

Thinking Space Paper No.19

Entrepreneurial Soft Skills - 12 practical exercises

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Positive Self-Concept

Activity: SWOB Analysis

Objective: For entrepreneurs to begin to understand that they are the driver of their businesses and recognising the skills and weaknesses they have can help them to improve their business; to help participants start to focus on specific skill areas they want to work on over the course of this programme.

Time: 00:45

Resources & room-set up:

- Paper and pens
- Flipchart paper (with a list of participant names) and sticky notes & marker pens

Procedures for delivery:

1. Completing the SWOB – 20 mins

- Explain that we're going to spend the next 30 minutes thinking about our strengths and weaknesses, and what they mean for our businesses. We're going to do this through a SWOB analysis – they might have heard of a swot analysis before but this is slightly different.
- Invited participants to draw a large rectangle divided into four equal parts. In the top left part they should write the word "strengths" (see below for the full diagram). In this section their own their own strengths. Here, "strengths" does not mean what they are good at necessarily – sometimes we can be good at doing something but not enjoy it.

What is important here is that they choose things that they enjoy, what they feel energised, strong and confident when they're doing. These can also be things that they are proud of. These things can be big (saving people's live) or small (making cookies). If they find it difficult to think of things, they can think of things other people have complimented them for that they felt good about.

Before writing each thing down they should try to visualise a time where they were doing this thing or using this skill. They have 5 minutes to complete this activity.

- Repeat the activity when the bottom left corner, where they should write "opportunities". Based on what they wrote in strengths they should try to brainstorm all the opportunities that these strengths bring them. How are they using their strengths now? How could they use them in new ways? How might they use their strengths to help other people – family, friends, customers, community?

They don't have to think too big here – small things like making people smile, or making

people feel secure, are also really powerful. And they shouldn't necessarily be thinking about how they can use them as a direct product or service for their business - some business opportunities might come up that they haven't thought of but that is not the purpose of the exercise.

Give a maximum for 5 minutes for this but they may not need so long.

- Repeat with the top right corner, where they should write "weaknesses". These are not things that they are bad/unskilled at, rather they are things that make them feel weak, disempowered, incapable or unconfident.

However, they should also be things that form a part of their everyday life. Some examples might be "replying to all of the emails in my inbox", "keeping my accounts", "staying in touch with friends". As with their strengths, they should try to visualise a time where they felt like this – what emotions and behaviours were associated with it?

What is important is that these things negatively impact their feels or mood, and maybe even their business or relationships. Again, give 5 minutes to complete this.

- Finally, repeat with the bottom right, where they should write "barriers". These are the things that prevent them from strengthening or overcoming their weaknesses, or achieving their full potential. In the examples above, the barrier to replying to all emails might be the feeling that I have to get the wording perfect; for keeping my accounts it might be that I'm not confident about what I should be doing...

Again, maximum 5 minutes.

Guidelines:

- In order to break up the periods spent in silence thinking, the facilitator can check in with the group after completing each section to find out how they found it, was it easy/difficult, etc.
- Some quiet background music (instrumental so as not to disturb the thinking) might also make the activity feel less formal.
- While they are writing, the facilitator should walk around checking that participants are thinking about the right things.

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Barriers</u>

2. Reflection and small group discussion – 15 mins

- Participants should now take 2 minutes to reflect on their SWOB analysis, especially the Opportunities and Barriers. Think about the following questions:
 - What excites you about the opportunities you see for yourself? Had you thought about them before? Is there anything that is stopping you achieving these opportunities (that should go in the barriers)?
 - What would life be like if they could overcome their barriers? What is stopping them overcoming their barriers? What would it take to overcome one or more of the barriers?
- Participants make groups of around 3 people and share their thoughts and what they have discovered about themselves. They should discuss:
 - How they see their strengths and weaknesses reflected in the outcomes in their lives and/or business so far. For example: “I really like talking to people and finding out about them and I can see that I have a strong personal relationship with my regular clients”; “I don’t like spending time organising my calendar and appointments, but because of this I sometimes have a lot of work to do around deadlines”
 - How they could work more to their strengths, use them more effectively or benefit from them more?
 - Which are their biggest barriers to overcome (the ones that would bring the most meaningful changes if they were removed)?
 - (based on the above points) Which areas they would like to work on the most in this programme?

Emotional & Social Intelligence

Activity: Empathy in business - perceptual positions

Objective: To help participants rationalise disagreements and differences of opinion by trying to empathise with others, rather than getting negatively emotional.

Time: 00:40

Resources & room-set up:

- 3 chairs for every 2 participants (meaning 50% more chairs than the number of participants)
- Video – Don’t judge - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fzn_AKN67oI
- Laptop, projector, speakers

Procedures for delivery:

1. Introduction – 10 mins

- Show the video “Don’t judge” (but do not share the title of the video with the group). Pause just after 2 minutes, as the boy runs away again. Ask the participants to describe what has happened so far – focus on the past not what might happen.
 - How does the boy feel? Why?

- How does the girl feel? Why?
- Play the rest of the video. How do both characters feel by the end of the video?
 - What was the problem?
 - Example answer: The boy judged the reasons for the girl's behaviour before he explored why. His assumption that she could hear meant that he interpreted her behaviour from his own perspective, not hers. This caused negative emotions.
 - How does this relate to business?
 - Example answer: we might assume our customers want one type of product but really they want another¹.
- Ask the group of any situations from their business or personal life when they have judged/reacted wrongly and had a negative outcome. It can be a small or large example.
- Introduce the concept of empathy and its importance as an entrepreneur. As we have seen, our view of the world is just one view – other people may see the world very differently, but their perspectives might be just as valid as ours. Explain that we can develop empathy by regularly trying to see the world from someone else's perspective.

2. Perceptual positions activity – 15 mins

- Explain the following rules to the participants before they break into pairs.
 - The participants will make pairs (if there is an odd number there can be one 3). Each pair takes 3 chairs and puts them in a small circle facing inwards.
 - The pair numbers the chair, 1, 2 and 3. Each chair represents a perspective:
 - Chair 1 represents the perspective of the person telling the story – this is the story teller's personal real life perspective of what happened and how it made them feel.
 - Chair 2 represents the perspective of the other person in the story, how they saw the events from their context, how it made them feel, and how their feelings influenced their behaviour.
 - Chair 3 represents the perspective of an objective observer, with no connection to the story, and their interpretation of events with no biases to either person in the story.
 - The pair will take turns to tell a story about a difficult time they had with another person in their business life. It could be an argument, a misunderstanding, a disagreement – but the person telling the story must be no of the people having the argument.
 - In the pair, decide who is A and who is B. The Person A sits in Chair 1, and Person B sits in Chair 3 (Chair 2 is empty). The Person A takes 2 minutes to tell his/her story – the context, what happened, how it made him/her feel, what the other person did, etc. Person B says nothing – just listens carefully, trying to understand the story.
 - After 2 minutes, the facilitator signals the time is up. The Person A now moves to Chair 2. He/She is now becoming the other person in the story. He/She should retell

¹ It is possible to connect this with design thinking/human centred design, if participants are familiar with these concepts.

exactly the same story but from the perspective of that person (speaking as though he/she is that person). Before starting the story from this perspective, the Person A should take 30 seconds to imagine the context from this character's perspective – what was happening in their life at the time? What were the priorities? What was the emotional state? What were their motivations? What did they act the way they did? Etc. Person A takes 2 minutes to retell the story from the new perspective.

Again, the Person B listens.

- After 2 minutes, the facilitator signals the time is up. Now, in 2 minutes, Person B retells the same story completely objectively, without making any judgements about who is right or wrong, as though it was a movie or a book. At the end of the 2 minutes, briefly discuss in the pair how the 3 stories differed.
- Repeat the activity with Person B giving their story.

Persuasion & Negotiation

Activity: Luma Oranges Ltd

Objective: Allow participants to experience a situation where they need to negotiate to get what is needed for their business.

Time: 00:55

Resources:

- Instructions for teams:
 - **Producers:**

You are the only producer of Luma oranges in the country, a rare type of oranges, with seeds imported from a distant country. The Luma oranges, according to latest research, have a great curative power and can be used in the composition of powerful drugs to fight serious diseases.

You have a very limited production, but soon you will be receiving some proposals from large laboratories.

The laboratories that are interested in the production of Luma Oranges need only one of the components of the Orange: one needs the skin and the other needs the flesh. But this detail will not be addressed by you. It is expected that the representatives of the Laboratories will, at some point, realise that and propose a win-win agreement. There is still juice and seeds left. The seeds you will need to keep for re-planting.

You have invested a lot in producing this type of orange and are expecting a good profit from it.

This demand from Laboratories values the Luma oranges even more.
 - **Laboratory 1**

You are part of a group of scientists that work for a large multinational laboratory, Labhealth, which is about to discover a drug that will be the definitive solution for

the cure of diabetes. They are only dependent on a rare raw material, the Luma orange skin, which is very difficult to find on the market.

You have just discovered a Luma orange producer in the country, which has a production below Labhealth's needs. But due to the great difficulty in obtaining this rare species of orange, you will endeavor all your efforts to guarantee that this production is fully provided to you for this great project.

Closing the deal with this producer will be the solution for Labhealth to overcome all its financial problems and become a global leader in light of the discovery of this drug.

○ **Laboratory 2**

You are part of a group of scientists that work for a large multinational laboratory, Labmed, which is about to discover a drug that prevents and cures any type of cancer. They are only dependent on a rare raw material, the Luma orange flesh, which is very difficult to find on the market.

You have just heard from a producer whose entire production would meet the laboratory's need to put on the market this fantastic drug that would prevent and alleviate the suffering of many people. Labmed's great challenge is to convince this so rare and valued oranges producer, to supply all its production for the benefit of this project, which will be a great achievement for humanity, besides launching Labmed among the largest laboratories in the world.

Room-set up: 3 round tables with chairs to accommodate participants, who will be split into 3 groups for the activity.

Procedures for delivery:

1. Set up Activity - 5 mins

- Tell participants that they will now experience a negotiation activity called 'Luma Oranges Ltd'.
- Explain that they will be split into 3 groups:
 - One group will represent the farmers who produce the Luma oranges;
 - Two groups will represent potential buyers (don't mention that they are both laboratories who want to buy only parts of the oranges).
- Each potential buyer needs to convince the producers to sell them what they need. The group who achieves this result will win the activity.
- They will have 20 mins in total for the negotiation.
- Split participants into 3 groups, distribute the roles, and ask them to go to different areas of the room where they cannot listen each other.
- Handout the introductions for each team.
- Explain that groups will read the instructions, create a strategy for the negotiation and choose one or two representatives that will carry out the negotiation on behalf of the group.
- They will have 10 minutes for the preparation.

2. Preparation time – 10 mins

- Groups start to prepare their negotiation strategy.
- As soon as the preparation time starts, go to the group who is representing the farmers and reinforce the fact that they cannot mention that each laboratory wants only one specific part of the orange. They need to find out by themselves during the negotiations.
- Stay close to all the groups in case they have any questions.

3. Running the activity – 20 mins

- Ask the representative(s) from the farmers to prepare a table, where they will welcome the representatives from the labs and start the negotiation. The other members of the group can stay close, but they are not allowed to interfere in the negotiation while the meetings are happening (but they can have discussions with representatives in between meetings).
- Make sure that the 2 other groups (laboratories) cannot hear what is going on during the negotiations at that table.
- Tell that the representatives of the laboratories can take turns to meet the farmers and carry out the negotiations. They can have as many meetings as they want during the 15 minutes of the activity and can go back to their groups for discussion at any time. By the end of the 15 minutes, they should all have reached a decision.
- Once you have given the instructions, leave the group to find their own dynamic for the activity. But stay close in case they have questions.
- Everything is allowed in the activity, even a meeting between the 3 groups (farmers and the 2 labs). So, don't interfere if they all decide to go down this route.
- Tell the group when they have 10, 5 and 2 minutes left.
- Once the groups have reached an agreement or when the time is up, ask the group what the decision is.
- Invite all participants to go back to the circle to have a quick debrief about the activity.

4. Debrief – 20 mins

- Invite all participants to sit in a circle again for the activity debrief.
- You can use the following questions to support the debrief:
 - How was the activity for you?
 - How did you feel during the exercise?
 - What strategies have you used during the negotiation? Did they help?
 - How do you evaluate the negotiation and the final decision?
 - How does this activity relate to your real life as entrepreneurs?
 - What could you do differently from now on to achieve better results in situations like this?
- Finish the discussion by saying that being a good negotiator is essential for any entrepreneur and, as any other skill, it can be improved with knowledge and practice. Therefore, it is so important that they continue to seek information about how to be better at negotiation and that they expose themselves to situations where this skill is needed.

Working with others

Activity: The Bonfire

Objective: Exercise the ability to get people to accept ideas and work towards a specific goal.

Time: 00:45

Resources:

- Matchsticks (30 per group)
- Blindfold (for 1/3 of participants)

Room-set up: One table available for every 3 participants. 30 matchsticks and 1 blindfold on each table.

Procedures for delivery:

1. Set up Activity - 5 mins

- Before starting the activity, prepare all the tables with the materials listed above.
- Tell participants that they will now experience a situation where they will need to work closely with another person to achieve a set goal.
- Explain how the activity works:
 - Participants split into groups of 3 people.
 - Within each group, they decide who is the INSTRUCTOR, who is the OPERATOR and who is the AUDITOR.
 - Each group receives 30 matchsticks and will have 10 minutes to build a bonfire by stacking up 4 sticks on top of another 4 sticks, crossed, until they reach the top or until the execution time has run out.
 - Only the INSTRUCTOR is allowed to speak.
 - The OPERATOR will be blindfolded and is the only person allowed to touch the matchsticks. They must follow the instructions given by the INSTRUCTOR.
 - The AUDITOR will move to a different group and will observe how instructor and operator work together. They need to make sure that all rules are followed by both. The group needs to start the activity from zero every time a rule is broken.
- Ask participants to split into groups of 3 people and choose one of the tables available. If any participant remains without a group, ask them to act as AUDITORS going around to different groups to observe how they perform the activity.
- Ask OPERATORS to put on the blindfold.
- Ask AUDITORS to move to a different group.

2. Running the activity – 20 mins

- Ask participants to start the activity, reminding them that they will have 10 minutes to perform their function.
- Stay close to the groups in case they have questions.
- Tell participants when they have 5 and 2 minutes left.

- If any group finishes the activity earlier, tell them that the OPERATOR can take off the blindfold and see what they have achieved. Ask them to stay quiet so they don't disturb the other groups.
- When time is over, ask all OPERATORS to take off the blindfolds and see what they have achieved.
- Ask participants to switch roles as they wish.
- Ask AUDITORS to move to a different group.
- Groups will then have another 10 minutes to perform the activity in their new roles.
- Repeat procedures.

Ideation & Creative Thinking

Activity: Egg Drop

Objective: To show participants the value of divergent thinking in increasing the possible options, before selecting an idea to solve a problem.

Time: 00:50

Resources:

- The following material for each group of 4 participants:
 - 2 large sheets of paper
 - 2 raw eggs (1 for practice, 1 for demonstration)
 - 2 balloons
 - 30cm masking tape
 - 100cm string
- A selection of stationery 'tools' such as Scissors, rulers, pens, pencils
- Measuring tape
- Cleaning products (for after the activity)

Room-set up:

- Separate workstations for each group of 4
- A high balcony/window – preferably 3m above a hard surface (not grass)

Procedures for delivery:

- Explain to participants that they will now have a chance to practise ideation by coming up with a solution to a difficult problem. Explain that they must design a method for dropping a raw egg from a height of 3m (or whatever height of balcony/window is available) to the ground without the egg breaking. Show the participants the full set of materials they have to work with, pointing out that while they can use tools such as scissors, pencils, etc. while creating their solution, they cannot use them as part of the final product.
- Explain that resources are limited – there is not enough to build prototypes before the final test. They will therefore be focusing on theoretical ideation.

- Invite all participants to spend **5 minutes** individually ideating. They should try to come up with the best solution to the problem on their own. They are allowed to look at the materials available, but not touch them. They must think the problem through. They are also allowed to draw/write/make calculations, etc.
- After the 5 minutes, ask participants to make a pair with another participant. In their pair they now have **10 minutes** to share their solutions and decide which is best. It is possible that combining elements of both solutions might create the best solutions – this is OK too.
- After the 10 minutes, ask each pair to join another pair (making a group of 4). Make sure each group of 4 is sitting at a separate table/workstation. They now have a final **15 minutes** to share their ideas, come up with the best solution, build the solution and test it. Distribute one set of materials to each group. Explain that each group has *only 1 egg* to practise with – the other egg must be saved for the final demonstration.
- At the end of the 15 minutes, stop all design & building work. Bring all groups together to demonstrate their solutions one at a time, dropping their eggs from the window/balcony. Celebrate any successes in the group - if appropriate award prizes.
- Bring the group together for a final debrief. Discussion questions could include:
 - How did you feel at the beginning when you heard about the challenge?
 - Did that feeling change as you went through the different phases with other participants in pairs/4s?
 - Did any group have a final solution that remained unchanged from the individual planning, through the pair planning and group planning?
 - How different were the ideas that different members of the group brought in each phase?
 - How many different ideas did each individual generate? And how many different/unique ideas had the group generated between them by the end?
 - Was it better to solve this problem as individuals or as a group? Why?
 - How does this activity relate to their business/lives as entrepreneurs? Do the different elements of the activity (e.g. the egg, the limited materials, the individual/group brainstorming) relate to specific things in business?
 - What can they learn from this to apply to their daily business?
- Wrap up the debrief by summarising the discussion. Share that it is natural that each person has their own world view and will therefore see a problem (and its solution) in their own way. This might mean they are blind to other aspects of the problem/solution – bringing in ideas from other people with different perspectives can help find a more appropriate solution (divergent thinking). However, there comes a point where the number of ideas has to be reduced to a final selection (convergent thinking) otherwise no progress is made.

Guidelines:

- If your group has problems with abstract situations, you can give them a scenario that their client wants them to design a solution for dropping medicine from aeroplanes, but the medicine cannot be damaged. The egg represents the medicine, and the limited resources reflects the available budget.
- It is possible that your group will not divide perfectly into groups of 4. In the pairs round it is fine to have one group of 3 if you have an odd number of participants in your group. In the

group round, if you have one pair left over, split the pair to make two groups of 5. In the debrief, it may be interesting to see if the groups that had more input (i.e. those with 5 people) perform differently from the other groups.

- If eggs are not available/practical/appropriate, you can replace them with some other object. It is important that the object is small but relatively heavy and fragile. An alternative might be a bubble of water wrapped in cling film/saran wrap/kitchen wrap.

Decision Making

Activity: Desert survival

Objective: To experience a decision-making situation and identify whether they perform better with or without valuable information regarding the topic, and if they perform better as an individual or as a group.

Time: 01:10

Resources:

- Pens
- Desert Survival – Scenario

It is approximately 10:00 am in mid-July and you have just crash landed in the Atacama Desert in South America.

Your light twin-engined plane containing the bodies of the pilot and co-pilot has completely burned out with only the frame remaining. None of you have been injured.

The pilot was unable to notify anyone of your position before the crash. However, he had indicated before impact that you were 50 miles from a mining camp, which is the nearest known settlement, and approximately 65 miles off the course that was filed in your Flight Plan. The immediate area is quite flat, except for occasional cacti, and appears to be rather barren.

The last weather report indicated that the temperature would reach 110 F today, which means that the temperature at ground level will be 130 F.

You are dressed in lightweight clothing-short-sleeved shirts, pants, socks, and street shoes. Everyone has a handkerchief and collectively, you have 3 packs of cigarettes and a ballpoint pen.

Before your plane caught fire, your group was able to salvage the 15 items listed on the “Salvaged Items” page.

Your task is to rank these items according to their importance to your survival, starting with a “1” for the most important, to a “15” for the least important.

- Desert Survival – Score Sheet

	<i>My ranking #1</i>	<i>My error #1</i>	<i>My ranking #2</i>	<i>My error #2</i>	<i>Team ranking</i>	<i>Team error</i>	<i>Answer</i>
<i>Torch with 4 battery-cells</i>							
<i>Folding knife</i>							
<i>Air map of the area</i>							
<i>Plastic raincoat (large size)</i>							
<i>Magnetic compass</i>							
<i>First-aid kit</i>							
<i>45 calibre pistol (loaded)</i>							
<i>Parachute (red & white)</i>							
<i>Bottle of 1000 salt tablets</i>							
<i>2 litres of water per person</i>							
<i>A book entitled 'Desert Animals That Can Be Eaten'</i>							
<i>Sunglasses (for everyone)</i>							
<i>2 litres of 180 proof liquor</i>							
<i>Overcoat (for everyone)</i>							
<i>A cosmetic mirror</i>							
<i>Score</i>	-		-		-		-

- Desert Survival – Rationale

Torch with 4 battery-cells:

Essential for night time use

Folding knife:

For cutting rope, food, etc.

Air map of the area:

To have idea on present location

Magnetic compass:

Since awaiting rescue this isn't of much other use

Plastic raincoat (large size):

To collect dew overnight

First-aid kit:

Everybody is safe at present

45 calibre pistol (loaded):

For defence. Three shots from a gun is also a recognised distress signal

Bottle of 1000 salt tablets:

Of no use in desert

Parachute (red & white):

Use as a tent

A book entitled 'Desert Animals That Can Be Eaten':

Food is less important than water in the desert. Digestion consumes water.

2 litres of water per person:

For drinking. A person actually requires a gallon of water a day in the desert.

2 litres of 180 proof liquor:

Useful as an antiseptic only as alcohol causes dehydration

Room-set up: Participants sitting in a semi-circle.

Procedures for delivery:

1. Individual Thinking - 15 mins

- Handover one copy of the Desert Survival scenario to each participant and read through this with them.
- Handover one copy of the Score Sheet to each participant and ask them to start the activity by working individually to put the items in order of importance (assume all are in good condition), 1 being the most important item and 15 the least important one. They will record this in the “My Ranking #1” column of the score sheet.
- They should not discuss this with anyone else at this stage.
- Give them 10 minutes for this step of the exercise.

2. Individual Thinking (with information about rationale) - 10 mins

- Tell participants that for the second stage of this exercise, they will have access to specialist information about how important (or not) some items are.
 - Give the rationale from 2 items to each participant, making sure all 15 items are equally distributed. You might have to print 3 or 4 copies of the annex, depending on the number of participants.
 - They are not allowed to share the information they receive with anyone else at this point.
3. Based on the rationale they received, they will put the items in order of importance again, recording it on the “My Ranking #1” column of the score sheet.
 4. They should not discuss this with anyone else at this stage.
 5. Give them 10 minutes for this step of the exercise.

3. Group Thinking - 15 mins

- Ask participants to split into groups of 4 people (or 3, depending on the total number of participants), making sure they partner with people who have the rationale for different items than they have.
- Explain that they are the real people who have crashed on the plane. And as a team, they are allowed to share the information they have with each other, but not with other groups.
- Give the groups 15 minutes to come to a consensus on each item on the list and to write their agreed responses in the “Team Ranking” column.
- Instruct them not to change their individual responses.
- Remind participants when there are 10, 5 and 2 minutes left.
- When the time is up bring the group back together .

4. Results - 10 mins

- Go through the answers with participants, asking them to write the right scores on the last column.

Desert Survival - Answers		
Item	Rank	Rationale
Torch with 4 battery-cells	4	Essential for night time use
Folding knife	6	For cutting rope, food, etc.
Air map of the area	12	To have idea on present location
Plastic raincoat (large size)	7	To collect dew overnight
Magnetic compass	11	Since awaiting rescue this isn't of much other use
First-aid kit	10	Everybody is safe at present
45 calibre pistol (loaded)	8	For defence. Three shots from a gun is also a recognised distress signal
Parachute (red & white)	5	Use as a tent
Bottle of 1000 salt tablets	15	Of no use in desert
2 litres of water per person	3	For drinking. A person actually requires a gallon of water a day in the desert.
A book entitled 'Desert Animals That Can Be Eaten'	13	Food is less important than water than water in the desert. Digestion consumes water.
Sunglasses (for everyone)	9	Protection against glare.
2 litres of 180 proof liquor	14	Useful as an antiseptic only as alcohol causes dehydration
Overcoat (for everyone)	2	Essential protection in desert – clothing helps ration sweat by slowing evaporation and prolonging the cooling effect.
A cosmetic mirror	1	Means of visual signalling

- Participants are then invited to work out the numerical difference between their ranking and the 'right' ranking just shared by you.
- For example: if the answer is rank 7 and they said rank 1, then the difference is 6. If the ranking was 1 and they answered 3, the difference is 2. Do not use minus figures.
- They will then sum all the results and register the final scores in the last row of the table.
- They need to do this for their own 2 rankings (#1 - without rationale; and #2 - with rationale) and their team ranking.
- The lowest the final score the better!

Action Focus

Activity: The Marshmallow/Spaghetti challenge

Objective: To introduce the importance of starting with small actions and experimentation, rather than using too much time on planning and thinking; to demonstrate that taking small actions, testing and experimenting, can be a good way to progress in a VUCA world.

Time: 01:00

Resources & room-set up:

- Two sets of the following materials per team, in a bag or envelope:
 - 20 Sticks of spaghetti
 - 1 meter of string
 - 1 meter of tape (paper tape/masking tape if possible so that it is easy to tear; if using cellophane tape you should make scissors available to cut it)
 - 1 medium-sized marshmallow
- A measuring tape (for checking the height of towers)
- Flipchart/whiteboard (for recording results)
- A separate workspace/table for each team of 4-5 people

Procedures for delivery:

1. Set up the activity (5 mins)

- Explain that before we start discussing the importance of an action focus, we will run a brief team challenge where we can look at how the team works together. Participants should split into teams and each team goes to a separate workspace/table.
- Explain that each team will be given a set of materials which they will use to build the tallest free-standing tower possible in a limited amount of time. The tower should support a marshmallow (included in the materials) on top, which marks its highest point.
- Distribute the materials packs, and tell participants that they have a few seconds to look at the contents before you give rest of the rules.
- Give the following instructions to the teams:
 - **Build the tallest freestanding structure** as measured from the table surface to the top of the marshmallow. The structure may not be suspended from another structure (like a chair, or the ceiling).
 - **The entire marshmallow must be on top of the structure.** Cutting or eating part of the marshmallow disqualifies the team.
 - **Teams can use as many or as few of the 20 spaghetti sticks** as needed, and as much or as little of the string or tape. (The team cannot use the paper bag / envelope as part of their structure, or any other external materials)
 - **Teams may break the spaghetti and cut the tape and string** as needed to create the structure. However, they cannot get replacements for materials cut or broken by mistake.

- **Complete the challenge in 18 minutes.** Teams may not hold or support the structure in place when the time stops. Touching or supporting the structure at the end of the exercise disqualifies the team.
 - Begin the activity and start the timer.
- 2. Run the activity (18 mins)**
- While the teams are working on their towers, the facilitator should observe the behaviour of the teams. Pay particular attention to the following points so that you can refer to specific examples in the debrief:
 - How much discussion went on in the teams?
 - How soon did they start experimenting/prototyping with placing the marshmallow on top?
 - Any failures that happened – when did they happen?
 - How was activity distributed throughout the time available? Was there a rush of activity at the end?
 - Give time warnings at halfway, 5 mins remaining, and 1 min. When time is up, everyone must step back from their tower to allow it to be measured. Measure the heights of the towers, and record these, along with failures, on the flipchart/whiteboard.
- 3. Debrief Part 1 (10 mins)**
- The debrief for this activity will take place in two parts – this first part will allow participants to explore what happened during the activity and what prevented them from getting great results. Participants will then have the opportunity to retry the activity before a final debrief which will allow them to learn from the activity. In this part, explore the following areas:
 - How did the participants feel during the activity?
 - Were they satisfied with the outcomes?
 - If not, what went wrong that prevented them from getting the results they hoped for?
 - Explore how long they spent on planning vs practical prototyping (use observations from facilitator)
 - Did they wait until the very end before they put the marshmallow on?
 - What would they do differently if they tried it again?
- 4. Rerun activity (18 mins)**
- Participants go back to their initial groups, receive a new pack of materials, and run the activity again.
 - Facilitator observes activity for any differences in strategy/approach.
 - At the end of the activity, make measurements and record results on the flipchart/whiteboard.
- 5. Debrief Part 2 (10 mins)**
- Bring the teams together for the debrief. Suggested points of discussion are:
 - How was this time different from last time? What did they do differently?
 - Did they experiment/prototype more in the early stages? If so, what was the result?

- What conclusions can we draw about managing our time when it comes to theoretical planning vs practical 'doing'? Is there an 'ideal' balance of planning vs doing?
 - What does this mean for our lives/businesses? Can you think of real situations where leaving action until the last minute can be negative?
- If useful for discussions, share some key insights from the marshmallow challenge used globally (adapted from Tom Wujec's website):
 - Children do better than business students because they start by trying out what works and what doesn't – they start with the marshmallow and they prototype early on. Business students plan for too long, trying to seek the 'perfect' solution, and leave the marshmallow until last (when they find their assumptions in the plan were wrong and it's too late to fix).
 - The Marshmallow is a metaphor for the hidden assumptions of a project: The assumption in the Marshmallow Challenge is that marshmallows are light and fluffy and easily supported by the spaghetti sticks. When you actually try to build the structure, the marshmallows don't seem so light. The lesson in the marshmallow challenge is that we need to identify the assumptions in our project—the real needs, the cost of the product, the duration of the service—and test them early and often. That's the mechanism that leads to effective innovation.
- Possible conclusions:
 - Planning is necessary but we often do too much because:
 - It feels safe to plan – nothing goes wrong while planning
 - We're afraid of failing or doing something imperfect
 - We're uncomfortable with uncertainty and think planning will give us more certainty.
 - By taking action early we can:
 - Make small mistakes early on when the risks are lower.
 - Learn from our mistakes and change plans if we need to (while there is still time)
 - In a VUCA world that is uncertain and constantly changing, our assumptions may be incorrect. Therefore planning based on those assumptions might be wrong. We can test our assumptions by taking small actions (prototyping) and assessing the results.

VUCA Skills

Activity: Basket risk game

Objective: To demonstrate the differences between risk and uncertainty, and show how they can impact decision making

Time: 00:40

Resources & room-set up:

- Paper balls (a sheet of paper crumpled into a ball) – enough for 3 balls per participant

- One bin/basket per team (these should be the same size to make the game as fair as possible)
- Paper tape/masking tape (for marking the floor)
- Flip charts (for recording the scores of each team)

Procedures for delivery:

1. Setup (before starting)

- A demonstration video of this activity can be found here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rz1kzGdron0>
Note: the video shows the whole group using one throwing range. We will use one range per team to save time and keep the element of secrecy around scores.
- Set up as many ball throwing ranges as there are teams in the group (there should be teams with equal numbers of about 4 or 5 participants per team).
- One ball throwing range consists of:
 - One basket at the end of the range.
 - 10 strips of masking tape on the floor, the first about 2 strides from the basket, then the rest at about 30 cm intervals.
 - Write the numbers 1-10 on the strips of masking tapes.
- Distribute 3 paper balls per team member to each throwing range.

2. Round 1 – individual team activity (10 mins)

- Divide the group into equal teams of around 4-5 participants, and assign each team to a throwing range.
- Tell the group that they are entering into a competition to get investment for their businesses. In order to enter the competition they must first show they can predict the number of points their team can score in a game. If they predict a number too high and do not achieve it, they will not be allowed to enter the competition. If they predict a number too low, they will not be eligible to enter the competition anyway (but unfortunately they do not know the minimum score required to enter the competition)
- Explain the rules:
 - Each team member gets 3 paper balls to throw into the basket.
 - They have to stand behind one of the tape markers to throw.
 - If they get the ball into the basket, they score the number of points marked on the tape they stood at.
 - If they do not get the ball into the basket they score 0 points.
 - They can throw from the same tape position for all 3 throws, or from different positions each throw.
 - Each person has a maximum of 1 minute to complete their 3 throws.
 - If any team has fewer team members than the others, one of their team members should throw twice (for example, if Team A has 5 people, B has 5, and C has 4, one of Team C's members should throw twice.)
- Give teams 3 minutes to discuss their strategy and make a prediction of their total team score. They should be aiming as high as possible for their score, but it should also be

achievable. They should discuss the risks involved in predicting the right score, and make a decision based on their individual confidence of getting achieving a high score. Remember they are predicting the total score for the whole team, with each member throwing 3 times.

- **NOTE:** During this time *they are NOT allowed ANY practice throws.*
- After 3 minutes each team should write their prediction on a piece of paper. This score is shown to the facilitator but not the other teams.
- The teams now have 5 minutes (or one minute per team member) to make their throws. They should keep their own score (as it is not feasible for the facilitator to monitor everything) but the facilitator should circulate among the groups to ensure there is no cheating.
- At the end of the time, groups total their scores and see if they have achieved their predictions. They share with the group whether they achieved their prediction (yes or no) and if yes, how many they scored over their prediction (for example, achieved the prediction exactly; 6 points over the prediction, etc.) They should not share their initial predictions or final scores with other teams.

3. Round 2 – competition (10 mins)

- Explain that all teams have been allowed to enter the competition (even if they failed to meet their target, the facilitator can explain that all teams achieved the minimum score for entry). They must now repeat this activity, but this time they will be competing against each other.
- The winning team will be the one that makes the highest prediction of their own score AND achieves that score. The team will only be rated on their prediction – for example, if they predict a score of 50 and score 60, they will still only receive 50 points in the competition against the other teams. If they predict a high score but do not achieve it, they will score 0.
- Once they have made their predictions they write them on a piece of paper and hand them to the facilitator. Again, scores are kept secret from the other teams.
- The teams then have 5 minutes to make their throws and keep score. Facilitator circulates to ensure no cheating.
- After the time is up, the teams total their scores and share with the facilitator who reveals to the group. When sharing the scores with the whole group, try to keep the suspense by starting with the predictions of all teams first. Then share the actual scores and reveal the winning team.

Maximising Opportunities

Activity: Opportunity identification

Objective: Help entrepreneurs to learn to expand the way they think about opportunities in the world around them and understand that opportunities grow when they move beyond the easy answers that are right in front of them.

Time: 01:00

Resources:

- Everyday life image (of your choice)
- Awareness test video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4>
- Projector
- Laptop
- Speakers
- Flipchart
- Marker pens

Room-set up: Participants sitting in a circle at the beginning, and then working in small groups for most of the activity.

Procedures for delivery:

1. Round 1: Identifying opportunities – 15 mins

- Ask participants to split into groups of 3-4 people.
- Handover one copy of an everyday life image of your choice to each group.
- With photos in hand, give the groups the following instruction:
 - Based on the image that has been provided to you, conduct a brief 3-4 minutes search to identify at least 3 interesting entrepreneurial opportunities that could provide a product or service that could impact this given scene.
- Make sure that the assignment is understood by everyone and answer any questions that participants might have.
- After 3-4 minutes, ask participants to come back to the circle and tell that now they will present the business opportunities they identified.
- Have each group quickly present the opportunities they found and the pain/problem those opportunities could solve. Write them all on the flipchart.
- There might be some overlaps, so make sure to capture in the flipchart the number of groups that identified the same opportunity.
- After the presentations, invite participants to look back at the flipchart and ask the following question: How deep did you actually go in terms of seeking out entrepreneurial opportunities in your scene?

2. Awareness test – 10 mins

- Show the Awareness test video.
- If the training is not in English, you can read the following translation:
 - At the beginning: This is an awareness test. How many passes does the team in white make?
 - In the middle: The right answer is 13. But did you see the moonwalking bear?
 - At the end: It's easy to miss something you're not looking for.
- After the video, ask participants the following questions:
 - How did you find the video?

- How many of you noticed the bear when you first saw it?
- Why did most of you missed it?
- What can we learn though this video?
- Now, thinking about the previous exercise (opportunity identification), how can you push yourselves further? How to put a fresh twist on ideas that you already had?
- Explain to participants that entrepreneurs need to be aware of potential opportunities that other people cannot see, instead of being too focused on and too passionate about a single idea.

3. Round 2: Identifying new opportunities – 15 minutes

- In light of the previous discussion, tell participants that now they will have a second round of the exercise.
- They will do the exact same thing, but every idea that was brought up in Round 1 is off limits.
- Encourage entrepreneurs to not restrict themselves to just the image they are seeing. Encourage them to think about what went into creating that image – what had to happen to make whatever is happening in that image. Encourage them to focus on what’s going on in the background, to think about what will happen next after that photo.
- Groups will have 5 minutes for the exercise.
- Once the time is up, invite all participants to come back to the circle and start presenting the new ideas they came up with. Write all the ideas down on another flipchart paper.

Future orientation

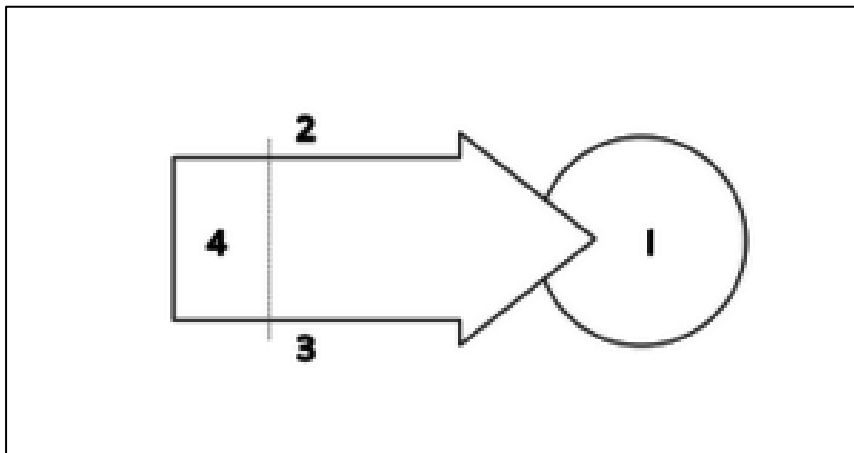
Activity: Future visualisation arrow

Objective: To develop motivation for personal development by envisioning a positive future; to empower progress towards goals by mapping manageable steps and anticipating potential barriers.

Time: 00:30

Resources & room-set up:

- Post-it notes
- Marker pens
- Flipchart paper (1 sheet or half a sheet per person)
- Flipchart with the arrow diagram below drawn on it (for participants to copy to their own flipchart paper)



Procedures for delivery:

1. Set up activity (5 mins)

- Tell participants that it is possible for us to learn new skills and keep constantly developing. This is necessary for our businesses and to stay relevant in a changing world. There will be barriers and difficulties, but how the right mindset can help us use these as opportunities for growth. We are now going to look at what we want to achieve in the future and how we can get there.
- Invite participant to make pairs. Distribute the flipchart paper (1 sheet per participant), pens and a set of post-it notes to each pair. Reveal the arrow diagram and ask them to copy it to their own sheet of paper. Once they have all completed this, they should decide in their pairs who is A and who is B.
- Explain that the diagram represents a map to their target future – where they want to be in 1 year's time – and the path to get there.

2. Run activity (20 mins)

- Person A imagines it is now 1 year in the future. They should picture what their life is like at that time – this should be the life that they want to be living at that time but it should also be realistic. Don't just focus on the external world around them (there is a tendency to focus on their business), but think of the type of person they are too. They can close their eyes if this helps, and also draw on the goals they planned during the Grit module if they want.
- Person B now interviews Person A for 2 minutes to find out what the future looks like – how is your life now? It is important that they speak about the future as if it is now, using the present tense. Person B writes the answers on post-its and sticks them in the circle at number 1 in the diagram. They should ask questions about Person A's life, personality, skills, self-image, emotional state, business situation, family situation, etc.
- Then for 2 minutes, Person B asks what Person A did in the previous year to get to this point – what actions did you take to get to this point? Again, they should be talk as though they are looking back from the future. Person B writes answers on post it notes and sticks them at point 2 on the diagram. They should feel free to ask clarifying questions to help Person A clearly visualise the details (for example: Person A – I learnt to create iPhone apps; Person B:

How did you learn? Person A: I took an online course; Person B: How long did it take? Person A: 6 months...)

- For the next 2 minutes, Person B asks person A about the difficulties and problems they encountered - *what were the challenges and difficulties that almost made you fail?* Again, write answers on post it notes and stick at point 3 on the diagram. Following from the example in the point above, this could be things like “I got sick because I had to study in the evening while working during the day”, “I got bored of the course so nearly dropped out”. Remember to ask about internal factors that might present barriers (lack of motivation, low self-esteem) as well as external.
- Finally, for 2 minutes Person B asks Person A to come back to the present day and look at the future they have mapped out for the coming year – *what actions have you already taken that or will you take in the next few days to start you on this path?* Again, note down answers on post it notes, stick them at point 4 in the diagram – the dotted vertical line represents today, so post its can be stuck either side of this. Person A now has a vision of the future they want in 1 year’s time, a set of milestones that they have to achieve to help them do this, and a warning of things that they should be careful of that might stop them achieving this.
- A & B switch roles and repeat the exercise.

3. Quick debrief (5 mins)

- How do they feel about the map they have produced? Are they happy that their vision of the future is realistic? Are the actions listed at point 2 realistic? Can they imagine overcoming the challenges at point 3?

Grit

Activity: Self-motivation

Objective: To help participants understand that interest and motivation are key elements of grit that help us achieve goals.

Time: 00:45

Resources & room-set up:

- Large pieces of blank paper, one per participant
- Coloured markers

Procedures for delivery:

1. Activity setup & reflection - 15 mins

- Following on from the video, ask the participants to think about why the pig continued to try so many different ways to get the cookies (if you already discussed this in the debrief, remind participants of the pig’s passion for the cookies)

- Tell participants they now have an opportunity to reflect on some of their successes and failures. They should think about *two times* they have worked hard to achieve a long-term goal that they succeeded to reach. They should be goals that took time to achieve, and maybe they encountered many barriers or failures, but ultimately they succeeded (for example, learning to drive, play the guitar, create their first successful product). Tell them they should draw a picture to represent each of these in the top corners of the paper.
- They should think about *two times* they have failed to achieve a long-term goal because they gave up. Perhaps they found it too difficult, got distracted by more interesting goals, or just lost interest. Tell them they should draw a picture to represent each of these in the bottom corners of the paper.
- Distribute the paper and pens. Give participants a maximum of 10 minutes to think of their 4 goals and complete their drawings (focus on speed and symbolism rather than artistic quality). Play music in the background if this helps with the atmosphere.
- After 10 minutes, ask participants to think of why they succeeded with the goals at the top and why they gave up on the goals at the bottom. Perhaps the goals at the top were really important to them (for example, learning to drive because they lived in a small village and needed to be able to drive for work) or just because they really enjoyed the challenge (learning to play the guitar). Write these reasons in a word or two next to the pictures at the top.
- Do the same with the bottom two goals they gave up on. Why did they give up on these? Write the reasons in a word or two next to each picture.

2. Group discussion - 15 mins

- Make small groups of 3 participants. In turn, each participant should briefly explain their pictures and their reasons for success or failure. Encourage others to ask one or two clarifying questions about the reasons to help uncover deeper levels of reasons, if the reason given was very general. (For example, what exactly did you enjoy about learning to play the guitar?)
- After all participants have had a chance to share their goals and their reasons for success or failure, ask them to look for any similarities in their reasons. Collect these similarities together for sharing with the whole group.

3. Activity setup & reflection - 15 mins

- Bring the group back together and share the points of similarity. The facilitator should write these on a flipchart at the front. Highlight if consistent themes come out of the groups and discuss these themes.
- You may find the following themes for the goals they succeeded at:
 - Autonomy / independence – e.g. achieving this goal allowed me to be more independent.
 - Mastery / expertise – e.g. it felt good to become excellent at doing something
 - Purpose / meaning – e.g. I'm passionate about this issue so I worked hard to achieve the goal.
 - Necessity (usually not a great signifier of success) – e.g. if I had failed there would have been some major external penalty

- Reward (usually not a great signifier of success) – e.g. I worked hard because I would get more money (usually money isn't the end goal, but rather things like status, self-esteem, etc.)
- You may find that the goals participants failed to achieve lacked those motivations. If participants give external factors for failing to achieve their goals (for example, I did not pass my driving test because the traffic was very bad) push the participants to consider why they didn't continue to strive against these obstacles (either seeking help or attempting to overcome the obstacles). Often the reason for giving up is that the goal lacked the themes above.
- Discuss the importance of motivation in achieving ones goals, and the importance of internal motivation (I want to do this/I passionately believe in this) versus external motivation (I have to do this because I have been told to/the law means I have to do it). It is much more likely that we succeed if we are internally motivated, passionate about our goals, or feel that achieving our goals will bring us independence or expertise. Therefore, if there goals that we feel we should achieve but are not passionate about (completing my tax return on time), linking it to a goal that we are passionate about (having a successful business in an area that I enjoy) can help us succeed by seeing the initial goal as part of the larger goal (if I complete my tax return on time, I will not have to pay a fine, therefore I will have more resource to invest in making my business strong). We will explore these levels of goals later in the session.

Agility

Activity: Origami Factory

Objective: To understand that we have to adapt our plans and activities to survive in a world that is constantly changing, and learn to deal with the frustration and negative emotion that often accompanies change.

Time: 00:55

Resources:

- Plenty of paper (you can use whatever paper is available – white, coloured, etc.)
- A selection of scissors, rulers, staplers, glue, post-it etc. enough for each group to have one of each if necessary.

Room-set up: Chairs in a circle for briefing and debrief, separate workspaces/tables for each group for the activity.

Procedures for delivery:

1. Setting up the activity (5 mins)

- Ask participants to split into groups of 4-5 people. Their group represents their company, which creates origami products (products made from paper).
- Tell the groups that their client has ordered 50 pieces of origami. Each group will be given 10 minutes for planning, then there will be a 20-minute production phase.

- Tell the participants that in the 10-minute planning phase, their group must:
 - Design a product made from paper (that they can make 50 of in 20 minutes) – they should try to be imaginative with this. Note unlike traditional origami, they can cut and/or stick paper if they want.
 - Work out how they will work together as a group to create the products (e.g. production line).
 - Create an organisational chart which set out the roles for their team members (for example, who is checking quality, who is cutting paper)
 - Collect the materials needed to produce their products.
- Before starting the activity, check understanding and answer any questions if necessary.

2. Running the activity (30 mins)

- Tell participants they can begin the planning phase. Start a timer for 10 minutes. Monitor all groups during the planning phase to make sure that participants are completing the planning steps they were told to. Make sure they are not starting production already. Regularly warn participants how much time they have left.
- After the planning phase, tell the participants that they are now entering the production phase and that they have 20 minutes to complete 50 pieces.
- During the build phase, the facilitator should closely observe what is happening in each group. The facilitator then stops the groups at various times and makes the following changes to the rules/the way the groups work:
 - After 5 minutes: one member of each group must leave their group and join another one. The facilitator should nominate which participants change group – choose the person most likely to cause disruption to the production process.
 - After 10 minutes: all participants are only allowed to use one hand for production for 5 minutes – they should sit on their other hand in order to stop them using it.
 - After 15 minutes: facilitator takes part of the materials of each group. This could be removing a set of scissors, glue, or even some of their paper. Try to make sure that whatever is taken should cause an equal level disruption to each group.

3. Debrief (20 mins)

- Bring the group back together in a circle for the debrief session. Note, not every group has to answer each of the questions fully for each of the parts of the debrief below – that would take too long. The outline below is just for guidance and should not be seen as a script.
 - Spend the first few minutes asking about *what happened* from the beginning of the planning phase. Participants will probably try to skip ahead to the production phase, but as question about the types of discussions they had within the group in the planning phase, the roles they each took on, the plans they decided on, and how they felt at this stage of the activity.
 - Allow the discussion to move on to what happened in the production phase, how their production started within the first 5 minutes, how they felt about it at that time. Then how did they react to each of the changes in turn, what did they do differently, how did they feel when the changes happened, and how easy was it to adapt?

- Move to a discussion of how the activity relates to real life – how much do they normally plan? Once they have a plan, do they like to stick to it or change it often? Ask for real life examples of adapting to unforeseen circumstances in their business, or when they failed to. What were the impacts on them (emotionally, personally, etc.) and on their businesses?
 - Finally, ask for conclusions they can draw about what they can do differently in the future. How can they know when to persevere or to pivot? What emotions can they expect to see when change and flexibility are necessary and how can they use these emotions as a positive force/prevent the emotions from having a negative impact.
- Wrap up the discussions, summarising the key points brought out by the group. If the discussions did now reveal the conclusions below, add them if appropriate:
 - The world is constantly changing, and so is the business environment. Businesses that do not adapt and change to fit the changing world or the needs/desires of customers will not succeed.
 - It is easy for entrepreneurs to become convinced that their idea is the best, and not accept the need to change.
 - Importantly, adapting to new circumstances causes frustration, and sometimes regret & anger (“why did this happen to me? It would have been better if this hadn’t happened”). Being flexible and adaptable in life and business firstly requires us to deal with this frustration and focus instead on the present situation. (Mindfulness can help with this).
 - Another key element of flexibility is the ability to manage our own expectations. If we do not get the results we expected, we have to try new approaches rather than being held back by the failures.