



Difficult Conversations

Trainer/facilitator notes

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Facilitation

Purpose of the film metaphor and improvisation-based process

Provide a red line for role plays throughout a program

In addition to the improvisations, provide examples to reinforce leaning points

Have a basis for student's own work - the creation of new scenes

Make it easier for fellow facilitators to animate role plays

Have fun

General facilitation notes and guidelines

There is a single sheet for each scene with (1) Alfie/Brennan insns, (2) Actor's insns, (3) Director's insns, (4) Assistant director's insns. There is no need to conceal insn's from anyone since this is an acting exercise. Assistant directors should be reminded to take notes.

The scenes can be run using various tactics:

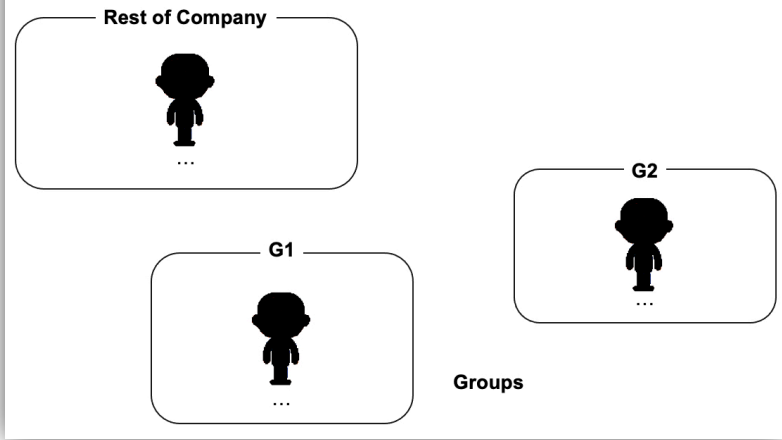
* Improvise, cut then continue, to highlight specific points

* Improvise, cut and replay, asking the Assistant Directors for suggestions, to fix things

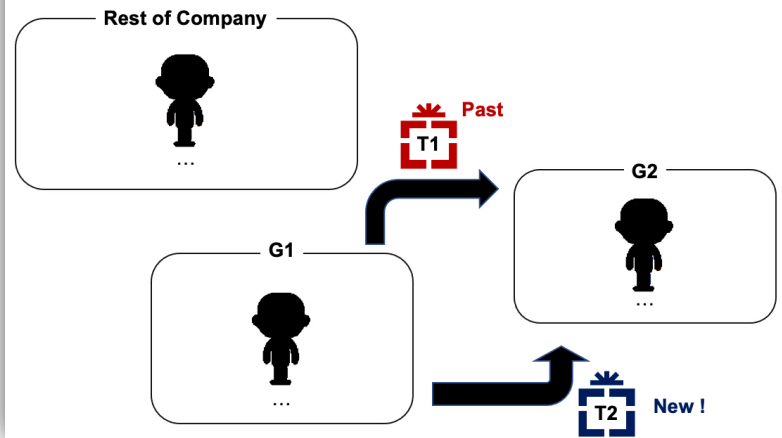
* Play from the script, in order to illustrate ideal behaviour (this can be mixed with the above two methods also)

Scenes can be played with (1) Alfie/Brennan as one participant and the Facilitator as Actor-Director, (2) Alfie/Brennan + Actor as participants and Facilitator as Director, (3) Alfie/Brennan + Actor + Director as participants. Assistant directors are always participants.

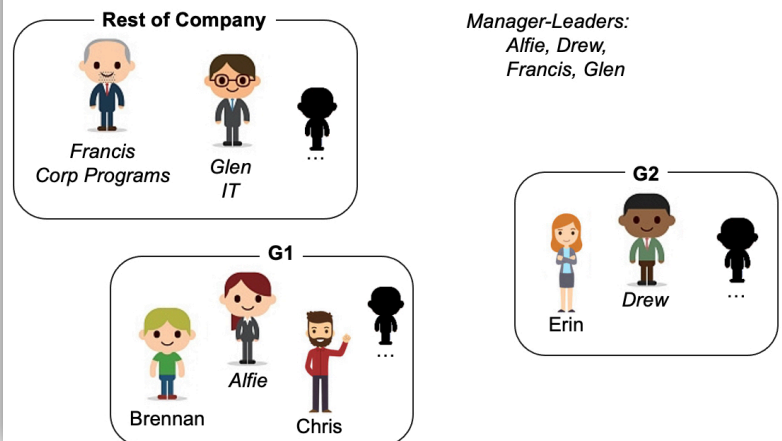
Organisations



Things (products, services)



People



Backdrop

G1 currently has several Things in production and has recently developed T2. They believe that it has huge potential and wish to promote it to G2, for use in their products and services. This would mean revenue for G1 and it would also validate T2, giving it credibility and helping it to succeed in other markets.

G2 is already using T1, an older Thing from G1, though the experience of integrating it was an unhappy one. There were delays and relations between the two groups became strained.

Cast of characters

(names below are *unisex*)

1. Alfie : Brennan's and Chris's boss (Manager-Leader in G1)

Whenever you take this role, you play it as yourself.

2. Brennan : An Engineer (Individual Contributor in G1 – reports to Alfie)

Whenever you take this role, you play it as yourself.

3. Chris : An Engineer (Individual Contributor in G1 – reports to Alfie)

Very competent though always joking about, trying to do many things at once, rarely on time.

4. Drew : Erin's boss (Manager-Leader in G2)

Conscientious. Holds strong views on *how* things should be done but is more flexible on *what* should be done.

5. Erin : An Engineer (Individual Contributor in G2 – reports to Drew)

Technocratic, logical, organized. Can be impatient with others who do not see things as clearly as them.

6. Francis : A Corporate Program Manager (Manager-Leader in Rest of Company)

Results-oriented. Charming and persuasive. Has a tendency to push people into competitive positions (i.e. slightly manipulative).

7. Glen : An IT Engineer (Manager-Leader in Rest of Company)

Technically masterful. Tormented by conflicting desires for speed and perfection.

PLEASE NOTE: The list of scenes and the characters that play in them is given on the last page.

Scene 1: Refusing politely

Setting

Alfie has been working on a presentation for an important meeting with G2 for the past three weeks. He sent Francis a complete version, for checking, two weeks ago and has been regularly mailing and calling him to ask for feedback. Francis has been unresponsive.

The meeting in question is tomorrow and it's 6pm when Francis calls ...

Characters

Alfie, Francis

Dialog

Francis

Hi Alfie, do you have a minute?

Alfie

Sure, I'm just finishing up for the day, but I've got a few minutes. What's up?

Francis

I just went through the presentation that you sent me for the inter-group call tomorrow. I like it a lot, but I think you should add backup slides with details of the T2 results that you told me about.

Alfie

Er Francis ... *[takes a few seconds to think]* ... before I answer, I've a question.

I'm not accusing, just a bit perplexed, and I'd like to clear the air before we talk about the details of the presentation. Is that Ok?

Francis

Sure. Is there a problem?

Alfie

Well, after I sent the slides a couple of weeks ago, I sent at least 2 emails and left a voicemail.

Did you get these messages?

Francis

Yes, I think so. But I've been so busy that I've just not had time for this. Sorry!

Alfie

Ok. I guess I was expecting you to jump on the slides as soon as I sent them, and that wasn't realistic ;-)

No problem.

Now, about the presentation ...

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

The current presentation is already quite long.

Alfie and Francis have already agreed that, for this meeting, the priority was to get an agreement in principle, and to avoid getting lost in technical details.

Even so, there is some merit in Francis's suggestions.

Francis: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are a Corporate Program Manager, a Manager-Leader in Rest of Company. Results-oriented. charming and persuasive, you have a tendency to push people into competitive positions (i.e. slightly manipulative).

React naturally to any troubling language from Alfie (defensively or by escalating the violence, for example).

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this first scene is to warmup participants to the film metaphor and to demonstrate the Moving Towards, Intentions and Observations aspects of Difficult Conversations.

For the improvisation, cut whenever the scene could be improved, get suggestions from the 'Assistant Directors', then rerun. You can even try variants that are WORSE than the original improvisation - there is nothing wrong with a Director who experiments!

Interesting variants could be, for example:

1. Alfie says, 'Sorry Francis, I've got something on tonight. I can't do it.'
2. Alfie says, 'Francis, I've been calling you for weeks about this. Now you're asking for changes at the very last minute. You're stressing me out! I've said I'll be home by 6h30, so I can't fix it tonight, no way. Sorry.'

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: Alfie has trouble responding rationally because they are very upset that Francis did not respond to earlier requests for feedback and that they now call at the last minute..

The resolution of the difficulty is in the opening script, pre-improvisation. *The hard work is therefore for the Assistant Directors, not the actors !*

For the Moving Towards and Intentions aspects, you could ask for example, 'Which difficulty did Alfie move towards? If they had avoided the main difficulty, what would that have looked like?'

On the Intentions aspect, you could ask, 'How did Alfie express their intention? What could have happened if they had not done this?'

In the examples given to the Director, above, #1 is an example of avoidance and #2 contains judgements, rules and the myth that others are responsible for our feelings.

Both #1 and #2 go to the 'no' too quickly, without getting any information from Francis.

Scene 2: Saying what you want

Setting

The quarterly inter-group operations review, chaired by Francis. There are about 20 senior people present in an atmosphere of inter-group politics and large egos.

Alfie's wants to get agreement for the use of T2 in G2 – this is the key message in their presentation (which Francis called about yesterday evening) .

However, it's late into this two-hour meeting and Alfie has not yet had a chance to talk about T2. Frustrated, Alfie decides to interrupt ...

Characters

Alfie, Francis, Drew (passive: about 20 Manager-Leaders from various groups)

Dialog

... the meeting is already underway as we join it ...

Francis

Moving on then, I'd like to hear from Nolan about their project. Nolan, what do you have for us please?

Alfie

Francis, could I just interrupt for a moment?

Francis

Sure, but please keep it quick as we only have twenty minutes left.

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

G1 has an agenda slot at the very end of the meeting, but everything's running late.

T2 development is going great! It's a month ahead of schedule, in fact, and 'internal beta' testing is complete. It includes all the features of T1 and some more.

Its auto-configuration feature means that it needs about a week for product setup, compared to about a month for T1.

To maintain momentum, G1 wants G2 to agree to a 'customer beta' deployment of T2 in their group.

If this is not agreed today, then a decision could be delayed until the next inter-group review :-(

Francis: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are a Corporate Program Manager, a Manager-Leader in Rest of Company. Results-oriented. charming and persuasive, you have a tendency to push people into competitive positions (i.e. slightly manipulative).

Compared to G1, most other groups have a higher revenue , more people and more projects - if time is short, you therefore tend to give them a higher priority in your meeting.

Not long ago, there were delays when G2 ran a 'T1 customer beta' for G1.

Drew: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are Erin's boss, a Manager-Leader in G2. You are conscientious and hold strong views on *how* things should be done, though you are more flexible on *what* should be done.

How can G1 support a new 'customer beta' when they are still sorting out the mess of the last one??

The added-value of T2 over T1 is unclear.

In spite of past problems, you respect G1 and their expertise.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to focus on intentions. Alfie went into this meeting with one intention, but things did not work out as planned. How do they manage this?

If you act in this scene, take Francis's part.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: The meeting has not gone according to plan and Alfie's original objective (intention) of obtaining agreement from G2 for their use of T2 is no longer possible. Alfie therefore has to adjust their intention - getting a separate meeting with G2 is the obvious way to avoid the delay that would result from waiting for the next inter-group meeting.

Of course, Alfie also has to be assertive. At this stage in the training, we have not explained NVC and so this scene may be used to sensitise participants to the issues that NVC addresses.

Scene 3: Dealing with resistance

Setting

Alfie managed to schedule a meeting with G2 to discuss T2 deployment in their group.

We are in the requested G1-G2 meeting, discussing a possible T2 pilot project in G2.

The G2 people are wasting time, seeing more obstacles than opportunities, focusing on trivia and making it difficult for Alfie to talk about the main topic.

G1's objectives for the meeting are to obtain agreement for the pilot project or, if that is not possible, at least avoid a definitive 'no'.

Characters

Alfie, Erin, Drew (passive: other G1 and G2 people)

Dialog

... the meeting is already underway as we join it ...

Erin

If we start working with T2, we're going to have to update all our IT packages.

Drew (*worried tone*)

That would be a pain. We all know how long IT changes take ;-)

Erin

Do you know if Glen is going to be able to support us for the IT update?

Drew

I think so, but he was very cagey about when they could start.

'Only saw them for a couple of minutes, at the coffee station with Indigo.

Erin (*sarcastic*)

Ah-ha! The infamous Indigo. Well I just hope they don't get put on the job!

Drew

Indeed. The last time I met Indigo ...

Alfie

Drew, sorry to interrupt. Please can we get back to the main topic?

Drew

Yeah, sure.

As I was saying earlier, I can understand that you want to get T2 deployed, but we've enough problems to deal with right now, and we're short of resources.

Integrating new Things takes time – there are processes to follow ...

Erin (*a bit impatient*)

And I'd add, Drew, that we're still reeling from the problems we had integrating T1.

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

There were configuration problems on the last project with G2, using T1.

In G1's defence, many of these were caused by G2 engineers not following guidelines properly.

Your understanding is that time-to-market is key for G2.

T2 can be reconfigured 10x faster than T1.

G1 has used a new documentation system, and so its user manual has improved.

Erin: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are an Engineer, an Individual Contributor in G2, reporting to Drew. Technocratic, logical and organized, you can be impatient with people who do not see things as clearly as you.

While the problems seen when integrating T1 were painful, you are not against T2. But it must be better than T1 and there must be evidence that lessons were learned from the previous G1-G2 project.

Drew: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are Erin's boss, a Manager-Leader in G2. You are conscientious and hold strong views on *how* things should be done, though you are more flexible on *what* should be done.

You are not in the mood for a pilot project with G1.

G2 has to go fast while maintaining high quality standards - when they make a mistake, it can affect millions of users.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is illustrate how passive resistance can be dealt with. Faced with passive resistance, how can you guide a conversation towards your original objectives?

If you are acting, take Drew's part.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: In the face of G2's problem orientation, staying focused on the objective. Further, since the problem orientation is a sign of passive resistance, knowing how to deal with this (careful listening, not rushing in with one's own arguments and requests)..

Scene 4: Expressing discontent

Setting

A few weeks later, Alfie has got agreement from G2 for a T2 pilot project.

That's great news, but Alfie then learns that entire the cost of the pilot, including G2's part, will be transferred to G1. This decision is irreversible and came about after negotiations between the CEO, the head of G2 and Francis, the Corporate Program Manager.

Alfie's just received this bad news. They're still furious when Francis calls about another matter ...

Characters

Alfie, Francis

Dialog

Francis

Hi Alfie, do you have a couple of minutes to talk about the schedule please?

Alfie

Hi Francis, sure. But there's something else that I'd like to deal with first.

I just learned that G1 has to pay for the T2 pilot – so G2 will cross-charge us for all their resources working on it. Is that right?

Francis

Yes, that's right. It was agreed by Giuseppe and Andreas on Tuesday night.

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

Giuseppe is the CEO. Andreas is the head of G2.

G2 has sold > 50 million parts with G1's T1. As a result, G1 received \$2-3M while G2 gained 10x more!

Your first reaction: furious! The cost transfer is outrageous and so is the secretive way it happened.

Also, it puts an unfair financial burden on G1, a small group.

You had been looking forward to working with G2, in partnership - two teams meeting challenges together, sharing the risks, the spoils and the glory. Now ... :(

Francis: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are a Corporate Program Manager, a Manager-Leader in Rest of Company. Results-oriented. charming and persuasive, you have a tendency to push people into competitive positions (i.e. slightly manipulative).

Giuseppe is the CEO. Andreas is the head of G2.

Cross-charging was discussed with Xavier, the head of G1, and they agreed to it, albeit under pressure.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to illustrate how to express discontent in a professional manner, avoiding judgements, rules and suppositions.

Reassure the person acting Alfie. You may have to cut the scene often in order to highlight judgements, rules and suppositions. That's ok - we will be critiquing the improvised script, not the person acting.

In fact, if they want to slip in some judgements, rules and suppositions deliberately, then that would be good too!

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: staying factual when emotions are running high. Avoiding judgements, rules and suppositions.

The scene can also be used to illustrate and sensitise participants to the importance of dealing with emotions - in the training, the feelings/needs aspect of NVC may not have been covered yet.

Scene 5: Pushing back

Setting

Now that G1 has agreement for the T2 pilot in G2, we are now in the heart of an G1 meeting to decide who will do what.

Chris, who has spent most of their 3 years in G1 focused on Things and who has worked more than anyone on T2, has just made a strong case for taking the lead role in the pilot. Brennan, who has been in G1 for 5 years and has experience not only of Things but of a range of other stuff, also wants to take the role.

Everyone in the meeting can sense the tension between these two colleagues.

Characters

Brennan, Chris (passive: Alfie and other G1 members)

Dialog

... *the meeting is already underway as we join it ...*

Chris

... and so I really think that I would be the best person to lead the pilot.

Brennan: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You want to lead the pilot. You are interested in project management and are actively developing project management skills.

You are not only more experienced than Chris, you are 15 years older (40 vs 25).

Though fun to work with, Chris seems anything but serious, with a surgically attached smartphone and a very short attention span.

However, if you were to lead the pilot, then you would certainly need the technical expertise that Chris has accumulated on T2 ...

Chris: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are an Engineer, an Individual Contributor in G1, reporting to Alfie. Very competent though always joking about, you try to do many things at once and are rarely on time.

You definitely want to lead this project - it would be fun!

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to illustrate how to assert one's own interests in a professional manner, avoiding judgements, rules and suppositions.

As for the previous scene, reassure the person acting Alfie. You may have to cut the scene often in order to highlight judgements, rules and suppositions. That's ok - we will be criticiquing the improvised script, not the person acting.

In fact, if they want to slip in some judgements, rules and suppositions deliberately, then that would be good too!

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: staying factual when emotions are running high. Avoiding judgements, rules and suppositions. Avoiding judgements, rules and suppositions.

The scene can also be used to illustrate and sensitise participants to the importance of dealing with emotions - in the training, the feelings/needs aspect of NVC may not have been covered yet.

Scene 6: Giving bad news

Setting

The issue of who would head up the T2 pilot was taken offline from the last meeting, and now Alfie has decided to give the role to Brennan.

Knowing that Chris is not going to like it, Alfie breaks the news ...

Characters

Alfie, Chris

Dialog

Alfie

Chris, can I have a word with you?

Chris

Sure.

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You've decided to ask Brennan to lead the pilot project.

Your opinion: Chris is very gifted in technical matters but doesn't seem to attach much importance to the non-technical aspect of professional life.

Chris: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are an Engineer, an Individual Contributor in G1, reporting to Alfie. Very competent though always joking about, you try to do many things at once and are rarely on time.

You would not be surprised if the job of leading the pilot project went to Brennan, because of their age and the experience bullet points on their CV :-)

However, they know far less about T2 than you and are less technically competent.

Technical expertise is a key quality that you look for in people.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to look at dealing with a situation where your words are likely to trigger uncomfortable emotions in someone else.

Pay attention to the balance between honesty and benevolence shown by the Alfie character and cut the scene if you think this could be adjusted.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: staying factual when emotions are running high. Avoiding judgements, rules and suppositions.

Also, showing empathy - the need to combine honesty with benevolence.

Scene 7: Facing irritation and anger

Setting

The project is underway and, inevitably, there are problems.

This is a weekly operations meeting. It's routine, but Drew seems to be upset about something.

The G1 team's objectives are simply to report progress and sync up with G2 and IT.

Characters

Brennan, Drew (passive: others from G1, G2 and Rest of Company)

Dialog

... the meeting is already underway as we join it ...

Brennan

Hi everyone. Sorry that I'm a bit late.

Drew (taciturn)

Hi Brennan. Glad that you've turned up.

You're late, for sure, but it's not just a couple of minutes that I'm worried about. Where's this release that you promised me? That's over a week now!

Brennan

There's no update since yesterday, and I think that you were copied on the mail?

Our best guess is the 17th.

Drew

BEST GUESS??! I've just about had enough of best guesses! Can't you guys do better than that?

This is a customer-facing project, I'd like to remind you. And it's our BU that's in the firing line!

IT'S NOT FRIGGING GOOD ENOUGH!

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You intend to ask Drew to provide more data on their system. You need it in order to fix some issues and give them the next release.

Drew: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are Erin's boss, a Manager-Leader in G2. You are conscientious and hold strong views on *how* things should be done, though you are more flexible on *what* should be done.

You have been under pressure from your boss to provide detailed project progress information on a regular and frequent basis, and you dislike that kind of work intensely.

The boss seems to have promised regular, elaborate reports to the customer, which is stupid since G2 doesn't have the people, time or tools to do that sort of thing :-)

Knowing the customer, they probably don't trust us to deliver on time, and that's the real source of all this hassle.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene work out how to deal with someone who is extremely upset.

If Brennan's response to the situation results in Drew getting calmer, let the scene run. As soon as Drew shows any sign of getting more upset, cut the scene and ask for guidance from the assistant directors.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: faced with someone who is extremely upset, returning to a normal, professional conversation.

People tend to do too much in these circumstances, attempting to find the right thing to say. If it goes well, the improvisation should lead participants to the conclusion that listening is the key skill in this type of situation.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: faced with someone who is extremely upset, returning to a normal, professional conversation.

Scene 8: Asking for more commitment

Setting

Later in the same weekly, Brennan raises some issues with IT.

It's something that Brennan has been worrying about and losing sleep over for a couple of weeks. Their patience with IT is wearing very thin.

Characters

Brennan, Glen (passive: Francis and others from G1 and G2)

Dialog

... we rejoin the meeting later on ...

Brennan

I'd like to talk about the beta that we requested a few meetings back.

Glen

I thought that was done now. You've had the release, haven't you?

I forget. Perhaps we sent it to G2 and not you?

Brennan: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You're furious, and you want Glen to update and reinforce IT's commitments to the pilot project.

Glen: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are an IT Engineer, a Manager-Leader in Rest of Company. Technically masterful, you are tormented by conflicting desires for speed and perfection.

Since you first promised the beta release, two IT members have fallen seriously ill and another has gone on paternity leave, 6 weeks before it was expected.

New work has also come up lately, associated with a new film studio project.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to explore situations where commitments are not being met and where getting them met is key to future work.

Look out for and cut if Brennan either let's irritation show through or is too amenable. Aim for a scene that shows a good balance between understanding and assertiveness.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: how to deal with someone who, you feel, has let you down and, making things more difficult, where you will need their support in the future (hence, there is a need to strengthen the relationship).

Scene 9: Challenging unwanted behavior

Setting

A couple of days after the weekly meeting, Alfie takes Chris aside.

Complaints have been received from G2 about Chris's behavior. There are no performance issues but, inevitably, the project has encountered technical problems and G2's discomfort with Chris's style leads them to attribute the difficulties to Chris.

For Alfie, the stakes are high: their relationships with both G2 and with Chris are in the balance.

Chris has a tendency to joke around a lot and to tease people. They are multi-tasking and look after "private interests" (such as Instagram and music forums) in parallel with work activities.

Characters

Alfie, Chris

Dialog

Alfie

Hi Chris, how did the meeting with G2 go yesterday?

Chris

Oh, fine.

Alfie

Did Drew or Erin not raise any issues with you?

Chris

Yes, but nothing particularly new. There's the automatic configuration software that is still giving problems and ...

Alfie

That's ok! Thanks. It's not what I was referring to.

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

Drew called to complain that he had seen Chris 'playing' on their mobile in a meeting yesterday.

You request an explanation, with a view to working out how this behaviour can be improved.

Ideally, you would like to have Chris discuss and resolve these issues with G2.

Chris: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are an Engineer, an Individual Contributor in G1, reporting to Alfie. Very competent though always joking about, you try to do many things at once and are rarely on time.

Sure, you look at your mobile during meetings, but you are able to listen to what is going on at the same time.

The meeting that Alfie is referring to was no big deal anyway. They were going around in circles on some technical details of little importance.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to illustrate a conversation where a person is receiving information that is very likely to trigger a defensive response.

Look out for anything that Alfie says that is likely to trigger a defensive responses from Chris . Cut to see if the assistant directors can suggest alternatives.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: expressing feelings and needs clearly in a situation where there is a high risk that your words will not be interpreted as you intend.

Also, showing empathy - the need to combine honesty with benevolence..

Scene 10: Confronting a peer about repeated issues

Setting

A month has passed by since Brennan's confrontation with Glen in Scene 8 and there will be another weekly tomorrow. Brennan *still* sees issues with IT support. Is this ever going to be sorted out?!!

Feeling their emotions running high, Brennan decides to talk to Glen directly, before tomorrow's meeting.

Characters

Brennan, Glen

Dialog

Brennan)

Hi Glen, How are you doing? Do you have a few minutes?

Glen

Hi Brennan. Fine thanks. Yes sure. How are you?

Brennan

Good too, thanks.

Glen, I'm calling to talk to you about the schedule and I thought that it would be better if you and I had a chat about it before tomorrow's weekly.

Glen

'Sounds ominous ;-)

Brennan: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

Brennan's objectives are to better understand why there has been no improvement since he last confronted Glen and to find a way out of this mess with them.

Brennan can point to lots of specific issues [make some up!]

Glen: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are an IT Engineer, a Manager-Leader in Rest of Company. Technically masterful, you are tormented by conflicting desires for speed and perfection.

Everybody is asking you for things and expecting that they can be done straight away.

If you give realistic timescale estimates, then you get attacked immediately, and if you give optimistic ones, then you get attacked later, when dates slip ;-)

It's impossible to schedule things accurately because too many unexpected things come up. For example:

The synchronised beta release fell victim to employee illness and a paternity leave.

External consultants messed up the SharePoint database.

G1 and G2 communicating through Teams, but Microsoft changed something ...

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to illustrate the need to make simple requests and not to demand a commitment for future behavior. It can also highlight the importance of correctly identifying the main difficulty - in this case, the repetition of issues.

Cut and retake to direct the scene so that Brennan addresses the real issue and makes receivable requests.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: avoiding a request of the type 'try to get something'. In this situation, it is tempting to ask for a commitment to do things better in future. Such a commitment, even if it is conceded, is unlikely to be met. So what do you request?

The scene also shows an important point about identifying and moving towards the main difficulty - not the last issue that came up, but the fact that issues are coming up repeatedly.

Scene 11: Confronting a collaborator about repeated issues

Setting

Chris is working hard and productively. However, they are repeatedly missing agreed commitments.

Brennan, is frequently surprised (and irritated) to learn that Chris is doing unplanned work and that tasks they agreed to do have been put off. When tackled on this, Chris invariably has a good reason for their actions but, never knowing quite what Chris is up to, Brennan finds it very hard to coordinate work across the project team.

Characters

Brennan, Chris

Dialog

... the call is already underway as we join it ...

Brennan

... Well, I'm glad to hear that things are going better with Drew.

Now, have you managed to fix the Transmitter configuration yet? Case 4088?

Chris

No, I've dropped that for now. G2 reported an issue in the Receiver – it's been dropping packets again, more or less at random – so I've been trying to sort that out.

Brennan

But the last time we spoke, case 4088 was *top priority!*

Chris

I thought that keeping G2 happy was top priority!

I can't help it if the Receiver's gone crazy – it wasn't my fault!

There's a workaround for 4088, but the Receiver issue's blocking.

Surely it's got to have priority?

Brennan

Yes, but ...

Brennan: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

There are 24 engineers working on this project at the moment, in G1, G2, IT and in external companies, and it's a nightmare trying to coordinate them all.

Chris is b&?*@# \$ unreliable, even though the work he does is of high quality.

Chris: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are an Engineer, an Individual Contributor in G1, reporting to Alfie. Very competent though always joking about, you try to do many things at once and are rarely on time.

You enjoy the work that you do and the freedom to decide what's important and what isn't.

Brennan get's a bit upset about project administration sometimes, but they shouldn't worry because you know what you're doing. For example:

You recently had to sideline the analysis of some T1 customer data. You're waiting for data from the USA, and it makes no sense to start without that.

Brennan asked you to look into new debugging software, for use by the team, but some much more interesting stuff came up on ML algorithms and you're looking in to that first.

You're following up with Glen on some issues in the current ML libraries, but Glen was unresponsive, so you're going to wait until you can see them in person.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene (similar to the previous one but for different circumstances) is to illustrate the need to make simple requests and not to demand a commitment for future behavior. It can also highlight the importance of correctly identifying the main difficulty - in this case, the repetition of issues.

Cut and retake to direct the scene so that Brennan addresses the real issue and makes receivable requests.

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: avoiding a request of the type 'try to get something'. In this situation, it is tempting to ask for a commitment to do things better in future. Such a commitment, even if it is conceded, is unlikely to be met. So what do you request?.

As for the previous scene, this one also shows an important point about identifying and moving towards the main difficulty - not the last issue that came up, but the fact that issues are coming up repeatedly.

Scene 12: Giving thanks

Setting

Finally, the pilot project has been a success and Drew turned out to be an excellent ally

Characters

Alfie, Drew

Dialog

Drew

Hi Alfie.

So we did it then!

Alfie

Yup! Signed, sealed and delivered!

I trust that the high-ups in G2 are pleased?

Drew

As Punch! You know, they had doubts at one point.

Alfie: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

The thing that particularly pleased you about Drew's contribution to the project was that they they showed solidarity for the multi-organisational pilot project team, defending G1 against their G2 bosses even when G1 was having trouble delivering functioning software on time.

Drew: *improvise from here, using the following information:*

You are Erin's boss, a Manager-Leader in G2. You are conscientious and hold strong views on *how* things should be done, though you are more flexible on *what* should be done.

Director: *to help the actors with their improvisations, note that:*

The purpose of this scene is to show that NVC is not only for dealing with difficulties!

Assistant Directors: *your contributions are crucial to everyone learning from and improving the scene:*

Watch carefully, then make suggestions on how the next 'take' could be improved.

Take notes that can be used for debriefing after the improvisations.

Facilitator:

The main difficulty: expressing needs and feelings sincerely.

Annex: Structure

PARTICIPANT: A trainee

FACILITATOR: The person responsible for animating the Scene role-play

BACKDROP: The history and starting situation for the Film

CHARACTERS: The people portrayed in the Film, their backgrounds and personalities

SCENES: The chapters of the Film

SCENE ID: The title and number of the Scene

SCENE SETTING: A short description of the situation at the start of the scene

SCENE CHARACTERS: The Characters who are active in a particular Scene (the cast)

MAIN DIFFICULTY: The principle challenge facing the Star Actor in the Scene

FACILITATION GUIDELINES: Advice given to the Facilitator/Actor-Director for a particular Scene

ESSENTIALS: The Learning Points (LP's) targetted by the Scene

BONUS: Other LP's that could arise

IMPROVISATION: The start of the Scene, from which actors improvise

EXAMPLE: Full script and LP's. This may illustrate not only the Essential LP's, but also Bonus ones

ACTOR-DIRECTOR: Usually the Facilitator

STAR ACTOR: The Character facing a Difficulty, played by a Participant (or the Actor-Director, for demo purposes)

SUPPORTING ACTOR(S): Other Characters in the scene (usually only one and played by the Actor-Director)

ASSISTANT DIRECTORS: All non-acting Participants (who must both observe and suggest improvements)

DIRECTION TO STAR ACTOR: Info and hints given to the Star Actor

DIRECTION TO SUPPORTING ACTOR(S): Info and hints given to the Supporting Actor(s)

EDITING NOTES:

Always do a Toggle Field Codes to show the conditional statements before editing. If you don't, the edits are silently lost.

After changing ScriptId and before printing, do Select All and Update Field, else the version of the document will not change.

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