



Experiential Learning Experiment

Perception versus Reality

Purpose: This is a great training opener to help your group to recognize how their pre-conceived ideas and self limiting beliefs can impact their possibilities for the future. This is an excellent exercise to do prior to brainstorming or visioning. It could also be used as an icebreaker for service training illustrating perception versus reality.

Preparation: Put participants in teams. Each team will need 1 eye dropper (glass dropper preferred), a glass of water and a shiny, relatively new penny.

Delivery: Ask the group to discuss among themselves the total number of drops of water they feel will sit on the penny before the water overflows onto the table. Tell the group they will have 1 minute to discuss and come to consensus on the number of drops. Then ask each group to say aloud their estimate. The guesses will range from 2 to 25, but most groups will guess low (5 – 10 drops). Once everyone has weighed in their response, instruct the groups that they may begin dropping water onto their penny slowly and to count each drop.

Depending on the size of your dropper, most groups will get from 18 – 28 drops on the penny before the water spills over. This result usually amazes the participants.

Debrief Questions:

Was anyone surprised by the result? Why?

Was your perception or preconceived idea very different from the reality?

Can you relate this experience to anything you've experienced at work?

Have you ever believed that a work process or project wouldn't work, but somehow it was successful?

How do limiting beliefs affect you ability to achieve success?

The questions you ask can vary depending on what point you'd like to illustrate and what particular topic you are preparing to address (i.e.: goal setting, performance management, communication, service etc). Ultimately, you want to tie the experience to it's relevance at work.

Exercise courtesy of Goldin Leadership Group. Origin unknown.

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