateness for larger numbers of decision makers over a longer time frame. Leonard and Swap do suggest the use of facilitators and the use of prototyping to aid convergence. We have not seen a team consciously use facilitators; however, sometimes individuals emerge in a role of moderating between strong personalities. Prototyping is observed, but not in a formal product development way; teams do experiment with small structures and agree or "converge" when one "prototype" looks like it will work.

Question 2 Describe the team/effort process? Comment on any emerging roles that took place including obstacles to creativity.

This question focuses on how the teams conducted themselves, and what facilitated or hindered the process. It is valuable to realize the importance that individuals, and any emerging roles, play in *group dynamics*.

The instructor can use the student experiences to illustrate that by following a group development process (Tuckman, 1965), groups or teams can be more creative in a quicker timeframe (efficient and effective). Tuckman's five stage approach consists of *forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning*.

Groups are *formed* by the instructor with a specific task to accomplish, typically leaving teams courteous, confused, and cautious. The *storming* stage sees the building of tension over personal styles. Various approaches to the task are exchanged with confrontations and arguments taking place over the "best" approach (prompting emerging roles by group-selected or self-selected leaders—to be discussed later). This period of experimentation and negotiation, most related to the "divergence" step of Leonard and Swap's model, can sometimes persist too long, hindering progression to the next stage. In the *norming* stage, cohesiveness is developed among team members, usually facilitating convergence on a team approach. Ideally one approach is adopted resulting in organized tasks and functions for each member as they strive to complete the task. Students also find themselves peeking at the competition especially when they are not faring well ("creative espionage" is often reported by observers). In the *performing* stage, the team will direct their energy towards working on the task after settling differences, while the *adjourning* stage marks the end of the exercise.

The *storming* stage in Tuckman's (1965) model of group development most exposes personal behaviors. Teams often start ok as they experiment and try different approaches, but tension and resistance builds as members begin to pitch their ideas. Confrontations and

arguments take place over the "best" approach. Personal and leadership styles emerge and often conflict (input from the observers should be sought for this discussion.). Various forms of power (French & Raven, 1959) can be asserted by members for control over the task and/or the group. We have noticed that leaders have a tendency of being selected, or self-selected, based on expert or referent power due to the nature of the exercise. However the instructor might consider reviewing other forms of power such as legitimate, reward, and coercive.

We have found that expert power certainly plays an important role in what appears to be an engineering oriented exercise. Students have a tendency to listen to and follow students that have engineering backgrounds because of the technical and conceptual skills they typically demonstrate. However, it is also important to point out the importance of interpersonal skills, which are essential for influencing people (Yukl, 2002, p. 192-195). Students are quick to point out that referent power can either facilitate or hinder the process. Although charisma is something that everyone looks for in a leader, students that have a "bossy" attitude can display characteristics or features that members of a team find unpleasant, or more importantly disengaging, leading to dysfunctional interpersonal dynamics.

Although divergence is essential to idea generation it must remain constructive. Some yelling can take place within teams. Some argue that this is part of the process (Austin & Devin, 2003). However, breakdowns or dynamic conflicts can lead to members losing interest or their faith in the team's ability to complete the task altogether. Other times, conflict simply makes it difficult for group members to hold a train of thought or to get a chance to express their ideas, what Thompson (2003) calls "production blocking."

Students should be asked about the role of the leader (assigned or emergent) and where they get their individual desire to excel in the task. We are all motivated differently, yet without member engagement, the creative process can be dull, or even destructive. Although motivation can come from material rewards, self-fulfillment, and possibly power, teams can receive satisfaction from just solving the problem. A contingency approach offers the leader the flexibility to take an approach that is more ideal for a particular task and team. Specifically the Life-Cycle Theory of Leadership by Hersey and Blanchard (1988) delineates two dimensions (task which seeks structure, and relationship behavior which emphasizes consideration), yielding four leadership styles: delegating, participating, selling, and telling styles. The selection can be a combination of a leader's preference (based on previous experience) and team member interaction.

Finally, good communication is often cited as key to success (Yukl, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Lencioni, 2002). This is important to emphasize as group climate is acknowledged in various forms only sporadically in the creativity literature. The instructor might point out that, although extended brainstorming may be time consuming, its precepts of civility and delayed judgment can extend beyond idea generation by facilitating a positive team climate for the whole of the exercise. The ultimate goal is to have good creativity process as part of the culture of the team.

Question 3 What did you learn from participating in this exercise?

This question is designed to have students reflect on the entire experience and register some kind of takeaway in their minds. It is interesting to see what they think was most important as opposed to the learning goals the instructor was planning to interject into the discussion. Students are often quick to point out that the task (creating the tower) cannot be achieved if the team does not work "together," highlighting the importance of good group dynamics. Time pressures, unproductive group norms and behaviors, and interpersonal conflicts emerge as the obstacles to group creativity consistent with Leonard and Swap's (1999) findings. Brainstorming is cited is an important strategy, although its effectiveness is still debated today (Osborn, 1957; Thompson, 2003). Some students admit their tendency to focus on the task, the "win" or the struggle for power. Students that "win" (defined as the first team to build a free-standing tower that reaches the ceiling) often display pride and camaraderie (e.g., giving each other high fives). It is important for the instructor to emphasize that the task is not the focus of the exercise; learning about the team creative process is.

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Table 1

Key Strategies to Deal with Major Obstacles to Group Creativity
(Thompson, 2003)

	Threats to creativity			
Strategy	Social loafing	Conforming	Production blocking	Downward norm setting
Diversify the team		Diverse teams are less likely to have common group norms		
Analogical reasoning		Can lead teams to think about different, nontraditional ideas		
Brainwriting	Especially helpful if the individual group members are accountable	Members are not influenced by others	Everyone can be productive at the same time	Individuals are aware of others' performance
Nominal group technique		Members are not influenced by others	Everyone can be productive at the same time	Members are less inclined to adjust performance
Creating organizational memory			Group members are less likely to repeat ideas	
Trained facilitators	Trained facilitators can keep motivation high	Trained facilitator can use strategies to avoid conformity	Trained facilitators can use strategies to avoid production blocking	
High benchmarks	Clear and high goals reduce loafing			Each member will be reminded of benchmark, which serves as the key goal
Membership change	Individuals may be less likely to loaf when newcomers are present	Group norms may be more scrutinized (less conformity)		Team has exposure to different and potentially higher benchmarks
Electronic brainstorming		Removal of group pressure because of greater (perceived) anonymity	Virtually completed eliminated	
Create a playground	If people are motivated and intrigued, they are less likely to loaf	Nonconformist spaces lead to nonconformist behavior.		

Appendix A
Instructions for the observer:

You will observe the team(s) and attempt to answer the following questions adapted from Bowditch and Buono (2005). You will report back to the class at the end of the exercise when each student will be asked to report on his/her experience.

- *Participation:* Who does and does not participate? How does the team deal with members who do not participate?
- *Influence:* Who is influential? Is there competition for influence?
- *Decision making:* How are decisions made? How are member opinions solicited?
- *Task functions:* Does someone suggest or ask for ways to proceed? Was there any specific or organized approach to the exercise? Does someone keep the team focused on the task? What were the steps followed by the team?
- *Maintenance functions: H*ow are ideas and opinions accepted or rejected? Did you witness the brainstorming ideas?
- *Feelings:* What kind of nonverbal cues or body language reflect the feelings of group members?
- *Norms:* Do members avoid confrontations? Do members fall into "group-think" patterns?
- Observe and rate the team on:
  - The **quantity** of ideas discussed and/or tried
  - The **variety in types** of ideas tried (a wide range of significantly different ideas as opposed to a greater number of small variations on the same basic theme)
  - The **originality or uniqueness** of the team's ideas.

Appendix B

Experience Feedback Form   Team # _____

Based on the exercise that you have just completed in teams, please answer the following by providing as many details as possible including any recollection of the order in which you and your group undertook the task.

(1) *Describe the process your team used to generate an initial approach to the task.*

(2) *Describe the team/effort process. Comment on any emerging roles that took place.*

(3) *What did you learn from participating in the exercise?*

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