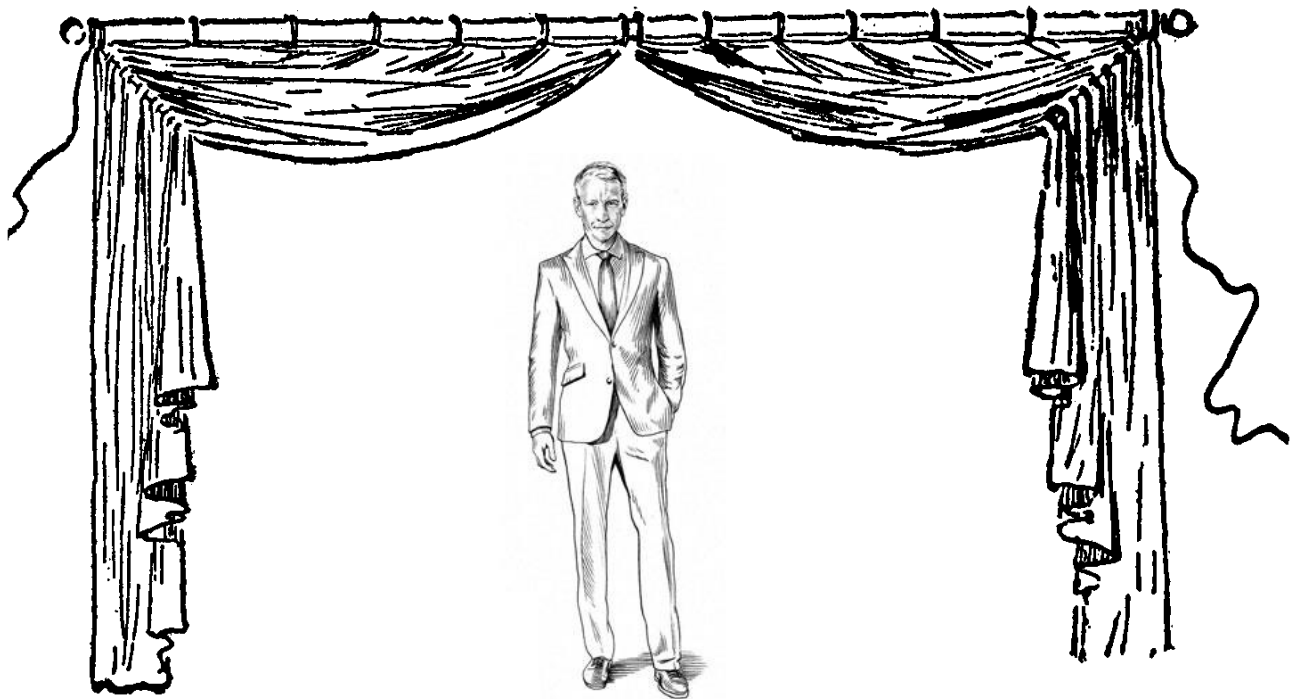




FROM THEATER STAGES TO BUSINESS

How improvisation fosters innovation in corporate settings



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*To my family,
Who has supported me unconditionally
Throughout my educational journey.*

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Abstract

Improvisation is a phenomenon originated in theater that has timorously cross over the border of pure art and reconnoitered the corporate sphere. The practice of improvisation has emerged in the United States decades ago, and now talented actors decided to enhance their set of skills on stage with entrepreneurial assets and bring the concept in Europe. Still, improvisation lacks vigor in providing factual data on how organizational settings might thrive by using techniques of improvisation. This issue is doubled by a corporate scenery dominated by business managers who are clung to the old way of doing things.

Matters of contention investigated throughout the study spin around the daily use of improvisation in companies. The presupposition targets beneficial outcomes as improvisation is taught to be serving the achievement of extraordinary creativity in work teams. Discussion finds lucidity by delving into the facets of communication and leadership, but also by reference to corporate theorizations and creativity-cognate scholastic articles.

The study has an exploratory scent as it aspires to offer clear definitions to both managers and improvisers, employees and actors. The foregoing work can be seen as a contrivance of creativity to the actual business environments, attempting to favor the creation of a meeting point for theater and corporate representatives. Valued at its best, the capacity of wondering is central to this paper. Processes step out of linearity and findings are entrenched in solid empirical frameworks. Curiosity and learning desire adds authenticity to the research mechanism and makes the following read at least captivating, if not enlightening.

1. The backstage – theoretical framing

1.1. Context introduction

“Nurturing a creatively competitive organization requires curiosity above all else.”

Tim Brown

The foregoing study implies an unusual invite for the readers to set their minds script-free and engage in a peculiar journey that will shed light on the dim mechanism of the current tumultuous business world. In doing so, the academic inquiry will often overlap with real world situations and companies’ theorizations, thereby the reader will reach meaningful comprehension on the matter of improvisation. As in improvisation, the delineated problem of the academic work needs the context to be defined in order for the successor steps to be fully consolidated. The transition from theater stages to corporate settings is rather a meandering process and therefore the requirement of theoretical framing will manifest onwards.

There is overwhelming evidence for the notion that uncertainty keeps steady as the only invariable of the business environment nowadays. The fast-changing world pushes companies towards continue adjustment. As a result, companies seek flexibility, which is defined by their people’s capacity to perform creatively both on personal and professional terms. This requires corporate inclination to building an internal environment based on collaboration, where the communicational flows are not blurred and the individuals are fostered to think and behave creatively. The approach might seem disturbing for the efficiency-driven managers, “but in a business environment that is spectacularly unpredictable in almost every way, efficiency is no longer the most sensible – or at least not the only sensible – strategy” (Brown, 2016).

Further evidence places the discussed creed in a light of relevance and directs the debate towards tangibility. IBM Corporation has published in 2012 a comprehensive global chief executive officer study – “Leading through connection”. The findings represent a significant starting point to the actual academic inquiry. In-depth interviews with 1709 top executives from 64 countries across the globe unveiled what the most sought-after traits the employees must have in order to succeed are (Figure 1).

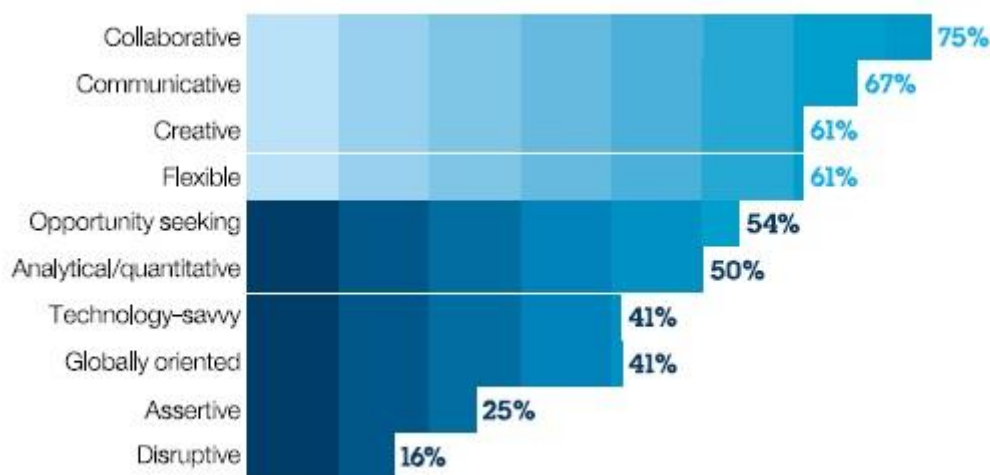


Figure 1. The most wanted employee's traits according to IBM (2012)

Albeit the study was conducted together with members of the C-suite settings, organizational leaders should allow themselves to chase another C-suite on all levels of their firms: collaboration, communication and creativity. In fact, these are the most demanded traits according to a vast number of top management representatives coming from all over the world. The wideness of the study reveals global applicability and narrow down the cultural constraints. Each company is uniquely complex and operates within a very specific context, but broadly speaking this guideline will ensure progression for the most companies worldwide. The new C-suite is therefore globally accepted to creating an organizational culture capable of thriving in a world of change. It doesn't only involve human resources departments, but top executives leading the search for "novel ways of letting the organization run" (Shaun Coffey, CEO, Industrial Research Ltd. as cited in IBM Corporation, 2012).

In an attempt to open up, top executives beliefs reveal their organizations will be impacted more by the pressure to be open than the need to control. Although corporate openness might sound soft, they are seeking hard outcomes. Innovation is seen as the resulting outcome of variety of thought and free flow of ideas. Moreover, "by turning the workforce into a market intelligence network, they are expanding their ability to sense shifts and respond nimbly. By empowering employees to act on their own ideas, CEOs are building employee accountability, initiative and loyalty. And by equipping employees to work in an open environment, they are arming the people who represent their brands to the world" (IBM Corporation, 2012, p.19).

Along similar lines, IBM Corporation (2012) brings to the surface the significance of organizational values and clear sense of purpose. Employees that are aware, accept and embrace these demand lower standardization and build up on openness. As a consequence, vulnerability rate also soars up, but in the world of today this has become a norm. The view is supported by Tabaee's (2013) research on improvisation who was astounded by managers fearing exposure and following blindly a business plan. Autonomy is contextually built within clear goals and stepping out of the imposed limitation pushes people beyond their formal role and adds on their experience to improvise.

For years, corporations tangled themselves into the so-known war for talent. They have been rigid internally, seeking people that could fit their systems and trying to identify those particular skills. The pursuit has usually ended in a shortage of the much needed skills. Assaulted by changing-factors, companies find the forecast of future demanded skills intangible as they don't yet exist. Functional capabilities cannot be projected into the future and conventional trainings cannot keep the pace anymore. Subject skills are becoming outdated by the time programs are designed, IBM Corporation (2012) sums up.

Fortunately, the information bombardment comes with alternatives as well. Open-minded CEOs concentrate on identifying the constant reinvention in people, as their main characteristic. Change and continuous learning capacity stand firmly in the modern employee's toolkit. Compendiously penned by a healthcare top executive, "today's connected economy is full of ambiguity, and the characteristics required to navigate that ambiguity are collaboration, creativity and communication." (IBM Corporation, 2012, p.21).

The journey we embark on is anchored in a loud reality. Top organizations know their way to the future and more than ever the future is now. It might resemble technology or standardization, but it is a rediscovered human approach. Collaboration, communication and creativity are both outcomes and processes. Interdependent in today's corporate environment, indeed they overlap. There is no boundary between these elements, therefore no line can be drawn between collaboration, communication and creativity. Each of them implies the other two.

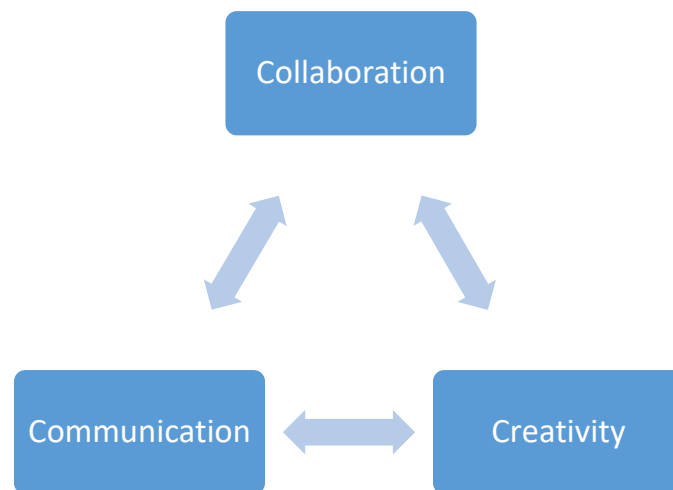


Figure 2. Mutual dependence within the new “C-suite”

IBM Corporation’s work is relevant because it involves authorities that have the power to change the way an organization operates from inside. Although it might seem equivocal in the eyes of a pure academic researcher, the corporate theorization chosen as a kick off on the journey of improvisation is filled with meaning because it shapes the practical note of the current study.

Anchored in reality, improvisation is what companies actually ask for without specifying it. Therefore, the gap in literature addressed hereby will be filled by attempting to create a state of practicality between the realms of improvisation and business, with accent on the innovative outcomes that could possibly follow. Given the starting point, we will advance further towards the creation of a tipping point in the journey of improvisation.

1.2. The principles of improvisation

“A mind that is stretched to a new idea never returns to its original dimension.”

Oliver W. Holmes

The phenomenon of improvisation in business is not a self-sustained discipline and it has not occurred since long in the corporate industry. However, the upward trend it is nowadays comes as an extension to the more academically discussed roots of

improvisation. Scholars have drawn attention on various fields such as theater (Spolin, 1963; Weick, 1993; Crossan 1998), jazz (Bastien & Hostager, 1988; Berliner, 1994, Hatch 1998), psychiatry (Embrey Guthrie, White, & Dietz, 1996), education (Borko & Livingston, 1989; Irby, 1992). Not surprising, the most mentions are related to the arts sphere.

In this paper, the discussion centers on theater as a source of techniques that could lead organizational teams toward achieving exceptional creative value. Although, researchers in improvisation have largely debated jazz implications in the occurrence of this concept. The objective of this paper refers to transposing the learnings of improvisation in arts onto business template, thus theater shows greater “accessibility, transferability and universality” (Vera & Crossan, 2005). Therefore, I avoid the impediment of analyzing jazz rooted improvisation without having musical knowledge and I bring forward the claim that theater uses elements that we encounter every day: verbal, non-verbal and para-verbal. Moreover, anybody owns understanding about theatric traits of humans as “dramatical expression is a universal and timeless phenomenon” (Vera & Crossan, 2005, p.204).

1.2.1. Collaboration

"If two men on the same job agree all the time, then one is useless. If they disagree all the time, both are useless."

Darryl F. Zanuck

Collaboration is central in theater as actors sharing a single stage must collectively improvise and give meaning to their representation as a whole. Similarly, organizational improvisation aims to implement a collaborative mindset throughout the work day, teaching people to construct on each other's ideas.

A number of studies approach the social relationships and collaboration as steerage of creativity in scientific settings (Farrell, 2001; John-Steiner, 2000; Maddox, 2002; Pycior, Slack, & Abir-Am, 1996; Uglow, 2002). Levine and Moreland (2004) emphasize the importance of three stages that occur in group collaboration: formation, performance and dissolution. A proper illustration of collaboration in groups is given by Farrell (2001, p.11): “A collaborative circle is a primary group consisting of peers who share similar occupational goals and who, through long periods of dialogue and collaboration, negotiate a common vision that guides their work. The vision consists of a shared set of assumptions about their

discipline, including what constitutes good work, how to work, what subjects are worth working on, and how to think about them.... For a group of scientists, it might be a new theoretical paradigm. Each member comes to play an informal role in the circle, and each role may have a history as the group develops over time. Even while working alone, the individual members are affected by the group and the roles they play in it.”

Prior research has suggested that collaborative gatherings are mainly facilitated by two factors (Farrell, 2001): a physical place where the members of the group can meet and the presence of a gatekeeper that decides who can enter the circle. The latter, also referred to as matchmaker, has a binding role by easing the integration of new members and strengthening the interaction at all levels. Ambition degrees, disciplinary traits and discourse style are framed and balanced by the gatekeeper in order to ensure attractiveness in each other capacity to communicate.

The literature shows consensus of collaborative group formation as social integration (Spolin, 1963; Moreland, 1987; Farrell, 2001). Four main types of integrative methods are enunciated: environmental, behavioral, affective and cognitive integration. As we will observe later, the concepts align with Harvey’s (2014) cognitive, social and environmental resources for achieving great creativity in teams. The foregoing discussion implies that collaboration is built on the same principles within and outside the corporation. Environmental integration is based on the setting’s capacity to provide supportive and motivating resources. Put specifically, the magnet places (Farrell, 2001) are organizations that make available to their employees a physical, inspiring and meaningful work ground. The behavioral integration is depicted by the group members’ interdependence and need for each other. The connection is based on social comparison, therefore in order for a group to collaborate effectively the gatekeeper has to mediate it by ensuring people can find similarities one in another. Following the penchant for sharing common characteristics, affective integration comes to contour the circle framing. Shared feelings developed within the group increases the chance of reciprocal attraction and thickens the border with the outside world. The commonly met obverse side is illustrated by antipathy towards external authority. On a rational parallel, cognitive integration occurs when people realize they belong together and share distinguishable characteristics compared to other groups.

Much of the current debate revolves around the subsequent step of collaborative group formation. On logical grounds, organizations seek performance and act objective-

driven. Compelling literature has emerged as social psychologists turned their attention to group creativity (Amabile, 1997; Milliken, Bartel, & Kurtzberg, 2003, Argote & Kane, 2003, Levine, Choi, & Moreland, 2003; Stasser & Birchmeier, 2003). Although the topic could be discussed from multiple points of view, the issue under scrutiny conjures up group structure and processes that mediate diversity.

Group composition can refer to as diverse constituents as demographic characteristics, personality traits, opinions, tenure in the group, and educational and functional background (Levine and Moreland, 2004). The question of whether diversity fosters creative collaboration has caused much debate in the organizational field over the years. There have been dissenters to the view that diversity always operates effectively within collaborative frameworks (Milliken et al., 2003; Moreland, Levine, & Wingert, 1996). On the one hand, divergent thinking might flourish under the umbrella of diversity. On the other hand, it could arouse negative feelings and personal conflicts. Consequently, complementarity depicts the solution to diminishing the negative and incrementing the positive. It implies similarity on background characteristics and dissimilarity on knowledge and abilities. On this line, communication is underpinned while variety in inputs can be stabilized toward definite creative outputs.

The performance in creative groups is highly related to process loss and process gain (Steiner, 1972, Hackman & Morris, 1975). Scholars agree considerable team's potential is leaked because of processual incoherence. Firstly, individuals have to be motivated enough to believe their ideas can contribute to the group's benefit. Communicating their idea precedes attentive consideration and feedback. Chosen ideas must be implemented, reloading the loop by generating a trustful platform in which employees find the safety and the control needed to share their ideas and to collaborate toward common objectives.

Further research in this area may include group dissolution as an inevitable step. Real world fights employee migration and most companies strive to retain their talent. However, several reason conduct to member loss. External motivation can attract members with a better offer of group formation, way of performing and tangible rewards. In such case, the losing side might rethink its strategy, especially if the phenomenon is not isolated. Moreover, a decrement in outside evaluation of the group work may lead to members' isolation and failure awareness. Although, the change to maintain a high level of creativity is high, producing an outcome that is not marketable can be seen as meaningless work.

Once the members realize this, resentment and accompanied by other negative feelings might become the daily reality of the group which finally ends in dissolution.

Equally important, internal breakdown is the most worrying factor that pushes people out of the system. It shows managerial incapacity and dysfunctional environment, and consequently talented employees are seeking for new fertile grounds for growth. Cognitive discrepancies are instances of objectives and methods conflicts. Social issues can also appear under the sign of unspoken growing frustration. However, when verbalized conflicts can escalate quickly. Worth mentioning is the fact that these conflicts are not necessarily motifs for group dissolution, but derail the group performance and the chance of dissolving soars up.

Key words: collaboration, formation, performance, dissolution

1.2.2. Improviser's toolbox

“Bad improvisers block action, often with a high degree of skill. Good improvisers develop action.”

Malcolm Gladwell

The role of repeated practice and experience accumulation has been debated by scholars as foundation to dynamic capabilities (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Zollo & Winter, 2002). The rule of “practice” in improvisation conducts participants towards forming a habit, while actors in theater “plan to improvise” by continuously working on their improvisational abilities. Researchers might overlook the importance of practice given the extemporaneous character of theatrical play, but there is confirmatory evidence that preparation and study builds on expertise which is essentially needed in improvisation (Weick, 1998). Actors might find their performance affected by the intangible value of communication and listening, and their cognitive stock that can impact on the context in a given scene (Crossan, 1998, Vera & Crossan, 2004). The underlying argument in the favor of the contrasting - at first appearance - expertise in improvisation is that actors are able to open up options for themselves, to access greater knowledge and to process the information coming from their fellows or the audience more clearly while playing a scene. The unscripted aspect of improvisation stays unshakeable, while the actors train for better responses.

Innovative organizations might adapt the theater concept of “agree, accept, and add” (Vera and Crossan, 2005). Halpern, Close and Johnson (1994) remark the importance of agreement as the only rule that cannot be broken. Once the common agreement established, the collective mechanism of improvisation start functioning using the technique traditionally known as “yes-anding”. This approach is the reverse of “no, but” thinking that many managers are still keen on in the organizational environment. Denying the ideas of others is considered a form of aggression (Johnstone, 1979) and leads to erasing anything that has been created before.

"Be present in the moment" frames what actors are imposing on themselves while acting. Improvisers must be fully aware of their role and how it affects the development of the entire piece. Thus, theater environment praises living the role, not only playing it. “The one word story” is a common improvisational game, activates the participants skills of listening and engaging into what other think, exercising the ability to intervene in their storyline and building upon it without altering the meaning previously set.

In the improvisational efforts, actors "draw on reincorporation and ready-mades" (Vera & Crossan, 2005). While making connections is one characteristic worth mentioning, free association is also a statement in theater that stimulates and releases cognitive capacity. This allows improvisers to give new interpretations to the world and to connect with people in a new way. On the other hand, reincorporation and ready-mades are clichés or motifs used as hooks for improvisation. In other words, improvisation supports the identification of patterns around which novelty can occur, and these form in time, through the labor of practice.

I will now summarize the ground covered in this chapter by reigniting the similarities between theater and daily business environment. As highly transferable factors, the use of gestures and mimics in theater could be transposable into non-verbal communication in business environment, while the vocal act on the stage is related to the verbal communication at work. Improvisation fosters creativity in both theater and business. Certain proceedings emerged from theater practice to companies frame could be exceedingly plentiful if applied properly. Practice, collaboration, “yes-anding” technique, the capacity of being present and the identification of patterns to build upon are interconnected theatric procedures. They emerge from the acting stage to the business environment unleashing the

paradox of “rehearsed spontaneity” or the “human-infrastructured” improvisation to a radical new, yet conveyable frame.

Key words: practice, “agree accept and add”, be present in the moment, reincorporation and ready-mades

1.3. [The role of leadership](#)

“Nothing is sure to shut down the engine of innovation faster than leaders who behave as if creating and executing on new ideas is just another item on their efficiency oriented checklists.”

Tim Brown

IBM (2012) has put a stamp on what modern connectedness mean to the world of business. Based on consulting with over 1,700 CEOs over the world, the research claims that three imperatives build on a successful organizational story: empowering employees through values, engaging customers as individuals and amplifying innovation with partnerships. Besides developing customer obsession, inspirational leadership and leadership teaming stand as pillars in creating the architecture of a meaningful workplace.

Benchmark in the field of creatively-set organizational structures, IDEO leads the way toward implementing applied improvisation on a daily basis. Discussion on leadership shed a new light on the Farrell’s picture of the gatekeeper. The connector finds new meanings in leading from different perspectives – from the front, from behind, and from the side (Brown, 2016).

The first stance of these roles is that of the explorer (leading from the front). Closest to governance, the explorative leaders stand in the front of the audience as we observe in many of the efficient organizations. Nevertheless, they don’t seek formal authority and are not prone to impose guidelines or directions. Rather than this, exploration is flexible and search after valuable input from the team members by asking strategically purposeful questions.

The following state is that of the gardener (leading from behind). The concept is complementary to Linda Hill’s (2010). As suggested, the leader’s role is ensuring creativity is rooted in a nurturing soil. Forethought and careful investment are assets coveted in such

leadership style which is obsessed with the creation of a protective environment. It acts as a potential booster and represents a tool for deploying creative potential within the company.

Eventually, the most challenging role is that of the player-coach (leading from the side). Engagement without suppressing the power of the group is key to this type of lead. It requires confidence and real-time response. Processes are happening live-time and it describes accurately what improvisation is. While as a gardener, the leader has to opportunity to prepare the ground in advance, the player-coach is “on the field”. High comprehension and alignment with organizational core values is indispensable when performing the player-coach role. Thus, it is legitimate to affirm that the most complex leadership role resembles the activities of an improviser.

Key words: explorer, gardener, player-coach

1.3.1. Individual versus collective

“It is literally true that you can succeed best and quickest by helping others to succeed. “

Napoleon Hill

The reader might wonder – why is improvisation collaborative? There are underlying arguments in favor of individualism as key to achieving outstanding innovation. The vivid example of auteur over committee (Stross, 2011) aligns with the fact that “the lone inventor has long being championed in the realm of creativity and, in particular, in the invention of breakthroughs” (Singh & Fleming 2010, p. 41). Accessing the most convenient weapon against collaborative breakthrough ideas, Apple’s success is based on the vision of one man in the person of Steve Jobs. The radical approach of Apple appears to be more successful if seen retrospectively. Empowering the auteur, Steve Jobs, “the company that has a single arbiter of taste has been producing superior products, showing that you don’t need multiple teams and dozens or hundreds or thousands of voices” (Stross, 2011).

On the basis of the evidence currently available, it seems fair to suggest that invention is distinct to innovation. The latter implies firm utterance of what the actual organizational problem or need is, while the inventors broadly focus on technical solution. In the second place, the extreme instance of Steve Jobs is no longer a guiding and relevant action line in today’s interconnected world. Thirdly, recent literature inclines the balance to the

collaborative innovation efforts. In addition, Singh and Fleming (2010) suggest that individuals working on their own are less likely to achieve breakthroughs and more likely to invent particularly poor outcomes.

Improvisation is highly seen as a collaborative process. Yet, individuals represent the initial fuel that aliment the common goals of improvisation. This paper focused on the logical sequences of creative synthesis elaboration that stresses the integration of divergent perspective into a unique understanding field that can be nurtured by the evolution of exemplars. Notwithstanding, researchers draw on the collaborative-individual leadership dichotomy. On this verge, I consider valuable a discussion that tackles the degree to which a non-constraining environment could effectively support innovation through improvisation. On the other hand, this topic raises questions about whether empowering an individual leader to manage creative processes or giving full credit to the group.

Although it is widely agreed that building on others represent a sustainable practice that directs companies to breakthrough innovation, Ayn Rand (1964) has manifested a powerful disdain to the concept of collaboration. She gives us an extremist view on selfish approaches by fading leadership away from the equation. On this matter, distinction appears between “a rational self-interest” and altruism – bridged with freedom respectively slavery. Moreover, Rand claims that “the first right on earth is the right of the ego. Man’s first duty is to himself” (Rand, 1964, p. 34).

Rand’s morality of the self in the context of today could be questioned, but her perspective is a tipping point that has been made when the industrialization began to expand. Therefore, the companies of today have their roots in the capitalism applications of ’60 and ’70. Perhaps a more lenient view could fit better the development of the argument of selfishness over the collective. Susan Cain (2012) reckons that “we are often so dazzled by charisma that we overlook the quiet part of the creative process.” Cain draws on the power of introverts and uses the instance of Apple’s Steve Wozniak, who is taught to have created the first user-friendly personal computer. The explanation of his journey may be as shocking as Rand’s belief, especially coming from a man directly involved in the corporation paradigm: “most inventors and engineers I’ve met are like me, they live in their heads. They are almost like artists. In fact, the very best of them are artists. And artists work best alone. I’m going to give you some advice that might be hard to take. That advice is: work alone. Not on a committee. Not on a team” (as cited in Cain, 2012).

IDEO is perhaps the most powerful example in terms of how collective leadership could occur. David Kelley is the initiator of shared-generative power behind IDEO. He enables teams to carry out processes all the way from iteration to prototyping. Considering IDEO's perspective, we can draw on collaboration as "a highly interdependent group work process, in which participants open themselves to the contribution of others, and use those contributions as material for their own work, towards the generation of emergent and novel unanticipated outcomes. The group often determines both the goal for the work and process for achieving that goal" (Hessel, 2015).

IDEO's internal processes contrive on transactive memory as an implicit part of the improvisational technique of rotational leadership (Vera & Crossan, 2005). There are situations in which people needs to be led, whilst at general level, a healthy environment which supports innovation has to empower people and shared platforms where they can contribute with ideas. This is the case of Google, seen as "a committee" with "lots of people playing a role" (Stross, 2011).

Key words: auteur, committee, collaboration, selfishness, rotational leadership

1.3.2. The creative project manager

"Tools should be developed for the management of creativity to make project management complete as a recognized profession."

P.J. Blankevoort

Theorists takes a middle-ground position on whether leadership should manifest collectively or individually and argues on a mixture of the two paradigms. The adoption of a hybrid model is close to an environment likely to produce innovative outcomes. Therefore, the presence of an individual actor is highly recommended in the organizational sphere. Pictured in the role of project manager, this has to proceed certain activities (see Fig. 5) in order to flourish the creativity within group works (Simon, 2006).

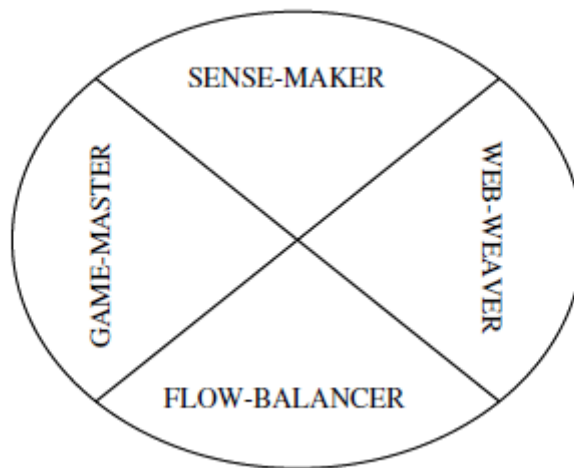


Figure 3. The activities of the creative project manager (Simon, 2006).

As a sense-maker, the project manager is the binder between individuals and the collective understanding of the group. The project manager transposes the meaning into actionable elements and translates team's beliefs into attainable objectives. Along the way, the sense-maker continuously reasserts the collective meaning through informal communication and formal meetings (Simon, 2006). In addition, the creative project manager is the convergent factor to all the individual talents in the corporation. The high focus on interaction brings the sense-maker in a favorable position to obtain advantages for the team both internally and externally (partnerships, sponsorships, resource allocation, expertise, distribution etc.).

Web-weaving activity is the second spectrum through which the creative leader is expected to operate. By creating a powerful network he/she accomplishes the "cut-and-paste" integrator role (Simon, 2006). Researchers have acknowledged over time the reality of widely distributed resources (Hargadon & Sutton, 1997). The web-weaver is a sharp skill observer. Matching profiles and diversifying teams' composition give the project manager the opportunity to sculpt the processes and the outcomes. Therefore, he/she can influence the prerequisite in the innovation journey.

Creativity management deftness often crystalizes at the intersection of material, social and symbolic elements comprised within the creative playground (Noller, Parnes, & Biondi, 1976; Isaksen, 1987; Amabile, 1996) The game-master ability turns the leader into a rules-setter and a goal-bearer. Along the way, the project manager has to foster both

competition and cooperation, which can be a trap most of the times. Mastering the game could be seen as an individualistic and differentiating trait, and it has to be performed transparently in order to maintain the coherence of the collaborative environment without making use of power and position. Ideally, the manager has to encourage interdisciplinary team members to “co-opetively build on each other’s contributions” (Simon, 2006, p. 121).

The leader as a flow-balancer is perhaps the most desired actor in a homogenous creative process. The leader needs to “keep the team on track” by motivating people, equilibrating freedom and constraints, setting challenges and last but not least, believing in fun (Simon, 2006). The project manager has to know his people well enough so he/she can aim to tailored intrinsic motivation. New generations’ motivation is to a big degree different than what the corporate world has been used to. Hierarchy, money and career track are old-fashioned ways of incentivizing employees (Zemke & Raines, 2000). Moreover, the project manager has to set a fine balance between constraints and freedom. This translates into work-flow, as that element that combine the goal-driven efforts with moments of recreation. In the creative organization, these moments, still seen as “taboo” in some environments, facilitate the creation of new ideas.

All things considered, it seems reasonable to assume that improvisation effectiveness and innovation enhancement have to be surrounded by a leadership authority that empowers people. This governance has to favor leading from behind, overcoming the misconception that position implies generating big ideas and nurturing the idea that “sustained innovation comes when everyone has an opportunity to demonstrate a slice of genius” (Hill, 2010). Therefore, executional followers are replaced by communities where the maturation of breakthrough ideas can take place. In doing so, backstage-leaders are key actors in the innovation process because they establishes two structural pylons in the construction of fruitful organizational environments (Hill, 2010). Firstly, leaders must ensure their companies are willing to innovate. Secondly, they have to build upon this willingness by focusing on three creative coordinates, as stated by Linda Hill (2010): abrasion (idea-generation ability as a result of intellectual discourse and debate); agility (testing and refining ideas capabilities through quick pursuit) and resolution (integrative decision-making feature).

Key words: project manager, sense-maker, web-weaver, game-master, flow-balancer, leading from behind, abrasion, agility, resolution.

1.4. [Creative synthesis – a comprehensive model](#)

“Creative synthesis provides an alternative way for groups to combine their cognitive, social, and environmental resources into extraordinary output.”

Sarah Harvey

Human-centered practices stay at the core of improvisation in business. In fact, people represent the most resourceful elements within a company, but their potential needs to be activated. The organizational environment represents the input towards innovation that employees could benefit from and facilitate the perpetuation of the creative process. Govindarajan and Srinivas (2013) argue that successful companies have to enable “the right climate for employees to cultivate the innovation mindset — to think different, act different, and achieve extraordinary success”. The point of differentiation and the chase of extraordinary within companies can be alimented by embedding improvisation onto organizational daily agenda.

As firms need to make a point that improvisation not only happens, but is effective (Crossan & Sorrenti, 1997) the discussion needs imperatively a clarification on a set of misconceptions that might impede the successful use of improvisation in business settings. In the first place, “managers risk confusing improvisation with random moments of brilliance” (Vera and Crossan, 2005, p. 203). This wrong approach leads to a radical evaluations of people’s ability to improvise by expressing whether they are good improvisers based on a situation contextually unframed. Improvisation endeavors entail preparation, thus it is possible “to prepare to be spontaneous” (Barrett, 1998, p. 606). Secondly, improvisation does not always lead to positive outcomes. There is a commonly agreed disagreement on improvisation as unique solution to all organizational problems. Managers should be able to create fertile contexts for improvisational processes because spreading the expectations under a form of generalization at corporate levels could result in control loss. Also, the skills of the improvisers are central to discussion, as depending on their characteristics improvisation may solve a problem or worsen it (Vera & Crossan, 2005).

The skills needed for effective improvisation, the collaborative assemblage and the role of managers in the process are to be elaborated further. Improvisation should be visualized as an input to group work. Organizational teams find themselves in the situation of managing various intakes daily, so improvisation should be perceived as one key on a pendant filled with a medley range of others. Researchers on creativity have elaborated the random variation model in which “diverse inputs stimulate variety in outputs” (Harvey, 2014, p. 324). The model is fruitful and sustains the creation of breakthroughs, but rather gives centrality to the individual. The collaborative core towards breakthrough innovation remains uncovered by this evolutionary model. Harvey (2014) proposes the model of creative synthesis (Figure 4) that engages individual perspectives into one common understanding of the group, which becomes the common vehicle towards innovation.

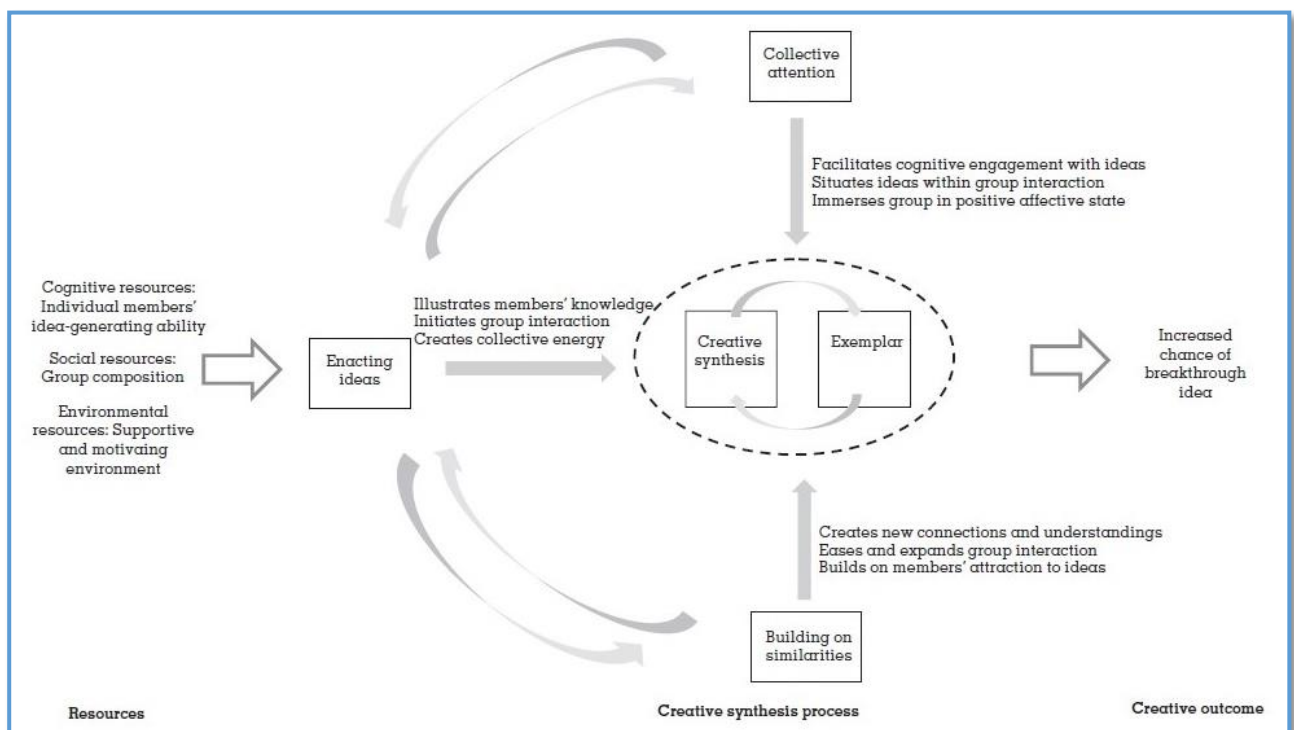


Figure 4. Creative synthesis process for developing breakthrough ideas in groups (Harvey, 2014)

Creative synthesis draws on three resources: cognitive, social and environmental. Along similar lines, improvisation constructs on the law of feedback which follows each of

the exercises and directs participants towards building on each other ideas and constructing holistically a sense of the whole. Improvisation workshops aims to shed light on the essence of desired environmental resource within an innovative company. Underpinning and inspirational frames are required in order for people to feel relaxed and aim for creative team-bonding. Improvisational learnings are meant to be directly embraced by groups, companies has to be aware of the importance of their “contextual influences” (Vera & Crossan, 2005).

The collective behavior pointed to attaining solutions “out of the box” is ingrained in a fertile organizational environment. Nevertheless, the extent to which environment effectively has to support this approach is yet to be defined. Improvisation praises for an ample flexibility which allows participants to proactively search for new ways of doing things. Hoegl, Gibbert and Mazursky (2008) reckon that supportive framework fosters creativity, but constrains could also be beneficial when discussing about creative results. In addition, it is natural to emphasize the growing support for the claim that improvisation refers to a proactive human-centered activity towards innovation, while obstructive “mise en scene” facilitates the bounce-back of a reactive approach which can lead to unexpected creativity.

The global-known animation studio Pixar typifies the creativity based on limitations at best, but underlies some characteristics that differ from the proactive free creativity route. In most of the cases, corporate entities are constrained by time and costs bounds. When these elements are doubled by high expectances from the audience and also from the internal self-set quality standards, the deployment of the A-team is highly needed. The real-life context of Pixar appears to contradict Spolin’s (1963, p.1) belief that “everyone can act. Everyone can improvise.” This view is grounded on the assumption previously agreed, that improvisation is useless if not effective. The crisis Pixar faced when trying to work on two movies at a time crystallized company’s view on how to structure and operate a creative endeavor (Catmull, 2008). In 1996, the company employed its best creative resources to *A Bug’s Life*’s production, while it decided to also start the pursuit of *Toy Story 2* by creating some early story reels. Although the incipient idea was optimal, the reels hadn’t been evolving as expected so the production turned out to be out of phase when the animation stage occurred. Moreover, “the directors and producers were not pulling together to rise to the challenge” (Catmull, 2008, p. 67). Finishing *A Bug’s Life*, the creative leadership successfully took over the failed creative attempt and managed to do in 8 months something

that would have normally been hard to reach in one and a half year (Catmull, 2008). It took the “A” team to perform effectively in a constrictive frame and Catmull (2008, p. 68) firmly concludes: “If you give a good idea to a mediocre team, they’ll screw it up. But if you give a mediocre idea to a great team, they’ll make it work.”

Teams’ performance in collaborative efforts are affected by social dynamics lying between individuals that form a group and cognitive resources of each of group’s members (Harvey, 2014). These two factors are surrounded by the environmental support shown by the company, largely debated above. Having the stage set, cohesiveness and communication stress the composition of a group. Improvizatie.ro adapts its training session depending on the group background. The most widely spread activity revolves around training different teams from multinational companies. In this situation, the principles of innovation come to comfort people taking the first steps outside their comfort area, paradoxically. Social dynamics established between members can ease or hinder the process. For instance, within a newly formed team, streams that connect people might be obstructed by the uncomfortable position of not knowing each other well. Without truly trusting your peer, collaborative creativity is not possible, as the creation of shared mental models is impeded.

Individual cognitive resources relies on the idea-generation ability of each individual (Harvey, 2014). Improvisation occurs at both individual and collective level, but the current analysis focuses on the impact groups have on innovation processes through improvisation. Nevertheless, group creativity starts at individual level empowering the capacity of self. Though, for teams to perform is it necessary the individual self to migrate to collective self. Thus, team improvisation is more than the sum of individual improvisations as joint activities draw on a new system of improvisational actions (Weick, 1998).

The individual effect in collaborative efforts is subject to inherent conflicts that occur on the way to innovation. Conflicts are fundamental to both evolutionary model (random variation) and dialectical model (creative synthesis). By comparison, in the random variation conflicts offer centrifugal approaches and ideas are born through a contradictory approach, whilst in creative synthesis divergence in ideas has the opportunity to be integrated in the universal understanding of the group. As a consequence, conflicts in dialectical perspective are perpetual as groups work on ideas that coevolve. The different degrees of development are exemplars of the creative synthesis (Harvey, 2014).

Improvisation is an exercise of creative synthesis and fosters the embedding of this sustainable breakthrough innovation generator model by teams in companies. It fosters people to adopt a collective creative habit, which is dialectically revamped after each cycle. Thereby, the occurrence of continuous breakthrough outcomes raises in probability.

Key words: dialectical, effective improvisation, creative synthesis, cognitive, social, environmental resources, exemplars, breakthrough innovation

1.5. [Innovation, creativity, improvisation, synonyms?](#)

“All innovation begins with creative ideas.”

Theresa Amabile

Today, innovation is considered a key driver of competitiveness and long-term success in many industries. The current chapter links the study of improvisation with the creative core in the innovative companies. Theories are selected and adapted in order to soften the rigid boundaries of the corporate world and to facilitate exchange with the external world. Additionally, creativity is discussed as catalyzer for innovation, implicitly improvisation.

Researchers dwell upon two manifestations of innovation in the corporate world. Poetz (2015) suggests that generating new knowledge or newly combined existing knowledge is a stepping stone to innovation. On similar lines, Delia Dumitrescu (2011) acknowledges in her work “Road trip to innovation” that invention can be assimilated to breakthrough, whereas innovation is the act of actualization of that thing. The question raised lies on the theoretical comprehension of improvisation whether as incremental or radical.

Given the complexity of improvisation, the process appears to complement the end benefit. Inventions without economic and/or societal value are outside the spectrum of innovation (Poetz, 2015). Thus, it is legitimate to bring to a settlement the fact that improvisation is both the process and the outcome.



Figure 5. The formula for effectiveness in innovation

In his work on disruptive innovation Christensen (2003) found that many large companies are defeated by small, innovative firms that conquer new markets. On these bases, the claim that small companies could be thriving grounds for improvisation to grow seems valid. The reasons underlying this assumption is that entrepreneurial entities have the advantage of flexibility. The quick adaptation could make an enormous impact on today's fast-changing world. On the other side, large incumbents might suffer from organizational inertia and lack of flexibility due to bureaucracy, routines and investments in capital (human, physical, social, etc.), Poetz (2015) suggests.

Big companies can deploy their ample resources, knowledge and experience in dealing with complexity. Their smaller competitors, on the other hand, can use the entrepreneurs as sources of creative destruction. Known as Schumpeter's gale, creative destruction refers to the "process of industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one" (Schumpeter, 1994, pp. 82-83). Thinking outside the box is key to innovation in such organizations. These aspects underpins improvisational principles, and the similarities between small firms and improvisation might be a clue for collaboration on both sides.

The intersection of improvisation with the corporate world can be facilitated by the capacity of the latter to access distributed knowledge. Scholars emphasize the fortuitous distribution of knowledge across time and people (Schumpeter, 1994; Hargadon & Sutton, 1997; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Jeppesen & Lakhani, 2010). In his early work on entrepreneurship, the Austrian born American economist and political scientist Joseph Schumpeter has firstly identified the challenge firms were facing in their pursuit for superior performance in innovation – accessing, mobilizing and combining widely distributed knowledge to solve current local problems (1912, translated from German in 1954). The

issue appears to stay quotidian as such knowledge might be located in “unexpected sources” (Jeppesen and Lakhani, 2010). The reason companies often miss external innovative opportunities relies on companies incapacity to “recognize the value of new, external information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends” (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, p. 128). In addition, researchers suggest the organizational spectrum to build on absorptive capacity and external search competence.

Literature has shown ample support for the claim that “all innovation begins with creative ideas” (Amabile, 1996, p. 1154). Creativity refers to the ability of generating novel and useful ideas. These ideas are central starting point for developing innovations. Nonetheless, innovations as described in Figure 5 should not be seen from this perspective only. Poetz (2015) dwells upon innovation as organizational creative problem solving capacity. She distinguishes between two types of problem solvers (Table 1).

<i>Individual problem solvers</i>	<i>Organizational problem solvers</i>
<p>Ability to develop creative ideas influenced by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → General intellectual abilities → Thinking styles (lateral thinking, analogous thinking, etc) → Existing knowledge → Personality traits (e.g. tolerance for ambiguity, risk taking) → Motivation (specifically intrinsic) • Environment (e.g. incentives, rewards) 	<p>Ability to develop creative ideas influenced by organizational:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures, processes/routines, culture • General firm strategy • Prior knowledge, Heterogeneity of staff, etc <p>Creative organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ambidextrous → Dynamic capabilities → High levels of absorptive capacity → Systematic ways of tapping into/ stimulating employee creativity

Table 1. Individual vs. organizational problem solvers (Poetz, 2015)

Individual problem solvers (users, inventors, employees, etc) differentiate from organizational problem solvers (firms, private nonprofits, public organizations, communities, etc). As individuals are mainly influencing the cognitive baggage within a group, the organizational problem solvers aims to connect the dots through a complex system. It is the organizational factors that impact on sustainable innovation and long-term vision. Therefore, Poetz (2015) advances a formula to prevent misunderstanding on this matter:

Organizational creativity \neq Σ Individual employee creativity.

Bearing this in mind, the study is keen on the concept of holism as a method used throughout the research. The holistic approach indicate that whole entities, as fundamental components of reality, have an existence other than as the mere sum of their parts.

“Suggestion box” is one of the first resolutions for tapping into employees’ creativity (Schilling, 2016). Immersing into a process of reminiscence, the method was firstly acknowledged in 1895, when John Patterson, founder of National Cash Register, created a novel program for tapping ideas of hourly workers. In the course of the following decade, roughly 7000 ideas were submitted, with a third being implemented. Ideas initiators were awarded 1\$ - as a tangible recognition of their engagement.

A century later, the likes of Google, Apple, Facebook and others have adopted programs that incentivize employee creativity. Google’s idea management systems made its way to the top references on this topic. The shared platform that allows employees to express, view, comment and rate others’ ideas is responsible for the creation of products such as: Google News, AdSense, Google Suggest, Orkut or Gmail. This process is usually referred to as the “20% rule” due to the freedom of employees to use a fifth of their working time dwelling upon their own ideas.

Idea collection systems might include techniques embedding idea generation contests and collaborative web platforms. Underpinned by the investment in creativity programs such as improvisation firms can enter a sustainable innovation circle. Schilling (2016) stresses out the impact of exercises that fosters the use of creative mechanisms (e.g. scenario technique, using analogies, etc.). Moreover, signaling to employees that their thoughts are passed through meaningful consideration and their autonomy is respected is a form of intrinsic motivation. On top of that, financial rewards completes the motivational loop.

Finally, the theories jell into a better understanding of the real world. Benchmark to this study, the practices of IDEO come to top up the theoretical framing. Bray (2015) explores the world of corporate creativity and points out the bottom-up innovation processes occurring within IDEO. Disruptive in many ways, top-down directives does not represent the usual flow in this company. Contrastingly, resources are stimulated from the bottom up through someone’s personal energy and commitment. As an example, an individual’s passion for education led to the fast-growing formation of a 23-people group working across the globe for that matter. Leaders are encouraged to initiate project, as IDEO intervenes supportively

and facilitates the underlying of the need and the articulation of the desired outcome in order to align people around a common goal. “The best strategies are the ones that people can make on their own”, Bray (2015) firmly infers.

Key words: creativity, knowledge distribution, organizational creativity, individual employee creativity, suggestion box, idea collection, bottom-up, top-down.

2. Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical foundations discussed previously, we will advance into the practical field of the study of improvisation in the business settings. This involves a qualitative research, which confronts the hypothesis of the dissertation with the reality resulting after data collection and interpretation. The purpose of the research is to validate or, if applicable, to invalidate the hypothesis which was assumed by the author as a starting point in the current academic journey:

Higher the use of applied improvisation on a daily basis within organizational teams, higher the change of innovation to occur.

Nevertheless, as the current study represents a process of learning and therefore of perceiving mistakes as opportunities (fully embracing the improvisational principles), the hypothesis has reached throughout the research a more valid and compelling dimension:

The use of applied improvisation over a longer time can facilitate the creation of daily habits that lead to increased employee satisfaction and sustainable innovative outcomes.

For the reader’s understanding, the aim of this study is therefore not to prove the validity of improvisation in business, which has been previously proven (Tabaee, 2013), but to shed light on how is it relevant from an innovation point of view. Strongly extolled throughout the on-field work, communication hence earns a central role in this study.

Knowledge It is the curiosity and desire to know more, along with the ability to identify 'blank spots' in the knowledge within a field, that creates a basis for investigation and thereby a path to new knowledge. Following Vibeke Anskersborg's (2011) guidelines on the research question model, the study axes on the wondering capability giving it centrality in the research effort. In order to add clearance to the hypothesis testing, the following thematic wondering questions will seek understanding throughout the analysis:

- How can the artful techniques be transferred to the business sector?
- How and whether improvisation influences innovation?
- Is innovation a planned approach?
- Work within or outside established routine of work behavior?
- Is improvisation an effective communication tool?
- Which companies are more prone to adopting creative work-frames?

3. Methodology

The research under review has been linked from its incipient phases with the idea of a journey. The mix of qualitative methods of in-depth interviews and observations has been proven to ease the journey towards understanding improvisation. The study was constructed on exploratory basis as the aim is to bring to the corporate world a new tool to be explored. The method relevance relies on qualitative inquiry's capacity to answer questions as "how" and "why", unarguably demanded in integrating a new perspective into the organizational routine.

The phenomenologist approach directs the research towards understanding the world through the use of participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and others, that yield descriptive data (Taylor, DeVault & Bogdan, 2015). Phenomenologists embrace understanding on a personal level the motives and beliefs behind people's actions (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011).

On similar lines, the systematic interpretive process I opted for in the study of improvisation could be understood from the German philosophical school of late 19th century. Referred to as "verstehen" (Weber, 1968), the method aims to gain understanding on meaning of action from the actor's point of view. It is entering into the shoes of the other,

and adopting this research stance requires treating the actor as a subject, rather than an object of observation. Methodology choices hereby mirror the principles of improvisation drawing on relevance, fluency and reliability throughout all aspects of the current academic work.

The empirical dimension of the research is designed aplenty to extract the implications in relation with business practice. The coverage of three distinct companies and two experiential programs builds on repetitive findings and study reliability. Logical coherence establishes between problem statement, analysis and conclusion. Theoretical and practical knowledge on leadership are extracted to concrete the use of improvisation in the business world.

From a technical point of view, face to face interactions proved to be very fruitful. Notwithstanding, accessing knowledge distributed widely across the globe implies the use of slightly different methods than in real life. The interview with Bogdan Grigore, the Romanian-based co-founder of Improvizatie.ro has been conducted via Skype. The tool is not only an online communication service, but it is globally used in educational purposes, such as online classrooms. Frequently used by researchers, it is considered a novel interview method to collect data (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). The facility of video interaction makes Skype interviews comparable to face-to-face interaction by taking into account the nonverbal messages. However, the half-length portrait or even smaller capturing frames could occur the observation of the entire body language. Another limitation is generated by the environment in which the interviewee is located. Technological facilities such as mobile applications allow people to connect and communicate at any time, but this could affect the quality of the interview if the surroundings tend to be disturbing (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Given the fact that interaction is only one-click away, researchers have been registered a higher rate of absenteeism and reschedule inquiries (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013).

The semi-structured interview method used to interview the three improvisation experts has certified to be nourishing from multiple perspectives. As the interviewer's guidelines focused on depth, allowing the inquired subjects to explore new areas of conversation or to reach even deeper points in examination brought lore richness to the study. From a metaphoric perspective, I constructed the interview as a gardener who plants the seed of interaction with question and gets the answers with follow-ups (Salmons, 2014). Taking into consideration the nature of the subject investigated and the background of the

interviewees I reckon the data gathering approach fits the whole frame of the study as the composition balanced “the preplanned questions of a structured approach with the spontaneity and flexibility of the unstructured interview” (Salmons, 2014, p. 20).

Ray Rist (1977) emphasizes the amplitude qualitative methodology implies onto the research, which becomes more than a set of data-gathering techniques, but a way of approaching the empirical world.

Nevertheless, the implication of the author into the research process could be seen as a limitation as it might bias the evolution of the thesis. Herbert Blumer’s (1969, p.86) argument against this belief runs as it follows: “To try to catch the interpretative process by remaining aloof as so-called “objective” observer and refusing to take the role of acting unit is to risk the worst kind of subjectivism – the objective observer is likely to fill in the process of interpretation with his own surmises in place of catching the process as it occurs is the experience of the acting unit which uses it.”

Improvisation is an unscripted theater technique. The current chapter continues to treat improvisation in the first place, although analyzed methodologically. Another concept that aligns undoubtedly with the improvisational principles is what Psathas (1973, pp. 14-15) called “bracketing”. He suggests sociologists to “break out the natural attitude and examine the very assumptions that structures the experience of actors in the world of everyday life.” Bracketing the assumptions of everyday life “rivals” the act of going on the stage without a memorized script. The whole reality happens on stage, therefore I accepted the challenge to expand the stage onto the academic research. Psathas (1973) reckons this technique changes one’s attitude toward the world, clearing his/her vision. Preconceptions and presuppositions are set aside, and what one “already knows” fades away in order to rediscover the social world with clarity of vision.

Flyvbjerg (2001) sustains the methodological alignment of this study by reference to Aristotle’s “phronesis”. The ancient Greek philosopher divides between “episteme” as analytical, scientific knowledge and “techne” as technical knowledge. He denies the completeness of either of these two, and brings into discussion the judgements and decisions made in the manner of a virtuoso social and political actor. Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 2) argues for the presence of “phronesis” in the social practice, “therefore attempts to reduce social science and theory either to episteme or techne, or to comprehend them in those terms, are misguided.”

Czarniawska (2004) remarks a propensity in social science texts for ending-embedded plots. All the text is supposed to be directed toward the conclusions. Nevertheless, the constructionist researcher offers a perspective on narratology to organizational studies. She reckons there is a chance that the outcome of one episode in the textual sequencing might affect the development of another one or the whole text. Therefore, social science authors are entitled to go back and make changes on the text or even adjust the hypothesis. This reality has to be communicated transparently to the readers, as the process of writing a thesis is primarily a learning tool and a chance to build on the capability of wondering. All things considered, the current study has known its own twists as the initial hypothesis gained amplitude over the empirical reconsiderations.

As a compelling guidance, the study uses the following suggestions as stated by Taylor et al. (2015, p.11):

1. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning people attach to things in their lives;
2. Qualitative research is inductive;
3. In qualitative methodology the researcher looks at settings and people holistically; people, settings, or groups are not reduced to variables, but are viewed as a whole;
4. Qualitative researchers are concerned with how people think and act in their everyday lives;
5. For the qualitative researcher, all perspectives are worthy of study;
6. Qualitative researchers emphasize the meaningfulness of their research;
7. For the qualitative researcher, there is something to be learned in all settings and groups;
8. Qualitative research is a craft; qualitative researchers are flexible in how they go about conducting their studies. The researcher is a craftsperson. The qualitative social scientist is encouraged to be his or her own methodologist. There are guidelines to be followed, but never rules. The methods serve the researcher; never is the researcher a slave to procedure and technique.

The above mentioned methodological approaches and argumentations supply the practice of good academic work. The correspondence with the real world builds on validity,

while the guarantee of repeated results with the use of the same method stands for reliability. The combination of the two results in what Czarniawska (2004) coins as meaningful work.

TERMS: phenomenology, empirism, holism, verstehen, phronesis

4. Setting the stage

4.1. Improvizatie.ro

Improvizatie.ro is the first company in Romania that uses a technique originated in theater – improvisation – to facilitate the flexibility and increase the creativity of individuals and teams within companies. The investigated venture's aim is to help companies become organic by increasing their adaptability and nurturing their growth internally. Improving people's spontaneity and collaboration capability helps leaders become more efficient in relation with the presence of mind, agility and communication.

The company was established by two human resources experts that shared a common purpose in non-formal education and unconventional learning methods. Bonding these areas together, Bogdan Grigore and Corina Anghel are seeking to input their expertise within organizational frames through applied improvisation.

An experienced trainer, Bogdan Grigore has developed his skills in the domains of persuasion, sales, charisma, public speaking, neuro linguistic programming etc. Grigore is part of Apple Sales Academy, being the one that helps Apple boosting its people's soft skills in Romania. Boom TV, Pepsi, BiblioNet and Lugera are some of the entities within which he has developed his consultant and competences-developer skills.

Corina Anghel has been focusing on learning autonomy, as part of the first Alternative University in Romania – an institution that is centered on student. She is part of the team developing the Learning Autonomy program that underpins students in managing their own learning process in accordance with their needs. Anghel was also involved in learning and development projects conducted together with Ericsson, Orange, BCR, Petrom etc. Her expertise in human resources and consultancy, her academic background jointing economics and psychology and the interest in self-directed learning has brought Corina on the Training Manager position in AVON Cosmetics.

Improvizatie.ro's beginning is rooted in theater stages, which hereby makes the case extremely relevant for the present study. Bogdan Grigore starred as an actor, alongside of his friends. In 2007, he decided to twist to the business environment, given his experience in training. Therefore, we face a pure theatrical journey that outlines the links with the artful practices. Improvizatie.ro is a fine example of art turned into business, and I reckon the daring to transfer knowledge between two apparently unrelated domains – theatre and business – constructs itself on the theme of innovation.

Improvizatie.ro's various role plays, working-together exercises and speeches on improvisation are highly focused on physical activities that transform their workshops into stages and participants into actors. Improvisational theater principles are fundamentally embodied by improvisation in business.

4.2. [Improv Comedy Copenhagen](#)

As Ellen Mølgaard (2017) repeatedly pointed out, it is impossible to theorize from one case. Relevant points come to the surface when observations are made from different angles and are not limited to one company. Bearing this in mind, I further investigated the improvisation sector in Denmark. My attention was drawn by a brilliant place situated in the core town of Copenhagen. Passers-by were often stopping by Improv Comedy Copenhagen, admiring the creation of an invigorating wonderful world taking place behind the big welcoming windows. The social and cultural movement was broader than the place itself. I was naturally called-in by the intriguing movements on the stage and by the amount of laughs shared between participants.

Improv Comedy Copenhagen (ICC) represents the most vivid and actual face of improvisation in Copenhagen. The first dedicated stage for improvised theater and comedy hit the doors in September 2016. At Improv Comedy Copenhagen, there are never two performances that are the same. Everything that occurs on the stage comes spontaneously, so every experience is unique.

The concept is catalyzed at the vision interference of Danish actor Stefan Pagels Andersen and entrepreneur Kasper Jacobsen.

Kasper Jacobsen, who has previously worked in an engineering company, has joined the team and was quickly seized by the possibilities of improvisation. "I heard a podcast from Silicon Valley that was about the benefits of improvisation and explored the possibilities in

Denmark. Here I met Stefan. The tools acquired in improvisation gave me an ‘aha experience’ in relation to the potential of these techniques for both individuals and organizations,” says Kasper Jacobsen.

Stefan Pagels Andersen is Improv Comedy Copenhagen’s founder and firefighter. He has been an actor since childhood and has performed improv comedy in 25 different countries. “When I saw this art form in Chicago, I knew I would do it for the rest of my life. Improv comedy changed my life and I learned to believe in myself again. For the last three years I have worked to bring the best artists to Europe. When we met each other for an improv course, it just clicked. We quickly found out that we both have “gunpowder”, want to create something ourselves and complement each other,” he says.

The actor that starred in *Mirakel* (2000), *Klatretøsen* (2002) and *Smukke mennesker* (2010), was the main contact bridging the ICC Theater and the current academic work. His broad perspective favored the overlap of art and business. Genuinely being an actor, Stefan Pagels Andersen has educated himself towards entrepreneurship. He identified a need that was not satisfied at the moment: “I asked myself: why do this not exist in Denmark? Why do we have the possibilities that we have here, but not this wonderful thing? Copenhagen is a very international city, it is a lot culture in it, but why not this?” (personal communication, 2017).

The entrepreneurial questions transformed the dream into vision and then it took the shape of action. In present, the ICC offers to its audience shows 4 nights a week showcasing American style Improv. The house teams performs from a single audience suggestion a 30-60 minutes play. ICC is also touring around Denmark and Europe and performs interactive comedy shows. Last but not least, it provides corporate training where the improvisers are facilitating the implementation of improvisational techniques into the organizational sphere. The main goals revolves around teaching employees how to say “yes” and build on the others’ ideas, be more open, outgoing, communicate more positively and collaborate better.

All things considered, Improv Comedy Copenhagen won the title of ‘City’s Best Scene’ at the AOK City’s Best 2017. This stands as a proof of reliability and relevance for the current piece of work.

4.3. [JustDo!](#)

With a long career in project management, Per Rasmussen has always had a special interest in how people interact, cooperate and communicate. He practiced improvisation as a hobby for several years, leading him to the creation of JustDo!, as a coaching service. Besides the excitement of improvising, this technique strengthened his ability to be present and focused and to overcome some difficult moments in his life. On a daily basis, Rasmussen holds the technical project manager position at Nets

Per Rasmussen is certified practitioner in “Systemic Coaching”. The systemic mindset is based on a holistic view – always with the individual at the center. From this point of view Rasmussen’s practice lines up with Weber’s (1968) concept of *verstehen*. This means the main focus is to work on seeing relationships in a broader perspective, uncovering relationships and understanding patterns of behavior and actions. In this direction, we make use of a variety of tools and methods depending on the situation and the specific context.

The coaching services are tailored to people’s need. A coaching session lasts for one hour and a half and it focuses on: setting goals, motivation for change, obstacles according to desired goals, actions and rounding.

A systemic coach is a practice theorist. The systemic approach refers to “a system” which is the context and relationships that form within that context. Thus, it is not about using fixed “systematics”, but understanding the relationships we are involved in. On this matter, the interaction with Rasmussen was meaningful, as he reckons he said “yes, and” to the interview, embracing from the beginning the improvisational techniques. The result was understanding a contextual relationship formed between the interviewer and the interviewee which led the latter to exclaim: “if I haven’t talked about it, then I would have not thought about it, so basically you made me a greater person.”

Per Rasmussen prefers an appropriate mix of structure in the conversation and the freedom to follow the intuition. It usually creates the best framework for a coaching session and at the same time ensures that the conversation is tailored to the needs, making it tangible in a form “you can take home with you”. Rasmussen’s personal motto is “coaching with focus”, as he strives to provide a cleaner way of coaching. He also likes to use models and drawings in the dialogue as a common reference tool, thus his activity could be linked

with design thinking. The interaction with Rasmussen has been filled with many visual examples that gave the research a clearer grasp on studied matters.

The philosophical discussion with Rasmussen is highly relevant from multiple edges. Firstly, it offers the view and experience of somebody who has been practicing improvisation over a longer period of time. In the second place, the systemic coaching comes as a completion to improvisation offering a different angled perspective. Nevertheless, coaching gently interferes with improvisation making the transfer of knowledge reliable, envisioning and broadening. Most importantly, it pictures the employee's perception as Rasmussen has repeatedly let the hired hand draw the answers to the improvisation inquiries addressed to him. This offers balance to the study and validity through the perspective disjunction.

4.4. A practical route towards improvisation

The empirical dimension of the current journey goes beyond the qualitative interview method. As I engaged into a process of learning, I considered mandatory to experience the contexts in which improvisation occurs. As this work is far from being an auto-ethnography, the reader will be engaged into a lively picture described objectively through the tool of observation. Nonetheless, as Herbert Blumer (1969) pointed out, the "objective" observer refusing to take the role of acting unit means risking the worst kind of subjectivism. Therefore, the following experiences will help the reader to frame improvisation into practicality without presuming they are purely objective:

1. ICC Theater Introductory course;
2. LEADERS Experience.

To begin with, the interview with Stefan Pagels Andersen brought me a new perspective on how the thesis process might develop further on. His passionate speech, militating for making the world a better place, convinced me to enlarge the spectrum of this analysis and to become an active element during the research. Thus, observing the phenomenon of improvisation took an inside-out twist. I signed up for the introductory course in improvisation held by ICC every Sunday for six consecutive weeks. For the first time, I was able to identify what Andersen and Grigore previously told me.

Significantly, the theoretical study of improvisation shed a light on the organizational complexity. As each company is a system dependable on variables, brining in the game of improvisation had to adjust the close proximity. In this case, a second empirical extension

was needed in order to express where functionality level remarks as higher. As a result, gaining practical experience on leadership styles covered the artistic side of the study into a membrane of effectiveness.

5. The frontstage – findings and discussion

5.1. The necessity of improvisation

Reminiscently shedding a light on our past, in professional and personal lives, we will find out that improvisation has always been there. The current study wants to reignite the potential of a tool we already possess. During the learning process I have embroiled in, I came across improvisation in many situations. Starting from the academic articles to people's behavior, I have realized improvisation is not mentioned specifically, but it is there.

In order to contour the vague presence of improvisation in our lives and to boost people's ability to draw on it, I will have to offer the reader a hands-on definition on what improvisation is business-wise. The actor and entrepreneur Stefan Pagels Andersen (personal communication, May 10, 2017) frankly provided an emphatic intriguing answer to what improvisation is: "I am changing people's lives!" In addition to that, Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) believes that improvisation revolves around the "yes, anding" technique, "meaning that you look for taking the lead from where you are and embracing what comes towards you and make that the new reality for the next step".

5.1.1. Cultural roots

"Long-form improv is not about being funny, but being truthful and making the other look good."

Stefan Pagels Andersen

Stefan Pagels Andersen (personal communication, May 10, 2017) had a great role in dividing the two main concept upon which improvisation operates by paralleling their cultural roots. He believes there are two schools of thinking towards improvisation: American improv and British impro (without the "v").

To begin with, the U.K. approach has originated from a governmental restriction. As theater plays were not allowed before having submitted the script of the show to the authorities in order to be approved, improvisation found itself in a difficult situation. One of the main characteristics of improvisation is the lack of a script. Keith Johnstone, the parent of the modern European improvisation, created a way people could practice improvisation as a sport, where two teams are competing. This way, improvisation gained a sense of competition and the performers were engaged in a battle for getting more intensive laughs from the audience. As a consequence, the concept of collaboration was left out. "Instead of using all philosophies in improvisation, you actually broke a lot of rules in order to get quick laughs and that is breaking the reality. It is still funny product though, but the philosophy is not honored as much as I think it should be", supplements Andersen (personal communication, May 10, 2017).

By contrast, American style is rooted in Viola Spolin's (1963) first attempts to integrate immigrants into the U.S. society. With Stefan Pagels Andersen as an iO Chicago adept, the American style fitted naturally at the ICC's core. Referred to as simply as "improv", or the long form show, the concept breaks the egg shell of laughs and focuses on being truthful and making the other look good. The laughs are not neglected; although they are prone to be less in number, they are expected to be more intense and authentic.

Bridging the theater scenery to the corporate setting the reality will clearly indicate the tendency of organizational actors to fight for achievements and recognition using the British-based improv philosophy. However, the approach the inquired improvisers are keen on is the American style. Collaboration is highly encouraged and the development of the others is primary. Andersen's acting background places the "yes, anding" in a sacred position. Building on similarity, Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) illustrates practically the consequences of the two approached discussed above. He reckons improvisation relies on thinking about the partner, rather than the story or the self on stage. Dexterously picturing an example, we have to imagine that our partners are the world champions in the sport we play, on the stage we act or the business environment we work in. In that context, we have to offer them what they need, to assist them into maintaining the world champions title. Fortunately enough, the environment has to educate all the employees to think alike. That is what Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016)

coined as downstream improvisation, emphasizing that “the moment you try to step out of this mutuality, improvisation becomes unnatural, and it goes upstream.”

Key words: American style, British style, improv, impro, downstream, upstream

5.1.2. [The fear of mistake and exposure](#)

“We need to teach people to trust so much themselves that they actually dare speak up. In their relationships, at the workplace, in life in general.”

Per Rasmussen

On the stage, feelings get amplified. It is what the introductory course in improvisation taught its participants by their own example. In order to run away from exposure, people performing on stage try to imagine things that are not in the scene. We are usually doing this in various contexts due to our defense mechanisms that wants us to fight the danger of being spotted. In theater, these acts are coined as transactional scenes.

During the ICC course, one specific exercise raised questions on how and why do we often focus on things out of the context. Two people were invited on the stage for creating a scene. The main objectives of the exercise was to establish a context throughout the conversation: who they are, where they are, what they are doing and most importantly how they feel about it. The emotional statement is meant to be a connector and to help forward the dialogue flow. As performing the exercise, the teacher repeatedly stopped the scenes because they were deviating, they became transactional. The main connector got neglected and the performers started to bring external elements into the discussion just to sustain the scene or the get more laughs.

Grigore, Andersen and Rasmussen’s visions align perfectly under the theater concept of transactional scene. People, both in professional and personal settings, should connect through emotions and tell out loud how they feel. As a supportive technique in this apparently risky opening, asking no questions stands as a communication facilitator. The responsible pass of the dialogue to the partner has to occur through a statement making, as questions favor tensions and enlarge the problem spectrum over the emotion.

Social patterns and behaviors might be seen as limitations. They are those restrictive elements that impede creative processes through the lens of desirability which can easily

transform into fear. Per Rasmussen (personal communication, 31 May, 2017) depicts the aching image of the business world, where “groups are dysfunctional because they don’t dare to speak up”. As a result, people tend to shield-up in defense mechanisms that lowers their exposure within groups.

Mistakes are highly encouraged in collaborative environments. IDEO supports making mistakes and believes it is a way to breakthrough innovation. On similar lines, Improvizatie.ro attempts to successfully implement this collaborative trait through all the trainings delivered. Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) emphasizes the “dare to fail” mindset he tries to transfer to participants. He perceives mistakes as “interruption of patterns” that could possibly lead to innovative results. However, errors are tolerated as long as the consequences are not projected long in the future. Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) underpins Grigore’s approach on mistakes making. He believes it is a tool for generating new ideas. He suggests people should embrace the opportunity on adding on somebody else’s errors, as it could end up into a new idea. Organizationally thought, the empirical guidelines construct on the concept of “competent risks” (Tabaee, 2013).

Key words: transactional scene, defense mechanism, social patterns

5.1.3. “Yes, anding” and its degrees

“No is the end of the story, whereas a series of yeses will take you somewhere.”

Bogdan Grigore

A closer look at the theoretical indications suggests that fruitful environments let their employees speak up and gives them the chance to feel heard and cared about. However, there are certain degrees to which this happen and slight difference can make a huge impact on collaboration. The teacher at ICC introduced the participants to a whole new perspective on how people interact. He constructed the interaction on four levels of response: “no”, “yes, but”, “yes, and” and “what I love about this”.

The simple exercise through which the four shades were explained had as objective setting a party. Participants interacted in pairs approaching all the four ways of answering to a party suggestions. In the first case, simply replying “no” to the partner’s idea was a

blocking element. Obviously, the party will never happen in this situation and the communication will be as limited as two replies. Therefore, every time when “no” comes across in the corporate world, a possible breakthrough idea might be suppressed or a person might feel a lack of self-importance. Absolutely, the organizational world has to decline most of the inputs as accepting everything would be physically impossible. The underlying argument here stands in the capacity of the managers to explain objectively why certain decisions went through and others not. On a more personal level, employees have to educate themselves to deny blocking, otherwise “if you accept the blocking, you are blocking too” (Per Rasmussen, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

The response under the form of “yes, but” is just a polite denial. No significant difference has been recorded between the first two options, as the initial aim could not be reached in either case.

Embracing one of the most solid fundamentals in improvisation, “yes, and” has brought a different continuation on the party suggestions. For the first time, the participants were able to set up the party, while building on others’ ideas.

Practice adds new perspectives to theory as the “yes, and” in improvisation has met its master. Words have indefinite power in the human interaction and there is a twist on how the “yes, and” can beautify and strengthen the human bond. When replying with “what I love about this”, we are not only accepting and adding on others, but making others feel valuable. This basically makes the transition from being a pawn to an actual human being within companies. As Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) simply illustrated this approach, “he is not just a supplier, he is Anders and has a mountain bike just like me.”

Communication on these lines need to meet some features in order to achieve high effectiveness. On field observation has led to contouring several guidelines. Firstly, we have to stay on topic. Deviations are not sustainable as they interrupt the conversational flow. It is recommended to stay tight and reach depth on a matter for it to impact the future and be implemented. Wideness doesn’t favor adoption, but can be a useful tool in incipient phases of a laissez-faire approached project. Moreover, emotions are the main binder that facilitates communication and exchanges of replies.

On similar lines, the NLP practitioner Daniel Bichis (2017) has put a stamp on the Leaders Experience program. The importance of communication spreads across multiple fields, strengthening the reliability and relevance of the currently discussed topic. Bichis’

exercises were focused on relations and the way people listen and reply to the others. Participants were asked to work in pairs and to share with their partner one quality and one defect that describe them. Importantly, “looking into the partner’s eyes” was one of the most stressed out indications, building on similarity with the ICC teacher’s permanent advice: “the answer is in your partner’s eyes”. Moreover, the listener had to hear carefully what the first person said, and without any bias – which could be translated into “no script” – had to reply maintaining the eye contact. The reply consisted of two parts: reiteration of partner’s quality and defect as a sign of listening and understanding, and further the value adding. The latter mentioned is perhaps the most significant: “I see you are (quality) and (defect), and much more than that.” Concluding on the exercise, Bichis (2017) states: “The partner listens to those words and let them enter the mind and the heart”.

Key words: “no”, “yes, but”, “yes, and”, “what I love about this is...”

5.2. [Beyond the fanciful leader](#)

“The leader manifests as a leader where there is passion.”

Daniel Bichis

Leadership has largely been debated as a desirable norm within companies. This chapter aims to proceed the beliefs on leadership beyond the “nice to have” asset. Strongly linked with the concept of improvisation, this chapter aims to shed a light on whether the artful approach has to be controlled in order to operate in a way that deploys commercialization and exploitation of the creative state.

Given the centrality of this issue to improvisation, I experimented leadership in a framework that adds on the research with knowledge from master practitioners, but also team work where specific traits have been observed. “Leaders Experience” is a leadership program in Romania designed to teach leaders how to collaborate. Holistically engaged into the whole experience, I have been able to observe how open a real working environment is to artful approaches and how various leadership styles affect these. The available evidence point to three main leader archetypes: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire.

“My way or the highway” could stand as the motto of the stiff, but goal-driven autocratic leadership type. The authority and team responsibility is given to a single man.

Notably effective in certain situations, the leader embracing autocracy risks social undesirability. As agreed when embarked onto the improvisation deck, no script is allowed. Therefore, the reader has to discover the importance of this approach without being biased by the desirability level.

When a new group forms, it is a big change to derail due to lack of expertise and dynamic connections. The low level of expertise within a newly formed team entails a firm leader that can give directions and teach others. Crisis situations are often met in the organizational setting. The dominance of one man, the quickness of decisions are in this case not limiting or bothering, but moving forward under pressure. To give an illustration, let's imagine how a less steady approach would look like in the fields of medicine or army. Is there any room for improvisation in an awake brain surgery? Or an army shooting operation?

The other side of the shield pictures the autocratic leader in a negative shadow. The power abuse is often an issue for the imposing leader. Naturally follows the loss of the team as the group members can become uncomfortable around a harsh, standardized approach. Lastly, capping can constitute the icing on the "melting" cake. Linearity and one-man vision might represent a barrier in the development of the other employees. Ilie Gageatu (2017), trainer Leaders Experience, suggests that these type of dominant leaders have to educate themselves to become silent and to facilitate feedback sessions.

Democracy has largely been praised as the common element of a well-developed society. The people interviewed, as well as the participants of improvisation classes and Leaders Experience found consensus in the collaborative leadership style as the most appreciate and socially desirable. On logical grounds, the chance of expressing opinions on all organizational levels gives the employees the satisfaction of being heard and on contributing to the environmental well-being. Decision is still laying into the leader's capacity. Consulting everybody in the company is physically impossible in large companies. The way decision is made has to be objectively explained to the team.

On similar lines, improvisation in larger companies has to be absorbed democratically. Stefan Pagels Andersen (personal communication, May 10, 2017) explains the need of alignment between all members of a corporation: "if you are a group of 25 in a corporation or department of 100, and those 25 people are doing the session, the rest of them will also need to know that something is changing because otherwise they will not be

able to communicate with one another. Ideally would be to work with the same company for the next year, year and a half, and make sure that everyone within the corporation knows what is happening.”

Laissez-faire is characterized by an uninvolved and permissive work environment. There is no actual leader and the processes are based on trust. In order for this style to function, employees need to know what to do, to have the desire to do what they know and finally to make it happen. It is easy understandable in corpuses similar to start-ups and non-governmental organizations, where the level of standardization is rather low and the creativity is encouraged in incipient phases of product development. Adelina Maria (2017), trainer and founder of the Leaders Experience program, emphasize the possibility of achieving breakthrough ideas using the laissez-faire approach. However, this could be a double-edge sword, as many of those ideas never get implemented in a permissive milieu.

As an example, during Leaders Experience participants were briefed to a business plan aiming to successfully offer a free guided tour to 100 tourists in a city nearby. Participants had roughly 17 hours to implement the idea. The challenge was to become aware of the others' leadership style and to adapt to that. Also, the group needed to quickly adjust and to start pushing towards a common shared-goal. This business simulation pictures the business world adroitly. People had an immense desire for affirmation and given the short-time constraint, the tendency to overlap with others both verbally and vision-wise has emerged heavily.

The unexperienced team feared the choice of a leader, as it might have offended others' capacity to lead. Consequently, the laissez-faire approach naturally installed as a framework. One of the biggest downsides of this was observed during the data gathering phase, when the group split into two, one thinking the concept in-house and the other one getting in contact with potential partners and creating lively an on-field route for the tourists. Not having specific direction, affected by a lack of expertise as well, the on-field group started to develop another idea that diverged with the work the other half of the team was doing. The idea was brilliantly innovative as it was bringing in technological features and was cutting off the risk of not having available expertise in tour guiding. Participants developed on the Virtual Reality possibility, as the main resources needed would have been a VR set and some virtuous image selection, voice over and editing. However, the idea got rejected by a democratic vote, as the time constraint didn't allow the team to operate with a

totally new tool. The take away is that the laissez-faire collective leadership style produced some brilliant idea that could have proven as breakthrough innovation, but they never got implemented due to lack of time. Moreover, bringing into discussion the new idea took time to debate and hindered the progress of the initial plan.

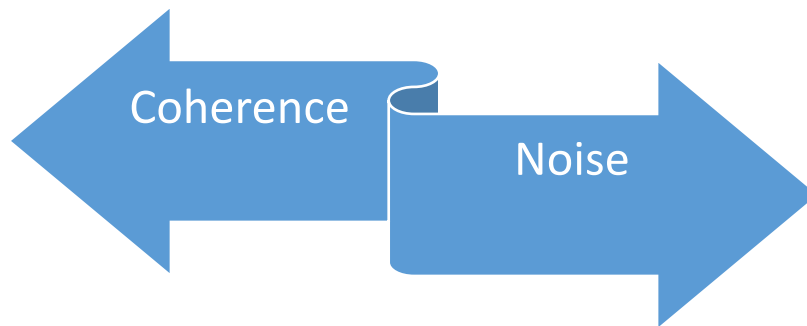


Figure 6. Quick self-awareness thought for group work

In order to understand how to sustain a dialogue by looking into the partner's eyes, it would be at ease to firstly decode how the partner sees the world. Especially in a corporate world, the idealist approach of improvisation saying that everybody is equal is rather an illusion. Therefore, improvisation needs an underpinning pillar in the attempt of creating a safe surrounding in which everybody speaks the same language. As an observation from the work within Leaders Experience, I was able to theorize on empirical facts, advancing to the group the quick self-awareness exercise (Figure 6) that everybody has to apply when tension arises. Question to be asked are: *"Am I helping the group or not?"*; *"If I add something now it will ease the flow or not?"*; *"Should I listen or speak up?"*; *"Do I favor coherence with my remark? With my silence?"*; *"Do I create noise if I diverge now?"*

In order to attain a common system upon which to act, one has to be able to identify the sensible overtones that will be always be present in colleagues' behavior, not to overlook them, but to adapt to them. Given this common rulebook from the beginning, Leaders Experience participants would have probably been able to listen more and to build on others' ideas. Important to stress out, especially when constraints applied, the "building on others" cannot be endless, so the group has to decide when to stop the flow and to move on to the next phase in the process. This can be easily done by the designation of a leader, under the characteristics of a creative project manager (Simon, 2006), who can facilitate transitions.

Alongside operational capabilities, Daniel Bichis (2017) emphasizes the intrinsic coordinates that build up a leader. He strongly believes that a leader impacts the environment in which he/she operates based on the “passion springing out of the soul and the willingness to make sacrifices”. The leader manifests truly as a leader where passion is the main drive and satisfaction comes from the process itself. In this regard, the NLP master stresses out three types of power:

- Physical energy – change capacity;
- The power of relationship – underpinning the group;
- Information – decision-making is laying on information.

Leaders facilitate the major transit from “I” to “we” and from “me” to “us”. Democratizing the power enacts the climate and organizational culture and therefore the change could be sustainably made inside-out. The next chapter attempts to reach the tipping point, so that stakeholders can comprehend the trigger mechanism that could favor functionality in improvisation.

TERMS: leadership, autocrat, democrat, laissez-faire, coherence, noise

5.3. [The mental shift](#)

“If you are a company and you are only looking one year ahead in your future, you will die within two.”

Stefan Pagels Andersen

As we deep down into understanding how improvisation could effectively function within organizations, a switch of mindset occurs. Grigore and Andersen both remark the misconception surrounding their activity at corporate level. While most of the companies only perceive improvisation as a pain killer, innovative firms have to seek ahead for adding value to their environment.

The data yielded by this study provide convincing evidence that companies are yet to discover the true benefit of improvisation. The primary reason for that is the tendency to overlook problems that might appear and to focus on short-term strategies. Intriguing enough, Stefan Pagels Andersen believes that companies concerned only with the following year of their existence, will vanish within the next two. Therefore, improvisation comes in not

as a debugger, but as a prevention tool (Figure 7). “Why not make sure that we implement it early enough so we will never get to the problems”, Andersen questions his corporate fellows.

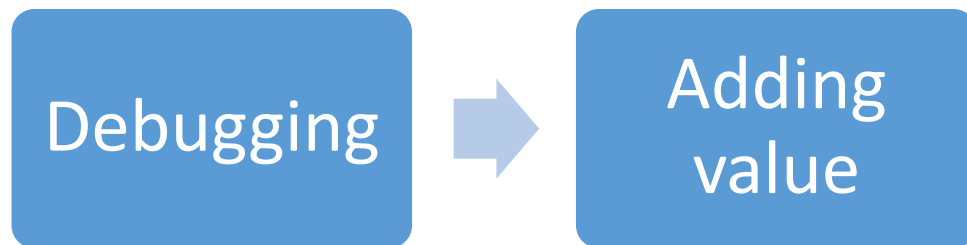


Figure 7. The mental shift towards improvisation

However, debugging represents a moment each department will face at some point. The back-up strategy to adding constant value has innovatively been proposed by Improvizatie.ro. Difficult moments characterize the rhythm of modern corporations, therefore Grigore and Anghel developed “team-building at the office”, a subscription based program that allows companies to call them whenever is needed. The strong focus on competences will help teams overcome deadlocks and use budgets more effectively. Grigore identified the discrepancy between the usual team-buildings and the moment they are really needed. Team-buildings usually happens during the employees’ free time and the learnings does not last for long as “engagement and motivation fade away easily” (Grigore, personal communication, June 2, 2016). It is rather an escape from reality than a sustainable tool for team bonding. With the collaborative approach at the basis, improvisation trainings provided by Improvizatie.ro are meant to offer the participants a two-edged development. Firstly, the activities carried out during the workshops are pointing out aspects related to attitudes – the way of being or behave. On the other hand, competencies explain the individuals’ ability to decide over a matter of fact.

Although, a first step towards a better usage of improvisation, problem solving represents a skill that teams must collectively embody even in non-threatening situations. Winter (2003) explicitly distinguished improvisation from ad hoc problem solving. The latter is referred to as neither routing or highly patterned, while improvisation is envisaged as a capability built on the “foundation of patterned and practiced performance, a fund of micro-patterns that are recombined and sequenced in creative ways” (Winter, 2003, p. 993).

Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) defines the desirable setting for improvisation as the shining platform. It comes as an opposite to the burning platform, which depicts a restrictive environment with obstructed informational flows. He observes an enormous discrepancy between the effort and resources allocated at the top, but the lack of time and attention distributed to the implementation part. Although there are some specific situations when middle management cannot be fully informed about all decisions at the top, but “from the middle management to the workers there should be no limitation” (P. Rasmussen, personal communication, May 31, 2017).

Key words: debugger, prevention, value adding, team-building, shining platforms

5.3.1. Technicalities in improv implementation

“If you see improvisation as a one-time act, you are cheating yourself.”

Bogdan Grigore

Frequency stands as the commonly mentioned development pillar in improvisation. Improvizatie.ro and ICC recommend companies to engage in more than one session. In fact, singular events are a form of cheating in Grigore’s perspective: “if you want to shape a behavior or to change an attitude, it is necessary that you practice that behavior or attitude.” Thus, empirical data align with the theoretical principles of improvisational theater. Practice, as the first of those principles, is highly praised by improvisation experts. Complementary, Andersen stresses out the amount of hours a teacher (facilitator) has to practice in order to master improvisation. Ten thousand hours is roughly the effort needed in order to master a field (Gladwell, 2006). Therefore, companies have to allocate more resources to improvisation if they really want to implement it.

Numbers are highly demanded in the corporate world, hence improvisers came up with specific data on structural matters. Forming habits by recursive behaviors implies repetitive sessions. The approaches might vary as Improvizatie.ro is keen on 5-10 sessions with the same group, whilst ICC believes that big changes appear after six month of once every two weeks or ideally weekly practice, summing up between 12-24 sessions.

Participants are limited in number as the improviser’s main purpose is to be able to establish a personal relation with each of them. Improvizatie.ro operates groups from

8 to 16, while ICC Theater ideal amount lays between 18 and 25. The business world can learn that interacting with too many people at once might lower the attention individuals receive.

The data gathered in the study suggest that three-hour sessions constitute the desired timing for improvisation to take effect. Notwithstanding, sessions can also be shorter depending on the agenda, but stakeholders have to bear in mind that shorter the session lower the impact. Contrastingly, too long sessions can affect participants' capacity of concentration. In this regard, Grigore is open to suggestions at the end of each workshop so he can tailor the program to people's needs. The valid experience of fulfilling the intro level in improvisation at ICC has offered me access to practical knowledge on timing. Three hours are split in three parts with two breaks in between. I reckon it is the perfect amount of time in order to keep participants focused throughout the session.

Structure and approach is dictated by the group characteristics. The incipient phase of improvisational development is presented as a warm-up meant to "break down the social patterns and behaviors, the defense mechanism, so participants become adaptable for the chance that is about to come" (S. P. Andersen, personal communication, May 10, 2017). What corporate world usually gives to employees is a set of scripts that need to be followed. Tensions and unexpressed thoughts can alter the relationship within teams. Andersen emphasizes three elements that are essential to address for good start of a session in improvisation: social patterns and behaviors, defense mechanisms and adaptability.

Moreover, in improvisation debriefing is an important part for understanding the exercises and therefore increasing the embodiment and further knowledge usage. Different styles of teaching come up with different approaches on debriefing. Improvizatie.ro has a structured dedicated session at the end of the workshop that treats this subject. Wrapping-up in such manner will readdress the skills practiced during the workshop and will make participants leaving the session with a sense of over the experience they just had. Corina Anghel facilitates the debriefing by offering a short theoretical preview of the exercise, so participants can be aware of what they are doing from the beginning. On the other side, Andersen cannot say "this is how you improvise", so he prefers delivering explanatory feedback as the exercises bind together towards a complex mix of addressed skills. At the

ICC course, as a wrapping-up ritual, participants were sitting in circle sharing what they have learned and most importantly how they felt during the workshop.

Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) is keen on the existence of a facilitator whose role is to passively guide the groups. He believes it is also a matter of industry whether processes should be autonomously driven by the collective power or by people holding managerial attributions. Nevertheless, companies that are not comfortable with creative endeavors yet, should count on a facilitator who afterwards can pass his attributes to the managers. In this regard, Improvizatie.ro operates trainings especially designed for managers.

Key words: number of participants, timing, social patterns and behaviors, defense mechanisms, adaptability, debriefing.

5.3.2. [Measuring improvisation](#)

“We might not be able to show you that in the next two weeks you double your revenue, that’s not what improvisation can do.”

Stefan Pagels Andersen

Evidence suggests that improvisation is not fully appealed by the organizational sector, as it lacks a specific measurement system. The form of theatrical art translated into business revolves around measuring results over a longer period of time by forming recursive behaviors. Nonetheless, companies demand numbers in order to make the move and to allocate resources on this. The improvisation experts inquired were not able to provide an explicit answer to how evolution of groups improvising can be monitored organizational-wise. Therefore, this issue represents a shortcoming in the attempt of establishing a trustful bidirectional relation with the corporate sector.

Stefan Pagels Andersen (personal communication, May 10, 2017) believes companies can measure the cost of improvisation over a time period of three years. The actor understands the urgency for results, but manages to uproot the sort-term beliefs with a powerful example. As Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) accepts improvisers compete with budgets, Andersen pictures the common situation of directing the budgets towards more palpable applications, such as sales trainings. He says that a sales

training could deliver results as sharp as reaching 15% increment in revenues over the period of three months, for instance. Question raised here is: what happens when those trained people leave? The company will invest again into training new employees. The alternative is teaching people to collaborate on selling better. The initiator of improvisation in Denmark cannot explicitly point towards swift numerical benefits, but guarantees that companies will see a decrease in personnel fluctuation over the course of a few years.

The insider's view on tracking issues comes from the project manager Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 10, 2017). He experienced the organizational use of tools such as surveys designed to measure happiness at work and attitude change. The corporate perspective shed a light on how improvisation could be measured and it points out to soft value measuring points. In other words, improvisation reaches on intangible benefits, thus it should be perceived accordingly.

Key words: tracking system, recursive behaviors, corporate budgets, employee fluctuation, soft value measuring

5.3.3. An alternative route to innovation

"You can't be that kid standing at the top of the waterslide, overthinking it. You have to down the chute."

Tina Fey

Innovation is perhaps the most wanted figure in the contemporary corporate world. Managers have innovation on their daily agenda, but not all of them know what it truly connotes. "Innovation is a multi-headed animal", Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) frankly points out. Apple's CEO Tim Cook believes there is no formula for innovation and if it was "a lot of companies would have bought their ability to innovate" (as cited in Kaplan, 2017). Therefore, the path to achieving innovative accomplishments is tangled.

Organizational lenses have a big focus on research and development as innovative thriving agents. It seems to be a legitimate approach as firms increasingly rely on products developed over the past five years for one third or more of their sales and profits (Poetz, 2015). Nonetheless, this study aims to grasp tightly one of the marginalized heads of the

multi-headed animal. Therefore, the focus on the process of human interaction as set through a theater perspective it is itself innovative.

Bogdan Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) thinks innovation become a clear path for people and organizations that are not afraid to try new approaches. Exemplifying his statement, the Romanian trainer believes Apple and Vodafone stand out of the masses due approaches on human development. In Rasmussen's (personal communication, May 31, 2017) opinion Denmark's innovative scenery is best represented by Lego and its ability to overcome difficult moments in the business development.

According to sharp observation undergone throughout the research, the route to innovation in the utilization of organizational improvisation has to follow some pit stops deviated from the initial path. Companies that accept to embrace improvisation are operating under a degree of innovation from the very beginning. Creatively accessing resources from a totally different domain and combining them in the scope of creating internal environmental value and exploitation of the individual and collective potential is a form of radical innovation. Moreover, it is a form of achieving innovation as an outcome. Although empirical data does not suffice the organizational necessity for proven statistical methods, it is secure to affirm that improvisation can favor the creation of better exemplars, needed for breakthrough innovation as Harvey (2014) pictures the process.

More accurately put, improvisation is tremendously gravitating around communication and keeping people together. Stefan Pagels Andersen (personal communication, May 10, 2017) illustrates the impact of firing 15-20 people as change in management occurs and within a year hiring that number back. It might seem that the void will be filled, but the fluctuation reaches actually 30-40 people. The actor is keen on world being a better place if everybody would take an improvisation class. Similarly, he believes that corporate teams increase their change of building sustainable relationships by using improvisation. Thus, the theatrical originated form of art is rather expected to bring incremental outcomes as team members develop the ability to work together smoothly, they face less need for planning, greater cooperation, fewer misunderstandings, and less confusion (Liang, Moreland, & Argote, 1995).

Companies that want to taste innovation via improvisation have to engage in a long term relationship. Stefan Pagels Andersen (personal communication, May 10, 2017) puts the accent on the facilitator' role and ability to teach as a necessary prerequisite in adopting

improvisation effectively. One step closer to the organizational routine, Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) resembles IDEO's bottom-up flow of ideas, but acknowledges that practices and techniques have to be accepted top down, otherwise people won't act upon it. Therefore, companies have to habituate with the techniques taught during the improvisation session and to be able to perform them on a daily basis without the presence of an external facilitator. As a suggestion for good practice it is recommended to maintain a subscription based program between the parties following Improvizatie.ro's model. This way improvisers can return at any point and facilitate adjustments or provide help in tense situations.

Attempting to adapt the consistent model of the creative synthesis (Harvey, 2014) to the organizational realm as seen from the verge of improvisation, I will emphasize the addition of some elements required beforehand. Within cognitive, social and environmental resources, companies and improvisers have to accord greater attention to leadership styles as they have direct influence on group dynamics. Other than that, environmental openness is defined more supportive as getting closer to organizational culture and values. Thus, it is not only the underpinning contextual approach, but the sustainable, continuous and proactive rooted-in endeavor for innovation.

Nevertheless, organizational performance in creativity cannot be attained overnight. The touch of this study is rather exploratory and therefore aims to speak directly to companies that find themselves at a crossroads, but are not yet willing to "go down the chute". Experiencing all three natural leadership styles, it is genuine to affirm that they could be easily transposed in a way an organization is run. The laissez-faire approach, although comprising improvisational guidelines at their best, is the most difficult to operate. Only a mature company could be able to hold grip on such a style and extract the gargantuan creative outcomes it is supposed to deliver. Without expertise the process is rather convoluted and the results are rather indefinite. Nonetheless, Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) believes the creative expansion cannot seek directly an end-benefit, and it rather needs to be a maturing process.

On the above mentioned foundations, I propose further the theory that a company which is unfamiliar to extraordinary employee creativity has to firstly dictate the creative flow in an autocratic manner. From a practical point of view, improvisation teachers are required in order to crystallize group potential and dynamics for a period of approximately six months

in weekly activities. This is a period of standardized creativity increment that Barrett (1998) noticed by the intriguing joining of practice and spontaneity. Thus, innovation can be stamped as a planned approach, with evidence indicating employees can prepare their creative muscles in order to provide better responses to every day challenges or creative processes.

Consultative expansion level is expected to be reached after the formation of recursive creative behavior is definite. After six months companies can lessen the strictness as improvisation starts to be inherited in everyday activities. Continuous consultation with the improvisers is expected to occur. Democracy-based policies can build on trust and employee engagement. Finally, the desired level for full functionality in improvisation folds onto the laissez-faire approach. The loosen work environment can only reach performance when expertise is the dominant characteristic of the group. This style facilitates the transition from individual leader to collective leadership and it is what IDEO has confirmed as being the highest point of organizational creativity.

Last but not least, readers have to bear in their mind that stricter the field limited the improvisation (P. Rasmussen, personal communication, May 31, 2017). The act of improvisation could go down to communication in very restrictive surroundings. The reality is that some companies are more creatively built than others and therefore could embody improvisation much easier. However, all companies may find adequate the use of improvisation as communication tool and those who are more flexible structurally could afford more of what improvisation actually is. This involves to a large degree the assumption of competent risks and failure as ways of breaking the pattern, which could result in breakthrough innovation.

Key words: innovation, communication, breakthrough

5.4. [Ethical resonance](#)

“Any tool can be used for good or bad. It’s really the ethics of the artist using it.”

John Knoll

Ethics constitutes the building platform for healthy and thoughtful practices regardless the field. The current chapter does not purpose to debate ethical constructs as

methodological guidelines, but to present the fine line between an artful practice and its downsides, as seen through the eyes of interviewees.

Although referred to as facilitators or teachers, improvisational trainers can frequently find themselves in a position of power or influence. For instance, a public speaking event, which is a common activity for Improvizatie.ro's founders, might become attention monopolies. In addition, the workshops held by Improvizatie.ro and ICC are modelled by teachers' intervention. Manipulation issues can arise in such context. Obviously, the exercises or speeches performed can include subliminal messages. The supposition has no solid foundation due to the lack of compelling evidence to support this ethical issue. As the topic might raise interest in ethical researches, further quantitative investigation is recommended in order to evaluate the degree manipulation occurs in this sort of activities.

Improvisation is by definition a collective process and it mirrors nowadays needs in the business market. Bogdan Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) underlines it is an act of altruism. Nevertheless, Ayn Rand's (1964) observations on the value of selfishness appear to counteract the foundation of improvisation. Yet, the arguments in favor of collaborative processes has widely been discussed along the narrative. We agreed that sustainable innovation is achieved through a collective approach. Moreover, Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) illustrates that some domains demand collaboration while others (such as arts in pure form) empower individual creativity. However, accepting that the business world demand the collaborative form of creativity, Improvizatie.ro only satisfies this need and supports the role of individuals in the creation of innovative outcomes. Individuals are expected to construct on the ideas of others, but the group also generates a reverse model of development, through which individuals can explore their selves. This responds to selfishness theories and prove that ethical issues on this matter can only be justified through extremist approaches.

Another side worth exploring is what Per Rasmussen (personal communication, May 31, 2017) refers to as "reboostness". The systemic coach believes that companies find themselves in the situation of creating an artificial desire to evolve which is most of the time wrong directed. Rasmussen frankly thinks people are "getting skilled in being incompetent" (personal communication, May 31, 2017). This statement is supported by his strong emphasis on communication as the main driver to organizational thriving, whereas corporations often put accent on non-human traits development. His coaching approach

points toward “a clean way of coaching”, as “reboostness” is totally vanished from the concept. Consequently, coach’s purpose is to underpin our self-exploration rather than engaging into a pursuit of socially constructed goals.

In the end, an inconsistencies between improvisers’ personal values and contracted companies’ specific area of activity can constitute ethical issues. Is it ethical to neglect the personal creed and to proceed further to training people from a company whose activity you disagree with, making them better at what they do and more valuable to the company? Grigore (personal communication, June 2, 2016) claims he has faced similar situations and he has steadfastly declined the potential collaboration.

Key words: manipulation, selfishness, reboostness, personal values

6. Conclusion

“We are creative people, so doing things that feel buttoned up and, well, organizational, doesn’t come easy to many of us.”

Paul Bennett

Scenes performed on the dazzling stages of improvisational theatre around the world often cease at the sound of the electrifying round of applause mirrored by the bowing actors under the wistful movement of the curtain pulling. Although following the principles of this form of art accordingly throughout the current academic journey, the finale act will not be shown in this chapter. It is rather an invitation to further commitment and action.

A firm restatement of the purpose is needed as this study pursues significance alongside artistic expression. The author has accepted from the beginning that the writing of a thesis on the topic of improvisation in business will be a process of learning. Thus, the research has primarily explored the potential application of improvisation in corporate environments. Uniqueness is drawn from the aspiration to create a common playground for both the gallant actors who embraced an entrepreneurial mindset trying to innovate in the organizational sector and the mostly standardized company representatives. Academic work undergone prior to this study has pointed out to the importance of improvisational

techniques in business, yet a gap was identified in the area of proactive research meant to cluster the views of firms and actors.

To synthesize the arguments presented in this paper, I will primarily reach to the value of cognizance concerning improvisation applications. Recently emerged in the organizational scene, the theatrical method has largely been perceived as a fashion of disconnecting employees from the arduous everyday business hours and corporate expectancies. The view is not erroneous, but confines the potential effectiveness of the method if used long-term. Therefore, companies are invited to detach from the old way of seeing and operating. Seen through the spectrum of longevity, improvisation might appeal the interest of firms that want to innovate, as they can fear extinction in nowadays fast-changing world if not embracing novelty. As any complex implementation strategy, the process requires time and resources to mature. Attitudes toward leadership and communication issues are central coordinates in the development of sustaining environments.

The syncretism of theater and business is still in its incipient phases. With the confidence that the study has contributed to the dissolution of the “taboo” factor gravitating around improvisation, I will highlight the need for further research in this direction. Foremost, improvisation needs to augment its efficiency. The cultivation of a tracking system of the used methods is highly demanded in a business world that operates with factual data. Moreover, the facilitation of a common meeting point requires profound analysis on how improvisation is perceived in the corporate industry and how improvisers might adapt their communication strategies in order to gain meaning in their interaction with the targeted audience. Acting under these circumstances managers might advance out of safeness and play the game of creativity.

In conclusion, the initial hypothesis of the study – “the use of applied improvisation over a longer time can facilitate the creation of daily habits that lead to increased employee satisfaction and sustainable innovative outcomes” – is confirmed, but further research is needed in order to consolidate it. Taking a middle ground position, the journey will cover up with the following actionable thought: “whenever you have no blueprint to tell you in detail what to do, you must work artfully” (Austin & Devin, 2003).

7. References

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8. Appendices

APPENDIX A

List of competences addressed by Improvizatie.ro:

SKILLS	DESCRIPTION
ACCEPTING	The capacity to immediately empathize with the existing situation, regardless of preconceived notions. This enables a presenter to recognize diversity and tolerate adverse opinions.
ACCURACY	The ability to quickly get to the point. This is useful during Q & A moments.
ACTION	The external expression of a strong choice, represented in a physical manner using the body and voice. This helps develop control of body language.
ADAPTING	The capacity to acclimate to a particular situation, although not necessarily accepting the circumstances. This aids a presenter during those times where a sense of logic and common sense appear to be lacking.
ADVANCING	The ability to move a story forward, from “point A” to “point B”, based on the natural progression of logic or emotion. This is a critical presentation skill in order to close, persuade, or influence a person.
ANTICIPATING	The quickness of expecting the unexpected based on a history of predictable outcomes. This skill also develops with experience, since business situations tend to repeat.
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	The talent for fine-tuning a perspective without cluttering the concept or over explaining the idea.
CLARITY	The flair for simplifying an issue without overstating or underestimating relative importance.
COMMITMENT	The tenacity to take responsibility for an expressed choice. For a presenter, any deviation from the chosen path will be seen as a limitation.
CONFLICT- MANAGEMENT	The capacity to see both sides of a situation while facilitating a positive (win-win) outcome.
COOPERATION	The quality of effort that always adds value toward a common goal.
CREATING A SENSE OF URGENCY	Exacting a pressure that identifies and targets the specific importance of a concept or idea. The art of persuasion is based on this principle.
CREATING ANALOGIES	The ability to find similar, real-world applications of defined parameters for a given issue. Comparisons to transportation, health, family, food or life experiences are the best analogies.

DEDUCTION	The natural transition used to show the reasoning behind a given line of logic. In presenting, this skill is used to thread a group of concepts into a flowing script.
FLOW	The functional layout of scripted logic, placed on a timeline and paced in a pleasing manner.
FOCUSING	The aptitude for finding the center of attention at any given moment of a situation. The lack of this skill causes participants to drift off-topic and get sidetracked.
INTENTION	The internal expression of a strong choice, represented in a mental manner using the mind and heart.
JUSTIFICATION	The internal measurement of belief in a personal choice. Expressed outwardly as self-confidence, this validates information for an audience.
LISTENING	The level of attentiveness to audible content and patterns of speech. A good listener hears the sound of silence between spoken phrases in order to grasp the pace of a person's voice. This avoids interrupting, overlapping, or cutting off the dialogue.
LOGIC	The sequential and predictable display of related information, whether legitimate or flawed, that leads to a decision.
MAINTAINING INTEGRITY	The facility to sustain a strict adherence to a value proposition without losing sight of the objective.
OBSERVING VISUAL CUES	The ability to detect and decipher actions and reactions, such as body language, facial expressions and other noticeable forms of feedback.
PROVIDING RESOLUTION	The capacity to reduce complexity into simplicity, while seeking the best outcome (win-win) possible.
REFERENCES AND ALTERNATIVES	The components of support for a given line of logic. Participants with more experience are likely to have a wealth of backup information at their fingertips available to overcome argumentative objections.
RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING	The knack for finding similar interests, desires or needs, while creating a common bond in the process.
ROLE REVERSAL	Taking on opposing character traits in order to understand a situation. Participants who can play "devil's advocate" (opposing their own concepts or ideas) can develop stronger arguments to support a line of logic.
SELECTIVITY	Choosing the unique and relative details of an issue specific to the immediacy of the situation.
SHARING	The willing effort to offer others a chance to enjoy a particular experience. This skill reduces nervousness (butterflies, jitters, stage fright, etc.) because it forces a presenter to focus externally (on others), rather than internally (on self).
SHIFTING FOCUS	The process of directing or giving attention to a particular view (person, group, support item, etc.). Participants use this skill to draw attention to support materials (a display visual), to others in the room (during interaction) or to imaginaries (virtual props & space).
SUPPORT	The effort given to promote or defend a particular choice. A presenter uses this as a collaborative skill when advancing a particular line of logic shared by at least one other person.

TABLE-SETTING	The ability to preset the conditions, parameters, or guidelines relevant to a particular line of logic. Participants always provide a necessary bias (selective data) to support a point of view.
TIMING	The aptitude for positioning the key component of an issue as near as possible to the highest moment of acceptance.
USING VIRTUAL PROPS AND SPACE	The talent for representing thought through visible action. Participants can use physical movements (gestures, body language, etc.) to identify the unique and specific components of a concept or idea.

APPENDIX B

Exercises ICC intro level in improvisation

Exercise	Description
Something that we like	Positioned in a circle, the individuals in the group had to introduce themselves with something that they like. Value has to be put on positive things, as people often sink into the temptation of making a negative parallel. Speaking out positivity increases intrinsic and extrinsic dynamics within the group.
Zip-zap-zop	Send a “zip” to somebody that will send a “zap” to somebody else who will send a “zop” to another person. Repeat the sequence.
Clapping game	Clap at the same time with the person next to you. That person decides whether the clap goes round or it turns back to the sender. The action is unique as the whole circle has to pay attention to where the clap is. Complicating the exercise, multiple claps are started at the same time in different places around the circle.
You - yes	Find somebody in the circle and say “you”. Once the person said yes, you can go take her/his place in the circle. It is important that participants don’t take “the yes” for granted. It increases awareness and acceptance.
Superheroes names	Find an adjective starting with the same letter as your name and add a movement to it.
Words on the same topic	The first person sends a word to somebody else in the circle, pointing his finger to him/her; the next person will continue the sequence with a related word, transmitting it to another person. Starting multiple sequences at a time will add on the awareness capacity of the individuals.

word-word-patata (I hope this is the word)	In a circle, participants say a word to the person next to them and that person has to respond with the first word that comes into her mind. Everybody repeats then the two words + patata.
The monologue story	One person in the middle tells other a story. When somebody feels he/she can continue, he/she will tap the storyteller shoulder and become the storyteller. When the person in the middle gets stuck, the group role is to support him/her and to
One word story on stage	The performers are given a title for the scene and then one by one in groups of five they will add one word to the story.
Recap (playing some games from the last time)	The continuous re-actualization of exercises performed in previous session cements the knowledge gained and favors the consequent implementation.
I need 3 things	Participants have to choose an available colleague, run to him/her and say "I need A, B, C". The receiver bears the C in mind and finds another available colleague repeating the action, but starting with the last thing mentioned by the sender before – "the C".
Plan a party	Participants were asked to plan a party using in their responses the following degrees: No – ideas were blocked from the beginning. Yes, but – it is a polite "no". Yes, and – people are building on each other. What I love about that is – interlocutors are not only accepting others but they make each other feel valuable.
Conversation in pairs	Say "yes, (repeat the sentence) and". The exercise is meant to help people embody the act of listening. While saying "yes, and" participants have to repeat in their head what the other said. Building on that, they will have to remember: "the answer is in your partner's eyes." Use body language is vital, as well as speaking out loudly (don't shout though).
Conversation in pairs on stage (3 lines)	In 3 lines, we had to make clear who we are, where we are and what we do. The exercise build on effectiveness as it teaches participants to offer contextual accuracy and to communicate effectively.
Stretch story	Stretch and tell a positive thing about your last week. The people will imitate your stretching position.
Triple clap	Coordinate your moves with the partners on the sides. Call people on their name while doing the triple clap. The ones called will repeat their own name and call somebody else in a triple clap sequence.

On stage in pairs	Set up the “who, what and where” and add an emotion to that.
You know what I love about you	A has to say “You know what I love about you”. B will answer: “This makes me feel...” Scene continues from here.
Close your eyes and listen to the music	The song was Kat Edmonson - Summertime. How did it make you feel?
Sharing circle	Wrap-up. “We are Gods on stage. And in life.” (quote by the teacher)

APPENDIX C

Transcript interview Bogdan Grigore, co-founder at Improvizatie.ro (June 2, 2016)

Could you briefly describe how did you get started?

I started the business in 2007 and then I coopted my partner, Corina. Initially we conceived it as an improvisation portal and this is why we chose Improvizatie.ro. Afterwards we used it as the website for our theatric improvisational band and finally, when this came to an end, I realized improvisational business training is a niche I would like to cover. Since then we tried to educate the market, to create awareness programs. We transited from open plays to private sessions with companies which is our main focus now. This is firstly because we had the expertise, but also because companies' demand are getting higher.

I didn't know that you were acting in a band before applying improvisation to business. Could you detail this experience?

We had shows. We were one of the first bands in Romania. Normally, improvisational bands are formed by amateurs, meaning that they don't have theatre studies. Amateurism doesn't have to do with the quality of the show. I withdraw from the band, but my colleagues are still playing under a different name.

Speaking about the business sector, how do you get in contact with customers?

We had diverse strategies: from open events for companies to attending HR&training conferences to being invited as speakers. It is important that the other party can see and

understand the method, because being a new method managers feel the need to experiment. If they cannot attend our events, we try to create a separate training for them.

How open are the organizations to this new practice?

Declaratively, they are open but practically we are able to observe the occurrence of jams. These are not coming from the HR departments but mostly from the managers, the decision-makers. It is also a positioning issue, because although we are different from “regular” trainings we compete on the same budget.

What is the HR role in relation with your workshops?

They have an organizing and positioning role. Sometimes, attendants don’t know what to expect and this grows uncertainty. It is necessary to describe what we do in order for the people not to be scared of a new experience but to embrace it. For example, we recently worked with an IT company and we feel the fear among participants of stepping out of their comfort zone. The moment they realize doing this is fun and also beneficial, they accept the play. HR must understand the value of improvisation and therefore to convince further the managerial branch inside the company. We try to connect with people from HR and training departments, this is the gate towards companies.

Is improvisation a one-time event or you have certain customers?

It is all about strategy and how you position your improvisational trainings in order for the client to come back to you. If you see it as a one-time act, you are cheating yourself. It is a constant push we try to make. With the help of improvisation we can develop certain competences. We have a list that we present to the companies and they can choose from them according to their needs. Starting from this, we build programs that have between 5 and 10 sessions, each lasting for 1.5 to 3 hours. If you want to shape a behavior or to change an attitude, it is necessary that you practice that behavior or attitude. This is how we act in most of the cases and makes us different from a one-day training. Sometimes we get invited to “do something fun” at an event, but you cannot change a man in two hours or one day.

How do you elaborate the workshop structure?

According to their priority list in terms of competences needed to be trained we create theme based sessions. We usually choose one competence by session. We don't have a standard structure and we adapt to each client needs. It can also include theory presentation, but we are based on practice, on exercises that train different muscles and after that we draw conclusions. We don't have a strict pattern that has to be followed. We have released a product – Team-building at the office – that we consider innovative. We identified that the team-buildings are held only once or twice a year and this happens not when it is needed but when there are no time and budget constraints. Team-buildings usually happen during the week-ends and takes from the employee free time. The impact of such team-buildings only last for a couple of weeks and the engagement and motivation fade away easily. It is not efficient from a cost-benefit perspective. We provide subscriptions to companies so they can call us when it is needed. If there is a difficult moment or the team has a low point, we focus on a competence demanded in that specific time.

Do you have any certain examples of how improvisation can impact innovation?

We had a collaboration with Regina Maria (the largest private care health network in Romania) on the innovation side. It consisted in two parts: firstly we provided a muscle-training part, where the participants were introduced to how to step out of the comfort zone and how to switch their perspective, the way they see the world; secondly, it was a technical part in which we used different tools.

Do you have a tracking system so you can monitor the evolution of the participants?

We use specific exercises that can serve as a good representation of the level people find themselves regarding a certain skill. We do this exercise in the beginning and again at the end so we can observe progress.

Do you consider exploring new tracking methods?

Yes, it is actually a good suggestion and I will get in touch with people that do this. We use a platform – Applied Improvisation Network – so we can share knowledge. I am rather an observer, I follow discussion there.

We agreed that it is not enough having one session in order for improvisation to be effective. But how important is the organizational culture to adopt a nurturing environment?

We received a request from Regina Maria to make a program starting from the company's values. Each of the values will be transposed into a workshop so the employees can understand that value in a practical way. Meanwhile, we think of taking pictures of these workshops and placing them at the work place so they can be powerful overtime. Another example is the one of a bank which want us to carry out a storytelling workshop using improvisation. They want to encourage quality relation between managers and the other employees. They focus on a quantitative dialogue based on targets and they want to open up to a new perspective. This type of clients is what we are looking for, which understand the value we can bring into their organizations and see us as consultants rather than providers. We want to build the customized product together with the client. We can construct complex solutions that can add value to companies. The understanding of the concept and the trust in the method from the company can facilitate this process. They have to make the psychological connection with the organizational need. In order to optimize the budgets, the tendency is to choose a single provider for everything. It happen to me many times. We missed training opportunities because companies chose the same provider for all their needs: train of trainers, public speaking and so on. But our product is different, it implies improvisation.

What competences are necessary in order to be a trainer? How is your approach different comparing to your partner, Corina?

In general, everything is interchangeable and any of us can equally provide any type of training. The style is different though. I am a bit warmer and more playful with my audience, while Corina is more organized and displays confidence. When we have bigger groups we can act together. Also, we can have separate sessions with the same group. In this case it is important to inform the other about the progress made last time with the participants.

Regarding the desirable size of the group, you recommend between 8-16...

Indeed, this is recommended, but we have done it with bigger groups as well. But in this case it is harder to do all the exercises and the debriefing. In fact, I like challenges and this is why I accepted it. The biggest experience was last year, at TedX, with 900 people. There

is an interesting observation I have to make on the group dynamics. In general, many participants are afraid to speak up while in big groups, but the social psychology says that in small groups of 10-12 people knowing each other, it is always a leader and if he/she accepts the challenge, the others will follow. You have between 15-25 people, then you'll find 2-3 leaders. Bigger groups lose their leaders and people become a mass. This explains human's behavior in concerts, strikes, stadiums.

So I understand leaders are the ones that facilitate transmitting the challenge to all the people in the audience. What is desirable for you? Having these leaders among participants or challenging yourself and awakening the sense of participation in a mass of people by yourself?

I have found no fear in challenging big audiences. The most of trainers don't feel comfortable doing so, therefore I believe it is a positive aspect than I do. If I would be recognized as a person who can add value to bigger groups of people, I would accept it. But there's a twist on the image of yourself you project to others. Somehow, I think speakers and people that can perform big shows with a large number of people are seen differently comparing to trainers and facilitators. The moment your group gets bigger, your approach should modify as well. In larger audiences there is another type of entertainment need. You become an entertainer, you are not just a trainer anymore.

But don't you feel that being able to become the entertainer is an added value to the trainer?

You are right, but people tend to put a single label on you. If they see you playful on the stage, they will think you will act the same way within a workshop. When you have 500 people in your audience, you are unable to perform the debriefing. You have to draw conclusions on yourself.

How important is the participants' feedback for you?

We had a team building one week ago. We asked the participants to give us a written opinion on individuals. I always read all the messages. I can read some to you: "He manages to make you learn something new without you realizing, through play." "Games very well planned and applied." "A professional, he is in control on what he does" "Relaxed, a man who does his job passionately." "Very good, especially on spontaneous games. He proposed

interesting exercises with a lot of energy and ideas of funny games with many takeaways” “Creative, organized, focused on details and non-verbal language, he steps you out of your comfort zone” “Spontaneous, ingenious, I liked the applications and the way he adapted them to the group dynamics” “Energetic, voluble and engaging, although I felt him distant from the group during the breaks.

When you receive negative feedback, how do you accept it constructively in order to improve your work?

People are not pointing you out, but your activities. Then I realize maybe they needed more breaks or we played for too long. I have to be always aware at their non-verbal language. There are various needs in the group and at the end some can be very pleased with the training and others say the structure should have been slightly different. Examples from the last training: “Fewer subject, but more time for deepening, time for more relaxing, more time – I would have stayed one more day.” The needs are different and you cannot fulfill all of them.

I will now run you through a theoretical description of what I do. I got understanding that people taking part into trainings bring with themselves the individual ability to generate ideas, but the individuals also gather and form social dynamics within a certain group, which is embedded into the medium resources – the organization, in our situation. Taking all the elements one by one, I will start by asking you what is innovation relying on the in particular? The self or the ability to build on others ideas?

The process starts from the self, but the most important is that you don't stay there. In order to innovate you have to accept the offers you make for yourself, the offers you get from the others, and the offers you receive from the world. I have exercises underpinning all of these steps. It is essentially that you believe in yourself. I learned this from one of my mentors, who is the parent of modern improvisation, Keith Johnstone “I think my brain is much more intelligent than I am, so I tend to trust it.” The moment you don't trust your brain, it will not show up with solutions you need. But if you trust it and you have a good connection with your inner self and your intuition, then solutions regarding innovation and creativity will flow easier. Another point refers to how you feel in relation with mistakes and risk. When I spoke at TedX, the conference theme was called “Dare to fail”, and before the big day the

organizers wanted us to practice our speech. I told them I cannot do it, because I will play with the audience. They finally accepted it, because I told them if something will go wrong this is the perfect place to happen – “dare to fail”. One experiment I tried during the conference didn’t work.

How would you transfer these learnings onto organizational understanding, which is more restrictive in terms of risks taken?

We encourage mistakes with short-term impact. I am not keen on mistakes at organizational level, but I see them as learning tools, ways to discover new things. If you made a mistake, you can discover something better. Throughout the time, a lot of things have been discovered by accident. Viagra is a powerful example. The researchers wanted to create a medicine for the arterial pressure, and it ended up being useful for a different matter. As humans we have some patterns, and the moment you make a mistake, you break the pattern which can give new meanings to your brain.

What do you think is better for innovation: a diverse group composition or a homogeneous one?

I believe a diverse composition in which people accept and appreciate the differences. They have to add value to each other. The variety of resources in a group have to build trust among the individuals. On the other hand, when having different areas of expertise as background there is less emulation. I don’t compete with you, so we can build something together. We have an exercise “Build a story in two using one word”. Before doing the exercise, we tell the participants: “imagine that the person you play with is a world champion in this exercise, and your skill is average”. Therefore, the role of the exercise is to support the world champion. But both participants start with this premise and the support becomes dual. Improvisation relies on thinking about the partner, not the story. Give your partner what he needs. The moment you try to step out of this mutuality, improvisation becomes unnatural, it goes upstream.

Speaking of environment in organizations, which scenario is more nurturing for innovation – a restrictive environment or one which underpin creativity?

It depends on the objectives and the level of people in that organization. The moment and situation the company finds itself across, the department in the organization etc. I believe it has to be an environment focused on collaboration. It is also a matter of management, which has to place people according to their needs. If you place a person with innovational endeavors into an executional role, it won't work. I honestly don't believe in the quality and sustainability of solutions coming from a pressure area. Instead, I believe in solutions coming from relaxation and collaboration. Innovation occurs when you accept change, and the restrictive environment usually generates people who fear change.

To what extent the creative processes should be controlled? As you are the facilitator that keeps the participants on track during a training, who and why should assume this role in an organization?

I reckon it should be both controlled processes, but also platforms where people should be able to present an idea when they have it and get others involved in order to contribute to their idea.

From a point of view of leadership, which is the option to maximize the teams' potential – collective autonomy in setting the objectives and process or empowering a single leader to guide the team?

I have work with an architecture company which was built on the principle of equality between all the members. I found it very interesting and empowering. I think the answer of this question is industry dependent. I believe in some projects you can apply this approach, and in others you can't. The best way is to empower people, but in each group a project manager is needed. It is not a person that necessarily conduct the group, but keeps it on track, support it when it enters difficult moments. In most of organization it micro-management occurs and this has an impact on results and innovation.

Is improvisation rather a holistic phenomenon, which perceives the parts of the process only in relation with the whole, or it is performable outside the team context as well, on personal level for instance, but with benefits for the company?

Improvisation develops people and therefore it can also develop you as individual. It is related with one's personal objectives. Even if you are part of a group, you can focus on

developing specific creative muscles. Improvisation is more than improvising, it is a method through which you can evolve. The group can also help you to explore on personal level, but firstly you have to allow yourself to explore more of what you are. It is a dual process, because you help back the group by exploring yourself.

Do you believe having a theoretical foundation can help you implement improvisational exercises better?

My partner, Corina, put accent on the principles before workshops. It is important that people understand what they do. It makes them feel more comfortable.

Can you give me an example of an innovative company you have worked with?

I deliver improvisational exercises for Apple. Although the trainings are not focused on innovation (mostly sales and soft skills), the knowledge is transferable. I like Vodafone on the Romanian market. They have introduced a new product on the market – M-Pesa – which is a way to transfer money using your mobile phone, not necessarily a smartphone. You can make national and international transactions. It correlates with the people's need, because the old people in rural areas usually don't have financial education or bank accounts. I was trainer on this project, preparing their sales men. Speaking of training and human resources they have a different approach comparing to Orange for instance, which is their biggest competitor. They didn't fear to try improvisation. They also innovated in terms of daily organization at work. Employees don't have to always sit in the same place, they can choose a different place every day and this nurtures connections between big teams and it also fulfill the need of millennials in having diversity at work.

Have you ever confronted ethical problems? How did you solve them?

It was a special case with Chevron who assigned people on field to discuss with villagers in an area affected by drilling and shale gas exploitation. They wanted me to offer them a communicational training in order to minimize the conflicts that could possibly occur as people living there didn't agree with the ongoing situation. They also had security teams together with the informational teams in the area, so in the end I accepted to diminish the conflict possibility by training their people how to communicate more effectively. Another ethical dilemma found its place between me and a cigarettes company. I didn't want to help

people sell more cigarettes, which I consider unhealthy. Before accepting an offer, I always think about the final end of our collaboration.

Do you think the collaborative nature of improvisation suppress the individual potential? Is this an ethical dilemma at individual level?

If you feel you potential is prone to individuality you can choose various fields where you can fulfill it. Writing, art in general. But in the organizational setting collaboration is needed because you obtain results by using it properly.

APPENDIX D

Transcript interview Stefan Pagels Andersen, co-founder at Improv Comedy Copenhagen (May 10, 2017)

Can you briefly describe the activities undergoing at Improv Comedy Copenhagen (ICC)?

We have the theater: shows 4 nights a week showcasing American-style improv. That is our house team that perform from a single audience suggestion a 30-60 minutes play. Then we have our touring company that tours around Denmark and Europe and performs – show form audience interacted show comedy. We also have the corporate training, implementing the techniques of improvisation into the corporate industry and how to teach employees to say yes to each other and build on the others' ideas, be more open, outgoing and collaborate better, communicate more positively. If they need brainstorming sessions, if they are developing new products we can help them with that. If they are entering a new market, we can help them on how to come up with ideas, how to approach the market and how to connect with the audience. It can be storytelling, if they create a product and they need to go out and present what is the story behind it. Basically, improvisation is what we do every day. Every day we go out of bed, we have an idea, a plan on what to do; for example the bike is flat, we might missed the bus or the train is cancelled. We have a plan, once the plan is chanced we have to adapt to a new plan. We are all improvising every day, so why not be good at it? That is our tagline. We can teach people how to work around and take what is there right in front of them, think on their feet and act in the now, be in the moment and react to what is there. We might not be able to show you that in the next two weeks you double your revenue, that's not what improvisation can do. But in the course of 3-5 years, if you

have consistently improv sessions with your team, I guarantee you that team will have a less change in employees, they will stay together for a longer and they will achieve more together. It is more about focusing on the group rather than the individual. We also do corporate shows, which is the entertainment value of improvisation. When there is a company party, you have a band or a stand up comedian. Here we are providing with a new product in Denmark, and we also do it in English. Then we have the community and the café, which is basically a regular coffee place. The shows take place in the café, it is a small thing. We can do a show for 500 people, with microphones on, but the whole this is all about the nerve and the intimacy that creates the fun in the improv shows. We have done shows for 300 people in corporate industry that is the maximum capacity theater-wise. I have seen bigger places where it worked, I have also seen bigger place where it didn't. It is all happening and it is all created in front of you, which means you would like to be as close to the magic as possible.

I would like to know more about how you shifted towards improvisation. I know you started to do this in 2009, but how did it come to you?

As an actor, I have used the words improvisation when I got my lines and I didn't memorize all of it. I told to myself, I can improvise something here. But when I figured it out as a tool for creating art that inspired me. It started out from this artistic point of view, and then I realized I could tour around because I was a well-known name here in Denmark. In 2013, I was sent to Chicago and there is where I discovered this form that we are doing right now that was not available in Denmark at that time. I was very fascinated about it and I realized it was something that was needed here. I asked myself: why do this not exist in Denmark? Why do we have the possibilities that we have here, but not this wonderful thing? Copenhagen is a very international city, it is a lot culture in it, but why not this? Then I was invited back in Chicago to begin my education there, to learn how to teach. So I am also one of the few people in Europe that have been doing that. What fascinates me in improvisation is that I am changing people's lives, it is a game changer. Once you do an improv class you will say "this is awesome". I have people who have been taking out classes and divorced with their wife or husband because they have realized they are living with a negative person. I have also had people who saved their marriage because they realize they are the negative persons. I have people who come and say "I play more with my kids now; once I get home

from my job I am tired, but now I have learned to say yes and engage myself in it". So it is not only professional-based, it is all the things around it. That is very fascinating!

So you don't see improvisation just as something that could improve your business, but something that also affects personal matters?

I honestly believe that if everyone took an improv class the world would be a better place. Improv is all about putting focus and attention on people in front of you rather than looking at yourself. So it will create less egos and more collaboration. I am not saying it is not good to have an ego, but I am saying it's better to make the people around you look better. An example I use is – my job is to make my scene partner look good which means if I am a good improviser the audience will not laugh at me on stage, but they will laugh at all my scene partners. This means after the show the audience will come up to my scene partner saying "wow, great show, you were so funny, good job!" But down in the green room all my partners will come and thank me for making them look good. The people who won't know about the techniques will think that they are great, and the people who will know about them will also know that it is my fault. If you are like that at your workplace, then you will be a very valuable employee or leader. It might not be your name that's on the billboard on your advertisement campaign, but everybody knows that no one would have created that advertisement campaign without you which means that you are less likely to be the first one to get fired. If you can play everyone good around you, then those people does not matter because you are such a valuable person.

Do you believe employees miss this capacity of playing the others good?

I really think so. Not in all workplaces but in many.

You were mentioning American style improv. How is that different to other styles? Can it vary from culture to culture?

Viola Spolin, which is a female improv guru, created improvisation as a tool to integrate immigrants. Later on, Keith Johnstone developed improvisation in the UK, but at that point the government didn't allow theater plays without having approved the script first. And this is hard with improvisation because there is no script. So Keith Johnstone figured out he

could create a theater sport, where two groups compete against each other about a victory. It was not theater, but it was a sport and they couldn't interfere. The way of doing it implies a game leader who's running the show, who's putting in obstacles and make it hard for you in order to get as many laughs as possible. Whereas, the American style long form of improvisation is improv, Keith Johnstone's is impro (without the "v"). The buying product of this competitive form is not making your partner look good, is about getting as many laughs as possible by yourself. Which means that if you are making your scene partner look good, they will win by the audience. So instead of using all philosophies in improvisation you actually broke a lot of rules in order to get quick laughs and that is breaking the reality. It is still funny product though, but the philosophy is not honored as much as I think it should be. In improv, they created the long form, which is not about being funny, but being truthful and making the other look good. Maybe you have less laughs in that show, but they are bigger.

Going back to the corporate sector, how do you get in contact with the companies?

Word of mouth and networking. If people are looking for improvisation in Denmark, they will probably choose as because we are leading the corporate sector. I have done workshops for people travelling from Malaysia for doing a corporate workshop.

What about companies that are not comfortable with improvisation. Do you provide educational programs?

It is a long process. We are letting people know that we have a new program that they might think they need. The most innovative and bigger companies in Denmark are international. They look to the United States to see what they do over there. The CEO of Twitter used to be a performer too. He is using improvisation, so when the CEO of such company goes out and says in an interview that improvisation is probably his most important tool when he hires new people, other companies that want to compare themselves with Twitter would probably have to do the same thing here. We also have to create the need, to let them know they need the product, it is a selling process. In a world that is rapidly changing we need to have employees who are suited up with skills of rapid change, who can handle situations that are changing all of a sudden and adapt quickly, master problem-solving. Those who are 1-2 years ahead need us, and that is the biggest company in the country.

Do you provide to companies demo workshops?

No. We have a strong enough product and once people have worked with us they will gladly recommend us to others.

Talking to Denmark as a country, how open do you think organizations are to improvisation? Generally, not just the ones that already work with you. What is your perspective on the business sector in general?

I think Denmark is a country where we value team building a lot. But team building can be many things. It can be climbing in high ropes in the woods, entering a dark room with a lock on it, going on a boat out in the harbor, sailing around, looking at buildings etc. Then there is the educational program where we can sit down and customize a workshop for a client that goes for week after week or every second week for six months. And then there are these small 3-hour sessions, where they as well might go bowling, but where they learn something. And Denmark is a country where you, as a company, should do something for the employees.

Do you think that the technique of improvisation can find a fertile ground here in Denmark? I sense they are already open to such activities like team building.

If you have the experience that I do, it is not a problem. It takes years to learn how to teach it. It is a difference between doing and teaching and that is the problem. If you think that you can teach it just because you know how to do it, you are completely wrong. The biggest obstacle is that people might think that here is a market and they might want to do this, they have done level 1,2 and 3 of ICC and now they will go teach it. It won't work and they are not going to be hired again, nobody is going to recommend them to others. We are lucky because of my experience and that puts us miles ahead of others.

What is the difference between teaching and doing?

It takes 10.000 hours to learn or to master something, a clever man once said (n.r. Malcom Gladwell). Imagine how many hours you would need on stage in order to learn how to perform and imagine how many hours you would need to teach it in order to learn how to teach it. The past year, I probably taught 750 hours of improv plus performing and taking

classes. I am still taking classes, I am working with the world's best and doing for ten years every year 4-5 times a week. Those are the people that I seek to.

What areas do the classes you take cover?

I have a background without being an actor. I have also been an entrepreneur, so I had a lot of startups. I have ran businesses and worked in big corporations. I have the business approach of this world, I have been in that situation. When I am doing improv classes, I am mostly learning how they teach. I am shadowing their classes, as a performer I am not drawing more, but I am overwatching people teaching others.

What is the role of HR departments in companies? Do you collaborate with them?

We had 21 HR executives from Petronas coming from Malaysia to Copenhagen to teach them how to pass on that mentality of improvisation into their different departments. We also have some other clients that we perform consecutive sessions with, planning on bigger projects that are not completely finalized yet. They see it as the new kid in town. This is the game-changer.

Do you think you can pass the knowledge to the HR departments or you have to provide yourself workshops within the company?

Our teachers that we have here are trained to teach the same as I can do. We are teaching the teachers a lot at ICC. So I am not the only one who is able to do it, because I won't be able to be everywhere. We are working with schools at the moment, trying to teach the teachers there improvisation on exercises for them to motivate the students. It is not only the corporate world, but in the public sector where is also important. The core is people should do what they are good at. If you work in HR you should take care of HR and hire people that teach improvisation.

Should improvisation be an active part of the HR?

I think so and I am sure that you will be able to see a difference. Not right away, but within the next 2-3 years. It's a long process. In the US, they have figured out the exact amount. Delloite a big hole with the capacity of 5000 people where every two weeks they have

employee development sessions, which improvisation is a huge part of. They have 200-300 teachers working on different issues depending on the department and strengthening their specific skills and tools for a specific task. If you have a common language – because this is how we communicate in improvisation – you will see a bigger effect in the result later on.

Do you reckon companies are patient enough to see the results of it?

If you are a company and you are only looking one year ahead in your future, you will die within two. You need a strategy on short-term, but also one on long-term. Especially in a world that is changing this fast, you need to be able to invest what it costs now in your employees. Perhaps you say you are doing fine and for the next year you might reach your goals, but then rapid change comes and you might need to fire 15-20 employees. Then a year later a new change happens and you will have to hire 15-20 new people. That costs ten times as big as what it would cost it for us to implement it in your company. Because it is very expensive to hire new people and to have that change in the workflow of employees.

Is therefore budget a problem for companies when they look at a new product as improvisation?

Yes, because they still think we are theater clowns, juggling with stuff. They don't know what it is. And if you ask me it makes sense. If I have 10.000 kroner and I can put in either into improvisation or a sales department that we can train into selling better and in the next 3 months will generate 15% extra revenue, that is perfect. But then what happens when those people leave? Then we will have to train new people again into selling. Whereas we can train them how to collaborate on selling better. So it is not about individual sales person, because if somebody is a really good sales person he/she will get a new job offer.

So improvisation is also a tool for keeping people together...

It works for a lot of things. And maybe this is our problem. We cannot say that this is exactly what it does. In general, in the overall picture, you will be better at everything. What about you have 500 employees in your company. You teach all of those 500 employees improvisation and in three years the divorce rate is half, you have less stress and the rotation in company is generated by the same people that only moved up, none of them leaving the company. How much in value is that? Because if somebody get divorced, they will not be

able to contribute as much. They will probably go down with stress. So what's the value of avoiding that? I can't tell you, but I can tell you what it costs to implement it. The companies with big group of people have statistics with how many people have left in the last years. I am sure we can guarantee a decrease in that number over the next five years.

You are advancing a new perspective to me. Personal life and professional life come together...

Absolutely. If you leave every morning on your way to work and you have an argument with partner, you will not going to perform at work. But what if you have a really good relationship back home? If you leave every morning for work and you hate to go there because the employee are not supporting you and you don't have a great work environment, you are not performing well at work. But if you go at work and you know what makes a great work environment and community, you will perform better, you will enjoy working, you will look forward to do your work and to contribute with your part of the bigger picture.

So it is like a domino... if something goes wrong in your personal life it will affect you professionally as well?

Don't you think so? I know how I am like when I am not having a good day with my girlfriend. My focus is there. I know that in two hours I have to go home and „do an argument“. Does that make sense? I know how that feels and I am not focusing on where I am.

Let's discuss about the workshop structure. How do you tailor it for each customer? How do you identify the needs?

It really depends on my customers. The structure of my workshops might be the same, but the outcome depend on the group itself. It is the journey of the people, their personal development throughout the session of the workshop that tailors what it is. But I am making the program and the structure, i.e. if it is a workshop on how to sell better that will be the overall theme of the workshop, but I am also improvising. I have a program, but if my client or the workshop participants I am having are not getting the first two exercises, probably I will have two thrown-in additional exercises that will emphasize the first two so that they know it the bigger picture that works. So in that way I can improvise in order to make the group perform better.

Do you have an introductory part and/or debriefing to your workshops?

We have a five minutes introduction, then we have warm-ups. If it is the first session we have some warm-ups that break down the social patterns and behaviors, the defense mechanisms, so we make participants adaptable for the change that is about to come. The debriefing I have throughout the workshop. Every time we do something, we figure out what it is. I am constantly building on each other. I can't go in and say: "this is how you improvise". It takes years to learn. But I can say "now if we add this exercise, combined with the other one, it will make sense." And I am adding a third one and a fourth one and I am constantly building them up and showing them what the difference is.

Is is there any ideal number of participants in a workshop?

I think it is ideal to have groups between 18-25. I can do 30, but 25 is my maximum. As a teacher, I need to be able to have a personal connection with everyone and make sure, in case they feel left out, I am able to include them. It is not like showing a PowerPoint and making them take notes. It happens emotionally face-to-face, right away. I need to be aware that you are getting it. Because if you are not getting it, we might have to work a little bit more on you, so that everyone gets it. We have a storytelling session of five people tomorrow. Working with companies can count as little as three. It won't be improv exercises, but we are working on stage presence, storytelling, how to connect with an audience etc.

What frequency should be hold with the same group in order for improvisation to work, for people to apply improvisation on a daily basis?

We recommend that you will do it more than once. Preferably, you should do this every two weeks or every week for six months. If you do that, you will see the results – a huge change. People just need to get to know each other better, there is an ice-breaking session to make them ready for change or adaptable for new information. For instance, in a kick-off session, we can have an hour and a half that shapes people together and open them up for new inspiration. Then you, as a manager, can go on a PowerPoint and explain them how the structure of the company is changing for example. It works down to as little as that. Focusing on collaboration, we recommend a minimum of a three-hour session. But, if you really want to implement it, four sessions within a month. What you also have to remember, if you are

a group of 25 in a corporation or department of 100, and those 25 people are doing the session, the rest of them will also need to know that something is changing because otherwise they will not be able to communicate with one another. Ideally would be to work with the same company for the next year, year and a half, and make sure that everyone within the corporation knows what is happening.

What do you think is the main characteristic of an innovative group?

I think if you are innovative you do not see boundaries. You look for opportunities. That is the whole philosophy behind improvisation – I cannot look for what limits us, I can only look for what opportunities a situation gives us. Being innovative means that you come up with new ideas; innovation is rethinking or doing things in a new way. What is that we do every day on stage? We create a new show in a new way. To be good at improvising, you will be great at being innovative. I have this idea, and most people will say that can't happen or it is going to be hard. But if we cannot say "no" to that idea, then how can we make that idea happen? That is pure innovation.

Does improvisation need a tool for providing specific data to stakeholders?

Give people an improv class and you will see the results. People will change. You felt it yourself – that moment of "aha". People rediscover themselves. From a social scientist point of view it is possible to measure it. You can measure it over the course of three years.

Would you use improvisation as a pain-reliever or integrate it into the organizational culture?

I obviously see it as a tool for prevention rather than a tool for fire-extinguishing. We have this problem; let's use improv to solve it. Why not make sure that we implement it early enough so we will never get to the problems. Unfortunately, no matter which company you at, if you are telling the CEO that in two years they will have a problem, he won't take your word for it. So we will be ready for when they have the problem and come and help them. But if I am able to show them that to avoid these problems by doing this, my job would be ten times as easy. In the United States, you are taking improv classes in college and high school. So if you can implement it already there in the educational system, we will see a much bigger innovative area. I started the CBS Improv Theater from the very beginning with a friend. If you can implement it there, the people can learn these techniques. But the

problem is that I can go and travel all around the world, meet another improviser, get up on stage and create a fun show because the fundamentals are the same. We speak the same language and we have the same common understanding on how to make each other look better. Imagine a world where you can do that with everyone. You could go into practically every job and and work together with the group because you have the right approach on how to work together. Some people have it, but I guarantee you that a lot of people don't.

Speaking about the process itself, do you think it should be controlled? Should there be one person keeping the team on track or would you rather empower the group?

You will always need a teacher. Improvisation is all about not judging the others. If you are all giving notes after each session, you are all judging focusing exactly on what people are doing wrong. That is contradicting with the whole philosophy. You should always have somebody from outside to give the feedback that is needed. And you should always take the feedback like every note given to the group is a note towards yourself. Because that way you will keep improving.

What is the manager's role in here? Should they become the people "from outside"?

I think they should hire somebody from outside. I think CEOs, top executives, junior executives should take the training together with assistants. It is all about the lining, creating the common language. If you as a manager show the group that you are into taking the risk and put yourself into that vulnerability point where you might fail, then you will show the rest of the group the way. But if you are taking one step back and say "I am protecting myself, I am not stepping out there", then why should the rest do it? It is all about the collective mindset – "let's all be in this together, let's all risk failing and be ok with failing". There is no right or wrong in what we are doing, we can only learn as we go along.

How do you make people comfortable with failing?

You see, that is the secret. But you will learn that through exercise. Half of the teaching is to make people feel relaxed, you have to know what you are doing and make them feel you know what you are doing, make them trust you, in order to make them grow.

Is a restrictive environment fostering creativity?

Thinking out of the box is such an old-classic coined term. But you have a box and you have to figure out how to get out of it, you have to think out of the box. But what if there is no box? What if you are given the responsibility and I trust that whatever you do you are doing it because you think is the best for all of us? You have to remove personal gain from the equation.

Do you have any special exercises for innovation?

Many. I can't say only one. Improv with one exercise at a time is not working. You have to combine the exercises and that is where the expertise comes in. In order for participants to reach this point in their personal experience or development, I need to make this happen to them. For this group of people, this is what happens, but for the next group of people the result might be completely different. It is all about the signals and the results that happens within the group.

Did you confront with any ethical issues?

We have worked with gas and oil companies. They are polluting the Earth. If I have the possibility to affect in a good way the people that do bad, maybe they will stop doing bad and start doing good. As I said, if everyone takes an improv class the world would be a better place. We are working with politicians. Teach them how to be better, that would be great. We are not working on how companies should sell the products, not working on how they create the business strategy. I am working on how they interact with each other on a personal level while at work. We have so many different tasks, we are working with a bank for doing 2-days session with 300 leaders within the company across the country. And our job is to teach them how improvisation could help and implement all of the theories down to their organization in 110-115 departments.

What is the most solid argument for companies to do improvisation?

It is like growing the seed. You are writing this thesis because you took one improv class and it has affected you and it is so vital for the rest of your career. So imagine if I come up in an oil industry and I do that with 100 employees, 6 months from now they might be in the situation when they might do something that is very critical for the strategy, for the company. They might think something that they did back then made them change somehow that they

are now here. You are the perfect example for what improv can do. This is your life work, this is the biggest paper you have ever handed in and you want to combine that into your whole education. I think that is very fascinating.

APPENDIX E

Transcript interview Per Rasmussen, Project Manager at Nets & Founder at JustDo! (May 31, 2017)

What is your current role here at Nets?

Right now I am a technical project manager, meaning that I am not a project manager in a normal sense. Why I do is mostly coordinating the technicalities. When projects enter into IT operations, I am the machine power of the Nets ship. So I have more a coordinating role than a normal business oriented project manager.

I also know that you started a company called "JustDo!". Could you explain me more about it?

JustDo! is a traditional life-coaching business, primarily personal coaching. The goal is to expand it for groups and businesses. These two things are basically the same for me. Group coaching for me makes more sense if it is work related. I am not going to pursue group therapy, but still it is linked very much with the improv idea. What I focus is mostly on relations and how people get lost in the modern world. Why don't they speak up, why don't they challenge things that they don't think are right, why don't they just try to cope with things until they kind of break down? That is very interesting in the business world because a lot of groups are dysfunctional because they don't dare to speak up. Improv exercises can make that easier. In my normal life-coaching I do not do improv exercises, but I stress out giving people the courage to speak up and to embrace their own errors. I want to make them settle in an imperfect world, being an imperfect person.

How did you get attracted by coaching and improvisation?

I have never been a spiritual person, but I have always been aware that there is something more to think about. I got divorced, it was a consensual agreement. We didn't really fit up anymore. The day after seemed like a wise decision, but the feeling of loneliness hit me like

a brick. It triggered me to realize that I actually did have a depression. Not just being sad, but I had a depression for quite many years. I went to my doctor and she was really convinced that I have a clinical depression. I had spoken to a psychologist before and I thought I need to speak to her again. It is a picture that I carried along with me lately, the psychology part. I often tell people that the life is like a backpack, full of stones. Some people carry a lot of stones and they are capable of it. Others carry less, but are not capable of it. So if you have to sort these stones and get some of them out of your backpack, that is the psychology part. If you have to go from where you are into the world with whatever you got in your backpack, that is coaching. I had these idea that I needed both. I need somebody to look into my backpack and I need somebody to guide me from where I am into the future. In that process I realized it was this split between looking into your past and acting into the future. I started reaching out for people I knew and it was this crazy thing that I used improv for entertainment for a couple out times. For some reason it was obvious for me that I have to start working with improv. I knew a guy that has been my facility teacher and he told me I need to go on Facebook to join their group. So I have made my first account and one of the things that happened was that Facebook exposed me to a girl that I have known for 20 years before and I realized that she was a life coach. She is teaching others to be coaches too. The insight was that I have to go to her and see if I can use this to help others. Therefore, I got certified two years ago and I decided this should be at least a part of my life. I am now teaching people how to live and act as a mid-level manager in a changing IT world. I have never been afraid to say it if I see something is wrong. What I have learned from being for 35 years in a free enterprising market is that a lot of people are not really speaking up. And we are back in the loop. They do not dare speaking up when their managers overrule them, when their managers greenlight everything. We need to teach people to trust so much themselves that they actually dare speak up. In their relationships, at the workplace, in life in general. But before you realize that you can do that without having the real answer, then you don't really dare. The most people don't dare because they fear for their job or their marriage relationship or they feel that they need to know more before they raise up and say something. And that is wrong. You need somebody to say "I do not believe this is right". And then go from there and use "yes, and". You can coach on tons of things, but if you want to work on relations, you need at least once to face the other person. Early-on in a project everybody needs to meet up and to know a bit more about themselves. Playing some games

normally in the beginning of the workshops allows people to know more about each other. Some of them are designed to tell somebody in the circle something you expect most of people would not expect of you. Not just a secret, but something you would not expect them to believe. Then a lot of things come out. Some of them are extremely personal. It has a fantastic feature I also used when encountered third-party people. It helps to see the other person as a human, not just as a supplier. We are humans in the first place and then we have relations and we add on the relations. Sometimes we add on the relation things that come before the relation, and that makes relations fade away. We need to do it the other way around, we need to have the person in the bottom and then you can add the layers on top. You need to be able to focus on the person. You need to know who you call, it is not just a name or a guy, it is not just the key account manager.

What is your coaching approach?

If you look at coaching homepages, there is a lot of spiritual stuff, a lot of crystals, a lot of scents. To me is not necessarily helping. There are a lot of people out there like me that will like to be helped but don't necessarily need five-star ratings in the corner, but just somebody who can pay attention to their problems. My buy line on JustDo! is "coaching with focus" and I hope to provide a more clean way of coaching. It comes down to the systemic thing again. I am not saying it doesn't work, but it doesn't work for me. That would be too much of you pushing into my sphere to really allow the objectivity to be there. I have a good old friend and she is a spiritual mentor and I know that she does immensely good things for people. But if she would come to me with that approach she would not be able to help me, because I would resent the idea that things will come to me from outside and I should just sit down and be open. I need to do something about it myself, but I know that if I am not open nothing will come to me. I need to be in that open "yes, and" world. The coaching part has to do with positive psychology and the improv part is the "yes, and". Meaning that you look for taking the lead from where you are and embracing what comes towards you and make that the new reality for the next step, instead of saying "I didn't see that coming so I have to run away the other way around". That is the way I do coaching, at least, because there are tons of ways of doing it. I am what it is called a systemic coach. From the science world of systemic theory, you know for example that in this interview your question bias me in answering, even though you would like me to be totally objective and I would like to be totally objective. When

we met the way we accepted each other is taking everything into a different perspective. Any kind of interaction has a reaction.

I have recently read an article from Business Harvard Review. It says that each member of the team is distinct from the other. If I am a star, you are a triangle. Managers have to put accent of what the star can do, not on how the star is not able to perform the triangle's tasks...

Exactly! Do you know the scrum as an agile concept? You have the scrum team and the scrum master which is a facilitator. He is not really responsible for all the things that a normal manager would be. So he is the one that makes sure the world goes around and he also isolate the team during a sprint. After a sprint everything should be complete. The trick here is that the group should be self-contained if it is a software development group. There should be people that can code, somebody that can test, somebody that is good at documenting and so on. They should be the complete team covering a complete production circle. Why I talk about this is that you can apply it to a normal group also. If you request one thing from everybody some of them will be good at it, some will be bad. But if you go and realize where the strengths are and who work good together, what kind of motivations are there, then you can make them self-contained. Again you need to be able to stand up and say I need help for this. In the morning you have something called the daily scrum. The scrum comes from rugby when everybody stands there and push together with the ball in the middle. The trick is that in the morning you have this quick go-around where everybody states what I have done yesterday, what is my plan for today and what obstacles do I see. Then somebody else can pitch in on the obstacles.

This relates to what I base my study on, because I think there is no pure objectivity in the world...

Yes, it doesn't exist because then you are totally alone. You are not really objective, you are isolated. The objectivity needs something to relate to, otherwise you are just isolated. Is that objectivity? I don't know. There is a downside of the objectivity. If true objectivity in social sciences or anything like interacting should be there, that means that you should be able to

be in a surrounding without having any kind of impact. Who would want that? The systems involve with each other. Do you actually think that you can measure the temperature of the water without influencing on temperature with the thermometer? Of course you can't. In the scientific world you can look at the deviations. You can prove that if you have 10 liters of water and an extremely thin glass thermometer, you can neglect the impact of the thermometer on the water temperature. But in the social sciences or just in people meeting, you cannot neglect it because there is no such a thing as a very thin glass thermometer. It is a huge thing you put into the water. So if somebody is blocking you need to go in there and ask "why do you block" and then you realize that it has nothing to do with what you say. It can just be that I had an argument with my wife and I couldn't tell her what I feel, but I can suppress you. If you just accept the blocking, you are blocking too. You need to have this respect in the encounter that nothing says that this will be perfect. And if it is not perfect it doesn't mean it won't work, but it is just a challenge and you need to accept it. And we go back to improv. You need to accept the challenge, to go there and know that the other part actually want to make you look good. So if somebody says know, you have to say "okay, why is that?"

Sometimes you cannot place the laboratory features in the real world. As you said we should embrace our new reality and work on it...

The reality changes all the time, you need to be aware of that. Being scared about not admitting to not knowing everything can be such a limiting factor. If you go into a discussion fearing that you will be asked the questions that you cannot answer, then you are not paying attention. You are not there in the encounter, you are not there in the interface. You are standing besides watching the interface. You need to be there, and in certain moments you can see in people's eyes that they are leaving and you need to grab them and get them back. Then back to the coaching part, where you can see some questions affect people and you try to hang them into the corner until they give up and say what is really going on. Of course, you shouldn't deal with people bad morning experience with their wife or husband but you have to admit that at that specific time they do not have the resources. It is better to go away from something, it is better to swipe the scene and do a second beat at a different point in time. In improv you need to swipe on a high because everybody then has something to build on. That is also a part of embracing the moment, saying that we cannot get any

further right now, it is admitting that we do not know everything, we cannot control everything. So it gets weird enough, let's just admit that it is not a problem. If we played the scene until the end, that would have been a problem. If everyone standing on the sidelines pay attention, they could see the ones on the stage struggling. And they can do a "mercy swipe". But do they do that in the business world? Do you actually go into a meeting or into a confrontation and say "hey, guys, let's go grab a cup of coffee"? Do you do that? No, you don't.

How could you switch the mindset in organizations?

I think you can switch it by allowing people to know that they are human. I mean that they do not have to know everything and that people care about them. I went to an improv class and the first 20 minutes the facilitator stopped us and said: "everybody look at each other" and that was easy because we were basically 25 people in a pile on the floor creating a fountain. Do you realize that this will not happen anywhere in the world outside the improv? We didn't know each other 20 minutes ago, and suddenly everybody was touching each other and having fun. There are people at work that we pass every day and we know absolutely nothing about them. How can we really trust that they want the best for us? You have the organization part and the top makes a lot of effort, but implementing it should go the other way around. The management uses all the time, and when it comes to implementing it there is very little time to do it and the management is already on to the next thing. So you don't have the up-going references.

Do you think the organizational cultures should embrace improvisation at their core?

I think they should do. The tricky part here is that before you end in this pile in 20 minutes (the above mentioned exercise), you need to accept that other people are not dangerous to you. But also being in an improv class, there is a filter that you have passed – "I actually want to expose myself into this". And showing up doesn't really secure that you have that mindset. So what would you then do? Would you screen everybody in an improv session when they are there for a job interview? Probably not, but you probably should. Perhaps not real improv, but you should prop people for this angle also, because I know extremely introvert people that are brilliant on stage. And I know extremely extrovert people that would

“kill” anything on stage. Those are the stand-up guys, but it is something different. I actually have to accept it, because when I am in a summer school I have to bias them.

How do you tackle improv from this different cultural perspectives?

If you go into improv style differences it has more to do with the artistic idea than the basic core of it. There is an angle I really want to go into. Keith Johnstone said he didn't invent anything. He just build on the old Greeks. He needed the scripted players to get out of the manuscript. He needed them to be there in the interface. This took off for him and made it an art form. The difference between improv comedy and improv theater is that theater is more like real life. It doesn't have to be funny. American style improv has to be funny and European style is pretty much equal to short-form improv. Keith made different groups play against each other. He has this saying: “I still not understand why people want to pay to see actors perform”. The training games have just been squeezed a bit and commercialized. The long form part, which is what Stefan does (referring to Stefan Pagels Andersen) I find most interesting, but it doesn't have to be funny. A lot of the American improv is very much geared towards how we can make people laugh, what kind of setup is easiest to bring the fun in. But if for some reason it ends up being about a couple waiting for their son to come home and they realize that he died, that is not funny. Nobody laughed, but they applause a lot when the scene is finished. When you are sitting in the meeting and you can see the pleasure in somebody's eyes, it is just because that person just realized something. You have to look into the people, you have to look into how they are doing. I do what I call analogue workshops, where everything is abandoned, but papers and pens.

So no PCs allowed. Does that improve attention?

Absolutely. It is always good to give people a back-thought. Also if you want to discuss something or really want to push them somewhere. You need to know what will happen when you give them the corner as the only option. Will they fight or cry? When I do analogue workshops I say to people: “the reason why I don't want you to have PCs and phones here is because we will produce everything on paper, it doesn't go away. I will sum up and I will distribute whatever we reach here. I need you to be totally focused and I cannot follow if you might be totally focused on your PC.” I don't believe anyone is paying attention if they have their PCs, so close it. Then they will just sit and do something different. We are built for

mono-tasking, or at least slow multitasking. I think people, in the world that we live today, want to embrace the fact that somebody pays attention to them. It works to give the people the chance to break of the pressure and be present in the moment and create something together with others. It also has to do with the need to learn about each other on personal level and the need to see the results summed up during the day.

Going back to companies. How do you think companies see improvisation in Denmark?

The more technical and manual, the less openness there might be. This is all up in the head. We have something here that is called digital lab less than a year old. It is trying to first of all shift the view because it is user-experience development. You make a prototype, you show it to people and they react to it. It is like improv – the “yes, and” and if somebody says no, it is actually a “no, but”. If it is a “no” you need to know what is that. So you actually pay attention to what is said to you, you act upon it finding a different way of doing it.

So in this situation the “no, but” could actually work?

You need the “because”, otherwise you don’t learn what the obstacle was. And the “because” might be an opening. If you just have the “no, but”, you are not allowed the possibility to accept the others’ constraint. And you are not allowed to be able to find a different angle on what you were intending in the first place. If you are not given the “because”, you cannot react. And this a thing from coaching – everybody likes changes. Don’t come and say you don’t want to. Of course, if there is someone on medication and can’t leave the room. But in general, you don’t wake up in the morning expecting that you know how your day will go. Of course, you like changes, you want things to be different. Everybody wants the change, but you don’t want everybody else’s change. You want your change. So if I want you to change, I need to convince you that this is actually what you want. You have a toolbox and I have a toolbox. You have a screwdriver and a screw but you are trying to hammer it in. I have a nail and a hammer and that’s faster. I can give it to you and you will say “go away, I have my idea”, because basically you don’t want my change. I can give you the hammer and say “now it’s yours”. Then you actually use it a couple of times and say “now it’s my hammer”. So until the tool is yours, it doesn’t work. It has all to do with change management. The trick is people are totally different. Somebody can say “yes, and” to the idea. But you also need somebody to say “no, it is a bad idea”.

So I can sense “no, but, because” can be an undercover “yes, and”...

It is the basic saying “yes” to the intention. “Yes, and” actually have this little brother that is called “say yes to the intention”. So you can have tons of “no”, but the idea is to put you in a situation where is some tension that can be released in a moment. In coaching we have this idea that you cannot say “never”, but “almost ever”. And that is an opening. In improv, we normally say “yes, and”, but it is more sophisticated than that. It is say yes to the intention and then add something. The trick with the “no, because, but” is that giving “the because” gives you something to react on. There is actually another angle to it. You should not basically be allowed to say “no”, period. You know why you said “no”, so share it. Then you have to trust me not to laugh at you or hunt anything. I am actually genuinely interested in why you said “no”. I want to know if you have a different idea. The best thing is that you now know a different way that you want to pursue, then give it to me. That is almost a “yes, and”. In our business world, I think we should play from the top of our intelligence. And It also has to do with the “blink layer”, when you go on stage as an improv player, but inside the improv player there are all that things that you have learnt. I know that somebody 100% disagree with me. I think when you go on stage as an improv player and when you go to work you should take care of yourself also. If you just say “yes, and” then you sometimes get squeezed into something that you cannot really accept. And then the scene will be bad. I had this discussion about you being protected by the comedy on stage, so you can say anything. Yes, but you need to stand up to the consequences.

What role does the HR department have in this?

You should not have a department that look at people as resources. I think that very often the HR department is much more a company department than an employee department. Therefore there are no direct measurable advantage in embracing the “yes, and” improv thing. Until Google said “now we go do”. But they are American, the mindset is different. We have a digital lab that actually plays with things. As I can see the “user experience”, in opposition to the normal way of prototyping is they don’t just want people to interact with the prototype. They go interview people to find out why and what they either like or dislike. It is not about the interface or the buttons, it needs to be nice to work with. You correlate what

you think with what they do. It is an improv approach. You open the box and see what is inside without really knowing it in the first place.

What kind of environment is better for improv to take place? A restrictive or an open one?

I think the tricky part is that in general you are better at changes. This is about changing attitudes and it is actually going to be scary. You are better at changes when you are on top. The burning platform is the most idiotic picture that change management has ever come up with. What do you do if you are standing on a burning platform? You run like hell and you don't care about anything else. You need to stand here and figure out where to go. And when you have decided where to go, you need to figure out how to go there and make everybody go there. It has to do with motivation. You need to put the "yes, and" idea into a company when it either has to or when everything is good. You have to have not the burning platform, but the shining platform to show that this is the way to work if you really want to excel. That is why Google's way is going to be a shining platform for everybody to start embrace the "yes, and". It is the small things that matter. At Nets we have the appreciation cards. On one side there is a smiley face and the Nets logo and it says "turn around". On the other side "thank you for..." I am so stressed with the work now and all of a sudden there is a cup of coffee on my desk. When I get out of it I would like to be thankful for it. Of course I could go and say "thank you", but I can do something even better. I can go pick up one of these cards and I can give it to you. Also, we will have a red wall where we have to put a picture of us, a bit about ourselves and what do we do outside of Nets and then our favorite place at Nets. We hope that people just start posting themselves. It is not the corporate mail coming out that now everybody has to do this. We need to know each other a bit better.

Do what degree this nudge has to be controlled by somebody?

Of course it has to be anchored in management. Because for some reason they will say this is not a good idea, then it is going to be hard. We have not asked anybody if we are allowed to put this on the wall. If somebody points to regulations or host policies saying that we are not allowed to do that, we will take it down and figure out something else. It has to be implemented bottom-up. Because once again it is going to be somebody else's change. It has to be somebody that is the shining platform. The power has been given to the management, the amount of time and money is given to the management. Of course, top

management needs to buy into this. And if it is a big decision, if it is a big change they need to be convinced and to take the time for the middle management. There are not enough time and resources to implement it to the masses. Very often you don't need to know that much. But it is not actually right. You cannot understand what I understand. There is a limitation of the information flow. There is a lot of effort going on in the top part. Then you go to middle management. They don't need to know all the stuff. First of all, there are some business decisions that they cannot be told, they cannot be told how bad things are or that they are getting ready to be sold. Of course, there is a limitation. But from the middle management to the workers there should be no limitation. We are back to the hammer and the screwdriver. Top management has decided, we have experts here and hard evidence that it works. "Go away, why should I carry a hammer?"

Do you have special methods or exercises through which innovative outcomes can be achieved?

Innovation is a multi-headed animal. For me it's obvious, you need the "yes, and". It also has to do with this exercise of letting go of your own idea in order to embrace the moment. You need to look at this little statement from so many different sides. You have to pick the one thing that makes this hammer yours so much easier than the other ones. When you do warm-ups for instance it is nearly never just one thing people want to do. And that is because you and I have different energies that releases the thing that is blocking our mind right now. You know zip-zap-zop right? There is a combined exercise in which you have to hold your partner's hand and point toward another one in the circle. So everybody needs to pay attention. Being there in the moment, release your own idea and the "yes, and" are three exercise that you can start with for a complete innovative day.

Can you talk about the workshops structure? Are there specific exercises specially done for specific needs? Can you give me examples?

That is one thing that i need to look into actually. it's kind of coming back to the thing called "trust" if you think of the analogue workshop. But people are usually there because they need to, or order to be there, so we need to settle this in a way, and set the stage in a way that everybody is equal. You know about the other ones, so you trust the other ones. I use

something and I know people that think is dangerous, but it is a simple exercise. You make a line in the middle, and you say plus on one side and a minus on the other.

And then you ask people to stay down with a post it and each have to write 2 obstacles they see concerning this workshop leading. So 2 things that they expect will go wrong and 2 things they expect to get out of this, so there is a bad side and a good side when they have done that and finish unequal, somebody just put down two bad things or the other side, that is the moment where i ask them to help me. So i asked them to group this stuff, and i have several post-its, and get them engaged on helping each-other figuring out and there is everyone up there trying to figure out if it has to do with not enough time, or documentation. Then I go further and i always start with the best stuff e.g. "there is not enough time". Then I asked them "What is this not enough time?" "What are your expectation?" so trying to clear things up it's an important stage, in the end of this clearing exercises everyone knows what concerns do we have and what things would we like to achieve? And then when it's done i believe the last 10 minutes of the meeting, i use them to go through this again "example of the time" and ask everyone "So, have we cleared this?" - Yes! Using this technique I have all the people on the same page.

How do you address these people in front of the group? They might feel uncomfortable

Yes, but everybody is like in the school where everybody doesn't want to raise their hands because they think the other people they don't know they are good or bad enough, they all know. So let's embrace it in a nice way.

Do you use theory or informative introductions to your exercises in order for the information to be assimilated quickly and more efficiently?

I do not know, because the one thing I have really not done, I haven't taught improv exercises, I just use them.

Why does it help you?

When I do improv specific exercises, more like what I call "inertia breaks", bringing people back, forget about of your food if it was good or bad, let's get back to what we were doing.

And we are all again, on the same page. But I have never taught about it as "now we do an improv exercise".

Do you actively talk about the benefit of this exercise or you just let it be?

I normally tell people why we do stuff. I tell them what I expect to achieve, because I never told anybody: "Now we have 5 exercises you can do in a workshop." I just used them. Is more than mindset, to embrace that moment and to see "how can I make this beneficial for the rest of us?". I just use them and if I was going to teach someone to use improv exercises I will also tell them why, but one thing I would always do I will try to map it to the situation, I think it's truly important and difficult.

What frequency and how many sessions should be held with the same group in order for them to understand and apply the principles of improvisation on a daily basis?

I think that is totally up to you. It takes effort, if you work with something I think automatically. If you work 8 hours a day for 3 years you are close to the 10.000 hours. When you start thinking improv, when you realize that you starting using it even if you are the most negative of yourself then you open, you are there.

Do you have a tracking system? How do you measure results of improvisation?

If an organization would like to see a result in my work it will be in happiness at work. I really do think they will see it there because the attitude in general will be more positive. And then of course, I will not be able to measure it but able to see it, in the revenue and perhaps in less sick days, soft value measuring points. Overtime you can see it in the bottom line.

How do you think improvisation impacts innovation as an outcome? Why would an innovative company be interested in improvisation?

Think fast, it has to do with the fact that you should not be afraid of making errors and embrace the fact that you might actually see that this is a bad thing that doesn't work and then you just say "ok, fair enough, so let's do something different". The thing that I do not know is what the "different" is, I haven't studied it yet. When trying to implement an idea, you cannot stop anything without really going into the details "Why this cannot be?" and I think this is interesting, finding an answer to this question might be a big waste. But there

again, waste is not a bad thing, you have to have a feast with the errors, you have to be able at what didn't work so share why it didn't work, share your journey, meaning you need to have some time to do this. I do actually think that Improv improves creativity and innovation. If you stop a project, you need to describe why you did it, and even describe what it takes to reinvoke it. Without learning from your errors you just get arrogant from your success.

As a concluding question, have you ever confronted with ethical issues?

It is what I call reboostness. People getting better and better on something that is and it shouldn't be. It is basically getting skilled in being incompetent. Do we actually live in a company where management don't expect to see the truth?