BEFRIENDING THE BOOGEYMAN

USING IMPROVISATION PRINCIPLES TO MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES AND MITIGATE FEAR OF FAILURE

BEFRIENDING THE BOOGEYMAN

USING IMPROV PRINCIPLES TO MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES AND MITIGATE FEAR OF FAILURE

By Kristen Webster

Submitted to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in STRATEGIC FORESIGHT AND INNOVATION

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, December, 2018

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I authorize OCAD University to lend this MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research. I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public. I further authorize OCAD University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

ABSTRACT

This project combines improvisation principles with design thinking concepts to create new exercises which can be used in the workplace to mitigate the impacts of fear of failure within an organization. The main research question for this project is as follows: How might we combine design thinking and improvisation principles to mitigate the negative impacts of fear of failure in an organization?

Fear of failure is a pervasive feeling which impacts organizations of all sizes, sectors, and maturities, and can have devastating impacts on organizational culture. These impacts include cynicism, lack of motivation, high employee turnover, and low self esteem. This project study uses evidence from academic literature as well as primary research to pinpoint the most pressing impacts of fear of failure and define points of intervention where improvisation principles would be most beneficial.

This project culminates in several new exercises which can be used by teams within an organization to mitigate these main impacts, giving way for higher levels of employee communication, creative thinking, and innovation potential.

Key words: organizational culture, psychological safety, improvisation, design thinking, communication, team dynamics, motivation, self esteem

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

DEFINITIONS

LONG FORM IMPROVISATION

Improvisation with a more fluid format, typically lasting between twenty to thirty minutes. This form generally consists of many interrelated scenes, re-capitulation of ideas, and more defined characters.

SHORT FORM IMPROVISATION

Also called "Theatre Sports", short form improvisation consists of short scenes which are governed by strict rules, often causing people to refer to the scenes as "games".

CIRCLE GAMES

Also called warm up games, circle games are used to bring up improviser's energy and focus before a practice or a performance.

PLAYER
A common term used to describe an improvisation performer.

FORWARD

MY LIFE HAS BEEN SHAPED BY BECOMING COMFORTABLE WITH FAILURES.

Since I was six I was a travelling softball player, and in a sport like softball you are taught that you will fail most of the time. A great batting average is .300, which means you fail to reach base 70% of the time. Stepping into my undergraduate degree, I took calculus and physics as mandatory parts of my program. Those topics were not my strong suit. While I passed the classes in the end, I failed many quizzes and my academic future looked questionable at the time. These experiences taught me to expect failure, to move through it, and to believe in myself despite failure.

I consider failure my friend. It is not because of my academic or athletic history, but because of another extracurricular altogether, this being improvisation comedy. I started doing improvisation theater ten years ago, when I was thirteen years old. Back then my improv was untrained, loud, and hectic, but after a decade of experience, hundreds of hours, and thousands of laughs later, I consider myself an expert in the field. Improv has taught me many things – how to listen, compromise, solve problems, be flexible, and be honest – but the most important lesson was to learn to love failure. In improv, you are almost constantly failing. Your jokes might not land, your audience might be grumpy, your scene-mate might not listen, you could have an off night. In an improv performance, you never know what you are going to say, do, or get. You must learn to move on fast from a failure, because dwelling on it only makes the scene more cringe-worthy. In fact, as a rule you should run with your failures and make them part of a scene.

For example, I was once doing a scene with a friend named Eric. At the beginning of the scene, I introduced him as Brian, my husband. Later in the scene, I called him Bob. The audience froze. Eric gave me a look. I had made a mistake – I called my scene partner by the wrong name, after I had *given him that name.* You could hear a pin drop.

I HAD FAILED.

There is an old saying in improv, "the audience wants to see you fail". Audiences have a twisted humour and joy, a schadenfreude, for seeing improvisors mess up. What they love more, however, is seeing them mess up and then recover. The next time I talked to Eric in the scene, I called him by another name, Trevor. Soon, the scene moved from whatever we were talking about – which now I can not remember – to a hilarious romp of me calling my husband by the wrong name and Eric escalating the conflict by getting more sentimental about our long marriage and more depressed about my forgetfulness. The audience loved it, because they got to see a failure turn into a success. If I had just tried to correct myself, to walk offstage, or to call myself an idiot, we would have been robbed of a good experience. Improv taught me to acknowledge and befriend my failures, and to use them to my advantage.

Stepping into my professional life, I noticed that my comfortability with failure was not a trait that I shared with my colleagues. Without the fear of failure, I am often confident to say that I will try anything and do anything, just to attempt it and see where it goes. In my workplace, I constantly heard phrases like "we can't do that" or "that will never work." Worse, I hear things like "we can never change," "the system is broken, but there's nothing we can do," or (sarcastically) "that's just business as usual here." I noticed that my colleagues seemed tired, frustrated and disconnected from the work they did. I heard them be sarcastic, cynical, and dismissive towards new ideas and initiatives. I interacted with upper management who said they wanted to keep things "the way it is" to "keep it easy." After some reflection, I realized most of these comments were connected to a lack of confidence in the system that my colleagues worked in, and a disillusionment towards how operations worked. Employees were scared, frustrated, and upset. As I talked to friends and family about their professional experiences, I learned that what I was hearing from my coworkers was not unique. These statements were almost universal. This is when it hit me, like a bad 2000's infomercial – There has to be a better way!

What if everyone had the confidence which is inspired by improv training? What if people felt comfortable and connected to failure? How could I introduce improvisation into workplaces in a sustainable way? How could I make exercises that were human centric, geared to the needs and concerns of employees? Can workplaces be fun? Can adults let go and laugh? How can I help people tap fearlessly into their creativity? How can I get teams talking to one another? From these experiences, reflections, and questions, my idea for my MRP was born. To create exercises which give teams an opportunity to shift toxic elements of their culture, and improve upon their communication, collaboration, and creativity. I hope you read my MRP, learn from my report, and use the exercises.

1

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

RESEARCH QUESTION AND SCOPE

HOW MIGHT WE COMBINE DESIGN THINKING AND IMPROVISATION PRINCIPLES TO MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF FEAR OF FAILURE IN AN ORGANIZATION?

The primary area of investigation for this project is examining how a combination of design thinking and improvisation principles might be used to create a set of strategies and techniques that can mitigate fear of failure within an organization. Fear of failure is a feeling which most individuals can say that they have felt at some point in their lives, whether in a personal or professional capacity. In organizations, failure is often stigmatized as a negative outcome of a project. This stigmatization, often, is logical and warranted, as failure can result in economic or industry related losses. This stigmatization manifests itself in risk-averse behaviour, which often look like organizations maintaining the status quo as to mitigate the possibility of risk. However, most organizations also seek innovative ideas and projects to improve their external competitiveness or internal operations. Maintaining the status quo stands in opposition to innovative ideas, as one cannot exist while the other flourishes. As a company seeks to maintain the status quo they often, perhaps unintentionally, negatively impact their organizational culture. When there is a culture hyper-focussed on maintaining the status quo, employees ultimately lose feelings of pride and connection to the workplace. Although companies may want to innovate, and organizational culture which is dictated by a stigmatization of failure ultimately find it difficult to do so due to the employee's lack of motivation. In this project, I examine how feelings of fear manifest within an organization, specifically looking at how these feelings result in change fatigue, cynicism, doubt, and disillusionment.
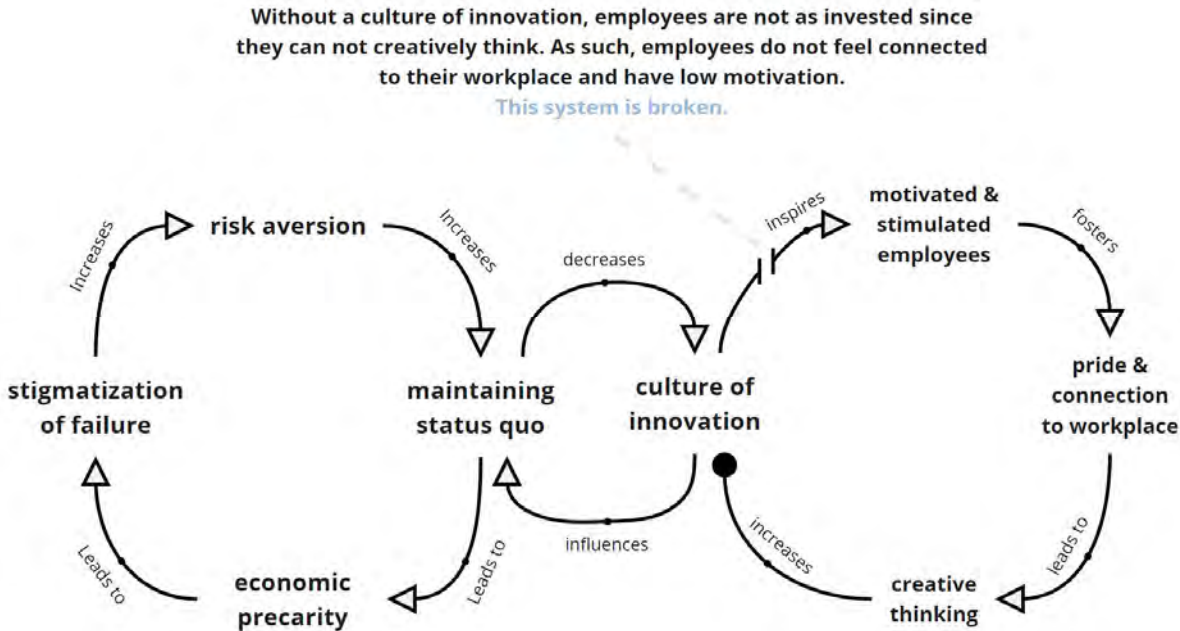
Figure 1: Impact of Fear of Failure on an Organization

I position improvisation principles as ways to build capacity for innovation within an organizational culture. By introducing improvisation into the system loop described above, one can boost psychological safety and cognitive improvements within an organization. Though countering the external pressures upon an organization may be difficult, building the capacity internally to an organization can build capacity to fight the external impacts.
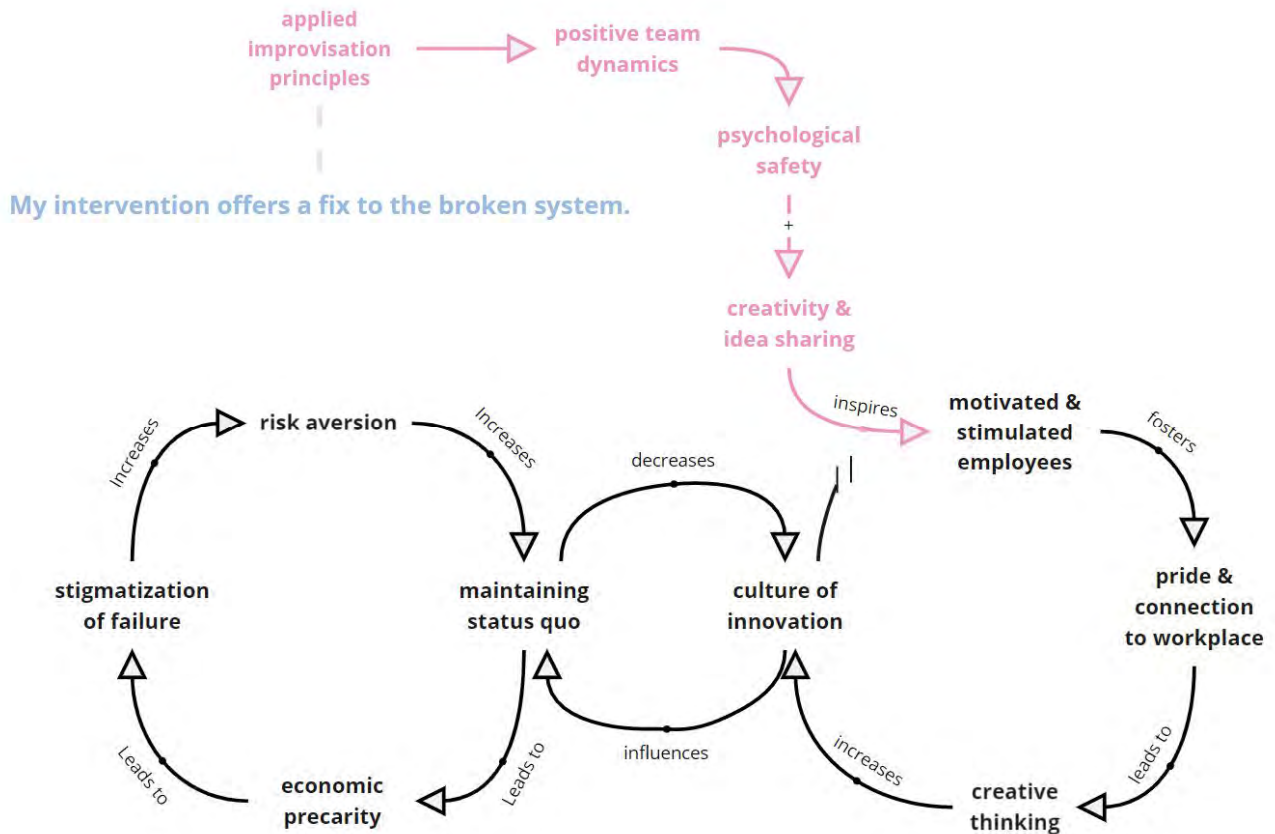
Figure 2: Impact of Applied Improvisation Principles on Organizational Culture

The purpose of this project is to develop a set of agile exercises which can be adopted by teams and applied to their organization. These exercises will be founded on a combination of applied improvisation principles and components of design thinking. Rather than being structured like a classic improvisation class, these exercises will use applied improvisation principles. Applied improvisation combines the lessons learned from improvisational practices with professional development goals, to help improve the lives of individuals or teams (Applied Improvisation Network, 2018). The term *improvisation* might include comedy, music, jazz, dance, and so on. Amongst the various artforms which include improvisation, improvisation is used as a tool to inspire organic and unique moments of creation. These moments of creation can be seen in jazz clubs, rock concerts, dance classrooms, movies sets, and so on. These moments of creativity can sometimes be as interesting as the scripted content, producing unexpected and memorable results. For example, in the 1973 hit *Jaws,* the line "You're gonna need a bigger boat" was improvised and went on to become one of the most famous lines from

the movie (Sloane, 2013). In this report, I will focus on improvisation used for comedic purpose onstage, as seen on famous television shows and theatres like Whose Line is it Anyways, The Second City, Upright Citizens Brigade, and so on. I use the principles of applied improvisation and from my research methods to create exercises which can be reworked and evolved to create sustainable and long-term cultural improvements in organizations.

It is important to note that the reason improvisational principles are being used to inspire the exercises in this project is not to teach one how to be funny or how to succeed in comedy. Rather, they are used to teach the core lessons of improvisation without necessarily going through years of improvisational training. When one reads about improvisation, one often assumes that improvisation means having to be funny, but in this report this assumption is untrue. There is a difference between comedy, improvised comedy, and improvisation.[1] Comedy refers to a scripted comedy show, like Saturday Night Live or a stand-up special. Improvised comedy refers to improvisational shows which are intended to make audiences laugh, like Whose Line is it Anyways or Improv-iganza. Improvisation refers to an exchange which had no prior set up or planning, where the parties present are listening to one another and responding accordingly. Most people engage in improvisation every day, within any conversation or interaction that they are having. Reflect on a conversation you had with someone recently. Did you know what the other person was going to say? Did you plan your responses? Unless you are a very talented fortune teller, it is likely that the answers to those questions are no, and that you therefore engage in improvisation regularly. All this is to say that in this report, I am not advocating for comedy, nor teaching skills relating to performance or joke-telling. Rather, I am teaching skills which are strengthened in improvisational contexts related to communication, bonding, and team building.

The workshops I develop are intended for internal use for teams' size five up to fifteen, to make positive psychological changes within the dynamic of that team. If these exercises are used consistently across an organization, one might expect positive changes throughout the entire organizational culture. The intention is to boost psychological safety, communication, and motivation amongst teams facing barriers rather than throughout a whole organization. These exercises will also give individuals the tools to better confront external pressures from outside the organization but are not intended to help teams directly analyze phenomena like changing economies, political powers, and so on. By following these exercises, however, teams will build stronger interpersonal bonds and be able to have more psychological resistance and optimism against external factors, while necessarily being directed toward the interrogation of these factors. Ultimately, these tools are intended to counter the negative feelings of fear of failure within an organization, while boosting feelings of communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Key to this report is the close connection between improvisation principles and the key components of design thinking. As defined by the co-founders of IDEO and the Stanford d-school Tom Kelley and David Kelley (2013), design thinking is a human centered process which finds the "sweet spot" between "feasibility, desirability, and viability" (21). As a process for innovation and creative thinking, design thinking follows an iterative process which usually includes a process of "inspiration, synthesis, ideation and/or experimentation, and implementation" (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, 22). I have summarized the connection between improvisation and design thinking below, but these connections will be examined fully later in this report. To note,

---

[1] Credit for this phrasing goes to interviewee Hartley Jafine.

these are high-level summaries and do not examine the complexities related to both improvisation principles and design thinking concepts.

INSPIRATION: Using tools like empathy and observation, design thinkers connect to the needs, desires, and motivations of users to inspire new ideas (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, 22). Improvisation relies on the performer's ability to make strong observations and empathize with people and/or situations in order to create strong characters and interesting scenes.

SYNTHESIS: A complex challenge, synthesis involves using "sense-making" skills to identify the patterns, themes, and meanings from the data you have collected. Synthesis helps designers to find "fertile ground" for their idea (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, 23). One might see synthesis skills during a long form improvisation set, where the team brings together ideas from the first 25 minutes of the set to form a clean and interesting conclusion.

IDEATION AND EXPERIMENTATION: After synthesizing data, design thinkers create rounds of rapid prototypes, which essentially serve as "quick and dirty" prototypes to test ideas (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, 23-24). We see a clear connection here to improvisation, with most sets involving experimentation with various ideas, jokes, and character choices. In most forms, improvisers test a variety of jokes before choosing the main plot.

IMPLEMENTATION: The final step in the design process involves refining the design and preparing a roll-out to marketplace (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, 24). However, under design thinking this final step does not represent the end, as in most cases the implementation of product still involves a high level of monitoring, beta testing, and learning from user opinions. The implementation step connects to story resolution skills in improvisation, which involves reflection upon earlier concepts and converging upon one idea to wrap up the story.

RESEARCH AREA AND VALIDITY OF RESEARCH

Companies are constantly under pressure to innovate, improve, and change to remain relevant. In the post-2008 crash has led to increasing economic and job uncertainty and stagnant wage growth (Scott & Zweig, 2016, 552). Despite a risky and uncertain market, organizations do not shy away from introducing new innovations into the workplace to stay competitive (Caccioti et al., 2013, 303; Scott & Zweig, 2016, 553). Employees often face the brunt of the pressures associated with new innovations and feel the impacts of the stigma of failure most directly (Singh et al., 2015, 151). The pressure to move quickly combined with crippling feelings of risk aversion lead employees to be unwilling and unable to think through innovations, culminating in an organizational culture riddled with feelings of frustration, hopelessness, disillusionment, cynicism, and fear (Singh et al., 2015, 151; Gkorezis et al., 2014, 303; Scott & Zweig, 2016, 552). In an organization riddled with these negative feelings, low to no innovation, or products which are less impactful than they otherwise might have been since teams either must rush to market or do not push the envelop due to fear of failure.

Since organizations are not equipped with the skills to manage the human-centered challenges which accompany innovation, innovative processes fail to reach their full potential and leave employees frustrated and disillusioned (Singh et al., 2015, 151; Gkorezis et al., 2014,

303; Scott & Zweig, 2016, 552). This project results in a series of exercises which acknowledge these human-centered challenges and help companies overcome some cultural barriers to innovation, like the fear and doubt which occur because of fear.

These human centered exercises in Part Four are inspired by improv principles. Improvisation is, at its core, a humourous story telling method which inspires creativity, quick thinking, and listening among participants. Skilled improvisors can work seamlessly with team-mates to create dynamic and interesting scenes with no prior preparation or process (West et al., 2017, 205). Creative and humourous methods which align with the principles of improvisation have benefits which can directly counteract the negative impacts of fear of change, including emotional exhaustion and burnout (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014, 305), rigid thinking (Mathew & Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 15), group discord (Mathew & Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 16), stress (West et al., 2017, 284), risk aversion and psychological threats (West et al., 2017, 285). This project seeks to create task-related exercises which, in the short term, help increase task engagement and performance, and, in the long term, helps to expand the organization's cognitive abilities in areas like risk taking, psychological safety, and motivation.

$70 billion on corporate training

$15 billion on leadership development

$5000 a week on improvisation retreats

Where is this money going?

Improv techniques can be used to "to run a meeting, handle negotiations, spark a brainstorming session, and positively influence those around you" and can be highly beneficial to a company (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 2). The use of improvisational games in workplace settings is not a new concept. In fact, almost every brand-name sketch comedy group has some sort of corporate program, in which comedians lead business-people through various improvisational games and exercises to help hone their improvisation skills (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 1). This being so, these interventions are often temporary, and produce a "kick" of optimism that often fades soon after. Yet, firms are very willing to hire this kind of help. In 2013, U.S. firms spent over $70 billion on corporate training and approximately $15 billion on leadership development, with much of this money going to "intangibles training" wherein programs focus on building skills like leadership and creativity. Specifically, regarding improvisation training, companies often pay at least $5000 a week to send executives to programs run by comedy-improv groups (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 1). Companies clearly realize that there is a need for cultural change and are willing to invest significant amounts of capital into such improvements. Many of these interventions are centered around the use of improvisation games and techniques, indicating that corporations connect cultural improvements to improvisation training.

The literature on this subject clearly indicates that fear of change and change exhaustion have detrimental impacts to an organization's culture, and that creativity and humour can alleviate these symptoms. There exists a gap in the literature which demonstrates sustainable, long term solutions to these problems. In some cases, the research simply identifies the problem/ possible solutions, whereas others look at "short term" interventions (such as day-long improvisation workshops). This research will uncover new, repeatable, and sustainable workshop modules which are inspired by improv principles, rather than driven by improvisation games. As far as this researcher is aware, there is no published research that combines improv principles and design thinking to create methods to alleviate organizational culture barriers associated with fear of change/change fatigue.

	Existing Improvisation Interventions	Interventions Developed in this Project
Uses Design Thinking Concepts	Symbolically only	Deliberately, as core inspiration
Use of Improvisation Principles	Symbolically only	Deliberately, as core inspiration
Use of Improvisation Games	Yes, main tool	No, creates new exercises
Can be Re-iterated and Repeated	No, must rehire professionals	Yes, designed to be iterative
Can be Started Without Hiring Professionals	No, must hire professionals	Flexible, can be combined with professional intervention or done in isolation
Financially Accessible	Depending on company budget	Yes, exercises are free to use

2

CONTEXT SETTING

THE BOOGEYMAN: FEAR OF FAILURE IN THE WORKPLACE
WHERE DOES FEAR OF FAILURE COME FROM?

In his book *Thinking Fast and Slow,* psychologist Daniel Kahneman gives his account of *System 1* and *System 2,* two systems of the mind which control our behaviours. System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little to no effort or voluntary control. It helps us to perform simple tasks like physical orientation, emotional reactions, doing simple math, and so on (Kahneman, 18). System 2 allocates attention and effort to tasks which are mentally draining, and usually is associated with experiences like agency, choice, and concentration (Kahneman, 18). System 1 and System 2 often work together with ease, requiring each other to operate smoothly. System 1 continuously generates suggestions for System 2, such as impressions, feelings, intuitions and instinct (Kahneman, 21). Meanwhile, System 2 either adopts or adjusts to these suggestions, helping to dictate our behaviour, reactions, and action (Kahneman, 21). This division of labour works well most of the time.

System 1 is not without fault, however. It is riddled with biases because of its instincts and impulses. When left unchecked, System 1 can dictate responses and behaviour, making it difficult to break patterns or escape traditional understandings. At its best, System 1 acts a companion to System 2, guiding it and informing it of opportunities and potential trouble. At its worst, System 1 confuses System 2, making it nearly impossible to break away from instinctual feelings and ideas.

This language of System 1 and 2 acts as a strong foundation to contextualize our discussion of the origins of fear of failure. Since System 1 operates on instincts and feelings, it can be conditioned to become cautionary and fearful, ultimately leading System 2 to be risk averse. Suppose you touched a hot element on a stove. After one instance of doing so, System 1 will understand that red coils on an element are hot. The next time you see a hot element, your System 1 will send a warning to System 2, "Hey, that stove is hot! Do not touch it!" Your System 2 could take any number of actions to mitigate risk, including putting on oven mitts, turning off the stove, and so on. Now, consider the same situation, but there are no visual warning signs that the stove is hot. The coils are not red, and the dial is not turned. Yet, you touch the stove element, and your hand gets horribly burned. Now, System 1 says "all stove elements are dangerous". Since you have no way of telling when stoves are dangerous or not, you might take the excessive step of removing all stoves altogether.

As a result of System 2's cautiousness, you can never benefit from the use of stove because you are afraid of easily manageable risks. The first example is the ideal way for System 2 to recognize and mitigate risk, as it has clear warning signs and opportunities for preparation. However, in the workplace, it is often very difficult to spot warning signs of failure – in fact, sometimes there are not warning signs at all. As such, the second example points to the feelings of risk aversion individuals have in the workplace. After even a single failure in a project or innovation, System 1 becomes bruised because it had no way of warning System 2 of the incoming risk. To keep System 2 safe, System 1 more frequently recognizes and attempts to mitigate signs of failure. As a result, System 2 will operate in "safe mode" unconsciously failing

to investigate or delve into any "risky scenarios". Because of System 1 instinctual fears, System 2 will take a cautious approach and try to avoid mistakes in the future. Some risks are beneficial or necessary, however, System 2 precludes these risks from being taken because of its risk averse approach. This metaphor is dramatic but is positioned as such purposefully in order to tell the story of how the "System 1" of an organization can impact the "System 2" of the organization and vice versa.

Failure itself is pervasive, unavoidable, and generally understood to be a factor faced by most people in their lives (Singh et al., 2015,151). Despite this, companies face pressures to avoid failure at all possible costs, which causes immense pressure among employees. In some cases, this pressure is so high that employees face panic attacks, hospitalization, and even suicidal thoughts (Singh et al., 2015, 151). Fear of failure is a psychological factor which inhibits entrepreneurial behaviour and acts as a barrier to innovation (Cacciotti et al., 2013, 302). It was originally conceptualized as the *motive to avoid failure* as opposed to *the motive to achieve success* (McClelland et al., 1953). Initial conceptualizations also defined fear of failure as the "disposition to avoid failure and/or the capacity for experiencing shame and humiliation as a consequence of failure" and as the "disposition to become anxious about failure under achievement stress" (Cacciotti et al., 2016, 304; Atkinson and Litwin, 1960, 146). In more recent literature lack of confidence and risk aversion have been marked as key contributors to an individual or organizations fear of failure (Cacciotti et al., 2016, 303). Fear of failure does not necessarily mean that individuals avoid risk taking behaviour altogether, but they might also alter their behaviours to be more cautious, resulting in higher levels of bureaucracy, red tape, and risk management.

FEAR OF FAILURE ORIGINATES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.
1) feelings of embarrassment, shame, and ridicule,
2) feeling of low self esteem,
3) having an uncertain future ,
4) superiors or important individuals losing interest,
5) upsetting or embarrassing superiors or important individuals   (Cacciotti et al., 2016, 305).

Failure and risk often have negative connotations in business, and many organizations avoid them at all costs. Yet, failure and risk can also have incredibly motivating effects, but the potential of learning from failure is lost if failure is heavily stigmatized (Cacciotti et al., 2016, 302; Singh et al., 2015, 150). In a study where participants went through exercises to "meet", or acknowledge, their business failures, a majority or participants reported having learned a great deal by experiencing failure (Singh et al., 2015,162). They also discussed how the role of the "ego" made them want to protect themselves from failure, and how these defensive barriers insulated them from new knowledge. They found "meeting their failures" gave them insights which transformed their understanding of the experience of failure and its stigma (Singh et al., 2015, 162). For an organization to meet their failures, they would have to have a certain level of

"psychological capital" amongst employees to carry out a similar exercise (Singh et al., 2015, 162). Without this level of psychological capital, employees might become stuck in avoidance or denial phase, and be uncomfortable discussing the reality of failure.

The way a company treats the risk of failure is rooted within how its internal cognitive evaluations (personal ability, potential of the idea, self esteem) and the external social cues (financial security, ability to execute) responds to/embodies stigmas surrounding fear of failure. The external or internal responses by the organization results in learning processes for employees which in turn impacts experience of fear of failure (Cacciotti et al., 2017, 315). The organization's response to risk in this case calls upon their System 2, helping it understand the meaning of the internal and external responses to change and risk. Ultimately, this alters the organization's System 1 "gut reaction" to risk and failure, as System 1 uses the lessons learned to either frame failure as positive or negative. In this project, I will be focussing on altering the *internal cognitive biases* towards fear of failure, rather than altering external sources of pressure. Ultimately, by retraining internal cognitive evaluations of failure, and organization might be able to increase its level of "psychological capital", thus being able to face and challenge feelings of risk aversion and fear of failure.

THE IMPACTS OF FEAR OF FAILURE

At the core of conceptualizing fear of failure, either positively or negatively, is the position of the fear of failure in a larger social context. The feelings of fear and anxiety are not representations of the individual themselves, but rather the current physical and social environment which they work within. Self stigma entails a person discrediting themselves, thereby endorsing the negative beliefs of failure endorsed by society (Singh et al., 2015, 152). The stronger and often more pervasive social stigma involves discrimination at the hands of other parties because of specific stereotypes (Singh et al., 2015, 152). When a company's employees feel burdened with both self stigma and social stigma, it affects the individual's feelings towards the organization, other employees, and projects undertaken by the organization. For example, empirical evidence showed that top managers who oversaw a failed project were viewed as unsuitable, unskilled, and unlikely to get another chance at management (Singh et al., 2015,152).

The general understanding that failure is a negative pervades social systems in workplaces, creating and heightening stigmas associated with failure. We can see that this stigmatization creates a toxic environment wherein individuals who face failure may be ridiculed, bullied, or dismissed. Ultimately, the stigmatization surrounding failure causes individuals to shy away from taking risks, ultimately creating a

"Help! I've fallen into a toxic work environment and I can't get up!"

risk averse environment. Further, stigmatization creates rifts within teams, as individuals are more likely to place judgements upon those who take risks since the "status quo" of the company positions risk-takers as dangerous and unskilled. The stigma of failure creates discord and pessimism amongst employees, leading to disconnections and a more toxic work environment. In addition, a stigma-heavy workplace makes it difficult to establish the level of psychological safety or psychological capital needed to create safe spaces to learn about failure, making it increasingly difficult to implement an organizational culture shift.
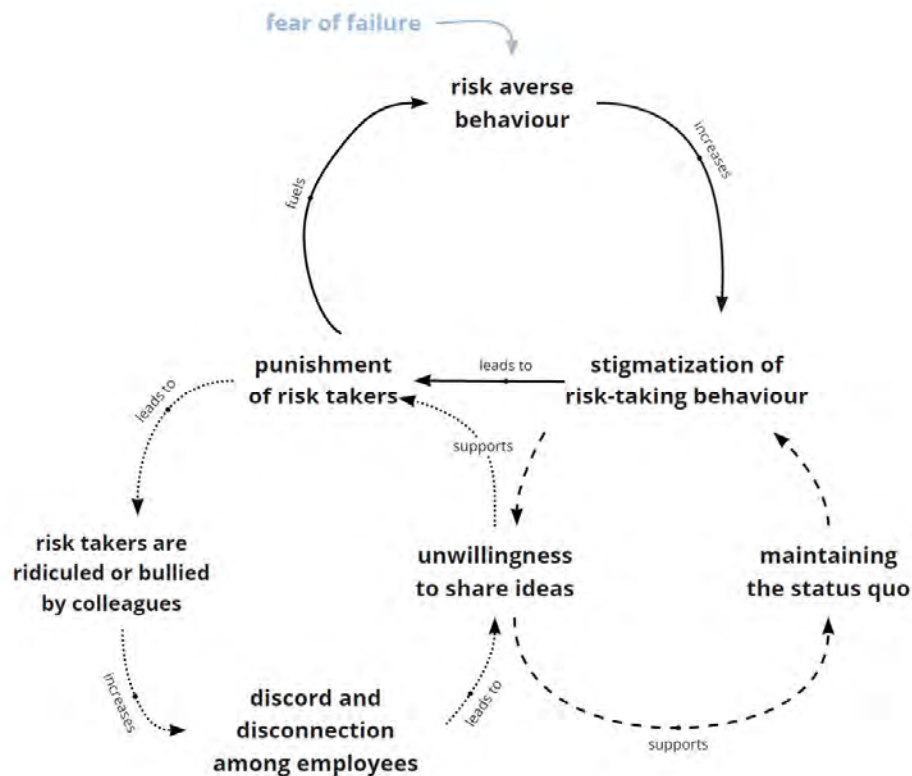
Figure 3: Risk aversion leading to social stigmatization

Organizational cynicism is described as a negative attitude toward an organization which results from a perception that the organization lacks integrity (Gkorezis et al., 2014, 305). Feelings of cynicism within an organization are characterized by negative beliefs about the organization, negative reactions to organizational experiences, and making negative statements about the organization (Scott & Zweig, 2016, 552). These factors are leading to higher feelings of disillusionment and uncertainty at work, which often expresses itself as cynicism (Scott & Zweig, 2016, 552). Researchers have found that cynicism extends beyond having stereotypically "grumpy" employees, but rather involves specific organizational experiences which contribute to the development of such attitudes. Organizational cynicism is connected to the self esteem and feelings of control that employees have, indicating how employees view themselves may have a direct influence on the development of their cynicism (Scott & Zweig, 2016, 553).

In a 2016 study, researchers described the ability for one to appraise one's worthiness, effectiveness, and capability as a person as "core self-evaluation" (CSE) (Scott & Zweig, 2016, 554). Those with high CSE generally look upon themselves positively, and see themselves as competent, confident, and able to influence their external environment. Researchers have found that there is a strong relationship between CSE and job satisfaction, work characteristics, and perceptions of organizational politics (Scott et al, 554). Individuals with low-CSE often adopt cynicism as a protective measure in order to preserve their sense of self and exert some control over their environment (Scott et al., 554). This study exemplifies how social stigmas related to fear of failure impact the individual worker, causing them to feel cynical about their work. In an environment where individuals are empowered, given agency, and make important decisions, their CSE is much higher and they feel happier. However, individuals adopt cynical attitudes when confronted with a work environment where their actions are heavily controlled due to "risk management" and their self-esteem is diminished due to social stigma surrounding failure. This study is especially interesting because it indicates that once employees feel connected to and in control of their work, they are less likely to be cynical about it. It is therefore possible to decrease cynicism by implementing exercises that increase feelings of CSE.
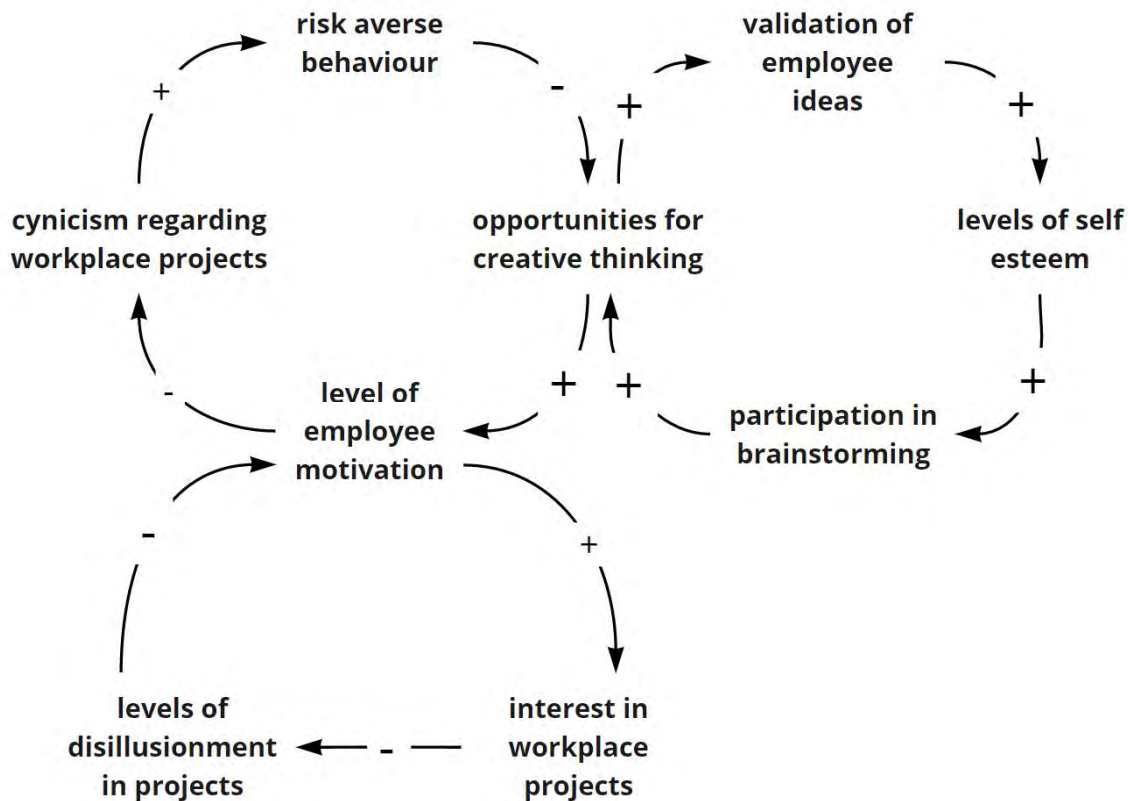
Figure 4: Impact of risk averse behaviour on employee behaviour

FEAR OF FAILURE IN CANADIAN WORKPLACES

Risk aversion plagues Canadian workplaces. A 2013 Deloitte study shows that despite the improving economy in Canada, Canadian CFOs planned to decrease spending. Compared to American counterparts, Canadian business owners are still less optimistic about their economic future (Walberg, 2013). American CFOs predicted a 10.9% increase in spending in the recovering economy, whereas Canadian CFOs predicted a 9.4% decrease (Walberg, 2013). It seems that the economic pressures associated with the 2008 economic crash are still being felt in Canada, resulting in prolonged anxiety and economic turmoil. According to Don Drummond, of the School for Policy Studies at Queen's University, Canada's caution is centered around its relative isolation from competition, which makes it more difficult to perceive the benefits of taking risks and easier to be overly cautious (Walberg, 2013). This intense aversion to trading increased risk for some other advantage leads to something Kahneman calls the "*precautionary principle*", wherein enhanced loss aversion infiltrates System 1 leading to intensely risk-averse attitudes and risk management (285). The precautionary principle may have benefits in certain products and industries, like medicine, operating systems, electric work, and so on. However, when it becomes too strong, it is crippling, leading to a risk adverse climate. Many Canadian businesses are operating from this precautionary state, leading them to be by paralyzed by risk-aversion.

48%
Canadian professionals
unhappy in their job

27%
Are highly engaged
in their work

54%
Millennials want to
switch careers

58%
Millennials would take less pay
for work which they value

(Sharma, 2017; ADP, 2016; Zukin & Szeltner, 2012)

CONFRONTING THE BOOGIEMAN: HUMOUR IN THE WORKPLACE

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMOUR?

A well known American social reformer named Henry Ward Beecher spoke of the importance of humour, saying that "a person without a sense of humour is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble in the road" (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 12). We can imagine that fear of failure is like a pebble, if not a large rock, in the road of business operations. If an employee's workplace fails to combat feelings of fear and doubt, they will feel each jolt along the road with violent force. In this section I cover the importance of humour in the workplace, and how it alleviates some of the tensions associated with fear of failure.

You will see throughout this section of the report that I will be mixing definitions of humour, play, creativity, and fun in amongst one another. This is purposeful, as my definition for "humour" in this project revolves around the feelings of joy associated with humourous moments. What is funny changes person to person, but the positive feelings and psychological changes associated with an individual's eventual laughter is consistent (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 13). These positive feelings also come about in moments of play, creativity, and fun. Further, humour is more likely to be found when one is playing, being creative, or having fun, so it stands that that my definition of humour would include the effects of these actions. Ultimately, for the purpose of this report, humour in the workplace will be defined as "the act of encouraging joyful moments" wherein joyful moments can be defined as "circumstances which facilitate moments of happiness, connection, or psychological safety".

> ### HUMOUR
> "The act of encouraging joyful moments, wherein joyful moments can be defined as circumstances which facilitate moments of happiness, connection, & psychological safety."

Throughout this paper I address the idea of "creativity" frequently. Creativity has often been confined to "artistic" fields, leaving it for the artists to be imaginative and the business-people to be serious. Creativity can be defined as "using your imagination to create something new in the world", and under this definition there is no reason that creativity should be left out of the workplace (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, 3). In fact, in the business world creativity manifests itself as innovation, yet creative thinking is often considered as a "nice to have", rather than a "need to have". In this section I will be covering not only the benefits of "humour" but also – based on the description provided in the previous paragraph – the positive impacts of creativity in the workplace.

The case for humour in the workplace is a strong one. A great deal of Fortune's *100 Best Companies to Work For* promote fun to enhance their workplaces, including corporate giants like Google and Starbucks (Tews et al., 2017, 46). Some researchers have gone so far as to call creativity as an ally to innovation, saying that creativity is as important to organizational survival as innovation (Serrat, 2017, 904). Research indicates that fun is significantly related to a host of factors in the workplace, including; job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, turnover intentions,

applicant attraction, job embeddedness, job performance, engagement, and employee retention (Tews et al., 2017, 47). When humour is present, individuals are less concerned with protecting their images, and are more open to exploration and to making mistakes (Tews et al., 2017, 47). A fun work environment creates an atmosphere which encourages friendly interactions without fear of negative repercussions and helps to create an energy which increases optimism and resilience (Tews et al., 2017, 28). A work environment which promotes fun can counter many of the anxieties typically associated with fear of failure, including concerns regarding social stigma and feelings of cynicism and disillusionment.

Humour has also been found to be a key part of adulthood and personal development.
- Play related tasks promote relaxation and mental renewal in adults, as well as increasing their task engagement and cognitive abilities.
- Adults who take part in play related tasks are found to do better in perspective-taking, sense-making, and creative problem solving.
- In addition, those who engage in task-related play are more likely to pursue mental well-being and opportunities for self actualization (West et al., 2017, 284).

A 2017 study examining the connection between creativity and play found that adult playfulness does not change over time, regardless of whether the adults were participating in play-based work or not (West et al., 2017, 289). That is to say that most adults have the capacity and willingness to engage in play-based interventions but are rarely given the opportunities to take part in such activities. When given the chance, the groups which engaged in workplace play found increased playfulness and creativity (West et al., 2017, 289). In this 2017 study, the groups who engaged in play took part in three improvisational workshops focussing on "short form" and "circle" games over the course of three weeks (West et al., 2017, 287). The study measured "playfulness" pre and post these interventions. It is interesting to note that the engagements stopped after the five-week study, and there was not a follow up on whether there were long-term changes in the organization as a part of the five-week intervention, much like most improvisation interventions. Ultimately, there is a connection between play-based work and creativity, which ultimately shows that repeatable exercises would help in maintaining the benefits of play-based work as documented in the 2017 study.

For individual employees

For the individual employee, humour can vastly improve their experience at work. Many studies indicate that humour can help people feel as if they are less afraid to face difficult problems, have less dysfunctional stress, have increased positive emotions, and have more self esteem (Cann et al., 453). Other studies found that humour helps decrease burnout by helping employees deal with problematic situations, reduce tension, and regain perspective on their jobs (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 15). Humour has also been linked to creative problem solving and can help to create an environment in which more original ideas are produced (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 16).

For individual employees, humour can directly counteract some of the negative impacts of organizational fear of failure. Considering humour helps introduce positive emotions and higher self esteem, we can see that it might directly counteract some of the feelings of self stigma

related to failure. Further, we see that humour increases employee's optimism and motivation, helping them push through stressful situations and have more positive experiences.

For the organization

Humour in the workplace is also beneficial for the organization.

- Humour has been directly linked to group cohesiveness, even during threatening or stressful situations. Groups who use humour feel closer together, increase harmony, collegiality, and inter-member attractiveness (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 16).
- Humour can facilitate better communication amongst teams, as it awakens positive emotions that enhance listening, understanding, and acceptance of messages.
- Using humour during mediation has been shown to help change perspectives, alter disabling perspectives, reframe relationships, and introduce new points of view (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 16).
- Through play-based methods, employees are given the opportunity to break away from expected workplace behaviour, giving them a "legitimate excuse" to behave in new ways. This ultimately increases their positive feelings towards the organization. (West et al., 2017, 285).

Here, we can see direct links to improving organizational feelings towards fear of failure and humour. These kinds of comfortable relationships promote feelings of psychological safety and might improve the organization's approach to failure and stress.

Several experimental studies indicate that there is a positive relationship between play and creativity. As little as twenty minutes of playful improvisation exercises increased college students' creative performance, and other students scored higher on creativity tests after imaginative role-playing games (West et al., 2017, 284). Play-based work is strongly connected to mitigating the fear of failure, since mistakes are welcomed during play, and the players are only limited by their own imagination (West et al., 2017, 284). By providing a safe space to take risks, play-based work increases levels of psychological safety by fostering new ideas and allowing employees to deviate from the expected behaviours as defined by social stigmas. Play helps to break social barriers amongst groups and has been shown to help employees make mistakes without fear of how group members might respond.

Overall, a playful work environment can create happier, healthier, and less stressed employees. These positive feelings ultimately might lead to better social interactions, promote feelings of safety, and ensure better creative thinking and problem solving. By encouraging an environment which is humourous, teams find increases in psychological safety and psychological capital. Further, employees often have higher levels of resilience, and are apt to bounce back from rejection and failure. The supportive environment combined with the increased creative thinking makes workplaces more engaging, exciting, and welcoming, lowing rates of disillusionment and increasing employee retention.

INTRODUCING A CULTURE OF HUMOUR

Introducing a culture of play into an organization can be met with significant problems. In many ways, it is the responsibility of the management to ensure that employees are not suffering from the ill effects of toxic corporate culture (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 12). One of the most significant challenges about introducing humour into the workplace is that it is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and does not readily lend itself to a single, generalized definition (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 13). It is difficult to provide a comprehensive definition of humour, or to understand what employees might find engaging or humourous. Considering the complex relationship that people have with humour, it is difficult to introduce a single kind of humour into an organization.

In the previous section I provided my definition of humour for the purposes of this project, and my implementation of humour in the workplace does not include introducing comedy that everyone will find hilarious. Rather, it involves introducing *elements* of humour, like levity, play, and creativity, and combining them with improvisation principles to create a workplace environment which reaps similar benefits to one which is humourous. The purpose of this project is not to create a comedy guide which an individual could pick up and get guaranteed laughs, but to use the mechanisms associated with the joy of a humour to create a workplace that feels safer, more communicative, connected, and joyful.

It is important to note that if humour is introduced into the workplace that the humour being introduced is healthy humour, rather than unhealthy humour. Healthy humour benefits all parties involved and can help lead to a positive state of mind and better communication (Cann et al., 2009, 453). Affiliative humour is a positive kind of humour, which includes joking around to amuse others. The humour in this instance is non-hostile and non-threatening and can help amuse others. Affiliative humour has been shown to reduce interpersonal tension, and acts as a "social lubricant" which can bring people together (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 20). Self enhancing humour refers to a humourous or "positive" outlook on life, wherein individuals do not become distressed when faced with adversity. This kind of humour acts as a coping mechanism and can help individuals maintain a positive outlook on life even when faced with stress and adversity (Cann et. al, 2009, 456). Unhealthy humour leads to negative emotions for those involved in the joking process. Aggressive humour is one kind of unhealthy humour, which manipulates, ridicules or criticize others. It uses methods like teasing, sarcasm, ridicule, and potentially offensive forms of humour (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 20). In fact, studies indicate that individuals cannot perceive the difference between benevolent and non-benevolent jokes when these jokes are delivered aggressively (Cann et. al, 2009, 461). Self-defeating humour involves self-deprecation is an attempt to amuse or gain acceptance from others. This kind of humour rarely produces positive effects in an organization because it produces uncomfortable or negative feelings towards an individual.

It is important to draw a distinction between these healthy and unhealthy humour for two reasons. First, the lessons learned from positive humour will be used to inspire the exercises I develop at the end of the report. Understanding how to implement positive humour and its benefits ameliorates the choices one must make when introducing humour into the workplace. Second, understanding the difference between positive and negative humour may act as a litmus test in one's personal or professional life, helping to understand where the humour they use lands. Further, unhealthy humour in the workplace indicates negative feelings regarding to organization itself and can act as a signal to managers that a change might need to be made. If you notice that your organization's humour often leans towards unhealthy humour, it may be time to implement cultural and team building changes to understand where these negative emotions might be coming from.

Creativity can not be turned on and off with a switch, which makes it very difficult to inspire creative thinking within an organization. Importantly, creativity flourishes within an organization which supports open ideas, inspires personnel, and maintains innovative workspaces (Serrat, 2017, 905). Creativity within an organization does not happen exclusively and tacitly in one individual's head -- it is not enough to have the "creative person" on the team. Rather, creativity must be cultivated within the organization. The organization must engage in context-setting, knowledge-sharing opportunities, altering organizational relationships, and engage in human-centered research within the company to help establish the capability for creativity within the organization (Serrat, 2017, 905). It is not enough to simply hold "fun" workshops or to hire a "creative person", but rather to implement an internal cultural shift moving towards an environment which consistently involves play, fun and humour. This will cultivate an environment which allows for better communication, team bonding, and increased psychological safety, thus creating a scenario where creativity can flourish. The exercises developed as a part of this project will help to cultivate such an environment.

"Boy, isn't it fun to work in an environment which fulfills us creatively?'

BEFRIENDING THE BOOGIEMAN: IMPROVISATION, RISK, AND FEAR

When people think about "improvisation" or "improvising", they often picture a loud, panicked method where people make decisions based on "gut instinct". Good improvisers rarely make decisions from a place of panic, but instead a place of active thinking where they quickly and honestly explore possibilities, synthesize available information, and introduce a response to a challenge in real time (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 5). Improvisation is not about saying the first thing that comes to one's head, but rather introducing the ability for individuals to give agile answers, recognize challenges and adapt to changes. Ultimately, individuals can call upon their improvisational training to help them perform tasks to a higher degree.

Central to this study is the close connection between failure and improvisation. In a corporate setting, individuals tend to adopt "mental framing", wherein they think quickly about the parameters and limitations of an idea (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 139). By switching to this point of view, organizations, often unintentionally, stop the flow of ideas. It becomes essentially impossible to explore outside of these parameters because of the strict lines of the mental frame. When the feeling of failure is so deeply ingrained in corporate culture, it often becomes replaced with learned helplessness. Like the feelings of disillusionment and lack of motivation discussed before, learned helplessness leaves employees accepting that nothing will ever change, and that there is no need for them to participate in improving their workplace (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 218). When organizations are crushed by external and internal stigmas associated with failure, this frame becomes increasingly smaller and the feelings of learned helplessness increase. In many ways, improvisational thinking flips this script. For an improvisation scene to succeed, an individual must be comfortable with taking risk and accepting the possibility of failure. Improvisors must operate outside of these parameters to explore ideas.

An improviser should always be willing to take risks, since improvisational comedy is, by nature, an artform which is about change, evolution, and failure. Since each scene is a new story, it is impossible to fall into patterns and rely on "what has worked in the past", which forces the improvisor to be constantly trying something new and taking risks. Improvisers are always asked to be present in the moment, giving way to uncertainty and suspending judgement (Ben, 2013). This mindset is one which is difficult to adopt in the workplace, since the fear of failure facilitates ritualistic behaviour which is difficult to break. Workplaces which can adopt a mindset which embraces constant change and evolution is one which is prepared to move forward, adapt, and think more creatively (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 193). Moving

towards embracing failure is not simple to do, but through the exercises developed in this project, this capability may be built amongst teams.

By believing in and practicing improvisation principles, individuals and organizations can become filled with creative confidence. As defined by Tom Kelley and (2013), creative confidence is "a way of experiencing the world that generates new approaches and solutions", ultimately leading to a new perspective and an improved toolkit (6). Creative confidence can help improve most people's satisfaction in their workplace and does not require a career change or external assistance (Kelley & Kelly, 9). Ultimately, improvisation training gives individuals the capacity to approach and do their work from a new point of view, which ultimately changes how they interact with their colleagues and improve the lives of their clients.

In this section, I discuss the main benefits an individual or team can expect to gain after regular improvisation practice. These benefits build skills like communication, team bonding, self esteem, creative problem solving, and so on. One can directly mitigate the feelings of fear of failure by building skills connected to improvisation principles. These principles either counter the negative effects related to the fear of failure or compliment the main benefits of humour and creativity. Below I summarize the main impacts of fear of failure and humour and creativity.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF FEAR OF FAILURE

Feelings of embarrassment, shame, and ridicule

Feeling of low self esteem

Having an uncertain future

Superiors or important individuals losing interest

Upsetting or embarrassing superiors or important individual

THE MAIN BENEFITS OF HUMOUR AND CREATIVITY FOR INDIVIDUALS

Less dysfunctional stress

Increase in positive emotions

Higher self esteem

New perspective on job

Creative problem solving

THE MAIN BENEFITS OF HUMOUR AND CREATIVITY FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Enhance listening, understanding, and acceptance of messages

Increased psychological safety amongst teams

Introduce new points of view

ENERGY AND ATTITUDE

Yes, and...

Perhaps the most fundamental and well-known rule of improv is saying "yes, and...". This rule states that you must always accept what your partner is suggesting, and then add to it. This rule requires active listening and shows that you care about other people's ideas (Goodman, 2008, 4). The rule facilitates feelings like listening and trust, which ultimately leads to more creativity, innovation, and enthusiasm for work (Goodman, 2008, 4). Within the phrase, "yes, and", we see a very clear mission statement. In business, "yes" shows respect, focus, and thoughtfulness towards someone's idea. "And" allows you to build upon other ideas or bridge into your own perspective (Anderson, 2008, 7). The "Yes, and" principle is deeply connected to the inspiration stage of design thinking, since it sets the stage for observation and opens the group up to new ideas (Kelley & Kelley, 2013, 81). "Yes, and" is a statement which promises to hear and build upon ideas, starting both the improvisation and design thinking processes.

"Am I dressed as a chicken? Yes, and I look great!"

Importantly, saying "yes and..." either within or outside of improvisation scenes does not mean that one must wholeheartedly agree with the idea, but rather it creates a mutual understanding that other's ideas are worth hearing and exploring. In advanced improvisation scenes, in fact, audiences will regularly see performers engaging in a technique called "aggravating the want". When a performer aggravates the want, they actively are taking steps to ensure what they another actor wants are not being fulfilled. A good example of this is the sloth in the children's movie Zootopia. The sloth works at the Department of Motor Vehicles. The main characters need to trace a license plate, are in a rush and filled with anxiety. In one of the funniest scenes in the movie, the sloth aggravates their want by taking an exorbitant amount of time to fill the request. The sloth is slow moving, makes mistakes constantly. If this was an improv scene, it might seem like the sloth is failing to say "yes, and..." in the scene because he is aggravating the want. In this case, aggravating the want *is* using the "yes, and..." rule, since the sloth is exploring the offer.

The main benefits of "Yes, and..." are as follows:

- Team members feel their ideas matters and are worth listening to.
- Leaders to constantly listen to other ideas, opening new opportunities for creativity and innovation since ideas are more likely to be readily shared.
- Shifts the conversation quickly from negative to supportive.
- Shows "respect for colleagues, respect for the idea that a group's common goal takes precedence over any personal agenda, and respect for the process of communication and idea sharing" (Kuhlan & Crisafulli, 2017, 28).
- Inspires "mindful communication", wherein conversations are held by individuals who are prepared to be present and participate.
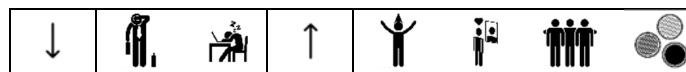
Support and Trust

A key factor for most improvisation troupes are feelings of support and trust. These feelings go together for performers, because they must trust that their fellow players will support them. There is an adage in improv that there is no single star in a group, but rather the group itself is the star (Halpern et. al, 1994, 22). By creating an environment where there is a mentality that no single member carries all the team, it is possible to counter burnout culture since there is a better balance of responsibilities. This shared responsibility also increases buy-in and motivation within the team, since team members now feel more connected to the success since they are actively contributing to the team (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 104). In a workplace setting, a shared ownership of a task founded on mutual respect gives employees agency over their work. Instead of a mindset wherein their failure constitutes the team's failure, or another individual's success indicates that another employee did not achieve the same level of success, we shift to a mindset where the group wins and loses as a team.

A situation where a lack of trust and support result in failure was in Ashlee Simpson's 2004 Saturday Night Live (SNL) appearance. During her musical performance, something went wrong, and the incorrect track played. Unsure what to do, Simpson did an embarrassing dance on stage. At the end of the show, Simpson stated "I feel so bad, my band started playing the wrong song" ("Ashlee Simpson on SNL", Youtube). Here, we see an example of lack of support. When the wrong track started to play, Simpson's band did not acknowledge the mistake and kept playing. They could have done the silly dance with her, walked offstage as well, and waved down a technician. Instead, they let Simpson take the fall. Similarily, Simpson blamed her band for the mistake, rather saying "something went wrong, we are sorry". In this case, we see a team failing to support one another, resulting an awkward and embarrassing moment.

It is possible for situations like the Simpson SNL episode to play out in regular workplaces. Imagine situations of "pointed fingers" when a group fails during a presentation, or a member of senior management grilling one member of a team about an idea and no one else stepping in to help. Teams which rely on support and trust would have the tools to counter such situations. For an improvisation troupe to put on successful scenes, there must be a mutual trust and understanding among players that they all have the same agenda in mind and will promise to work together to create an entertaining product (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017; Campbell, 2014, 41). This idea ties directly to the "yes, and..." rule, since constantly supporting and listening to teammate's ideas fosters an environment of support and trust.

The main benefits of "Support and Trust" are as follows:
- Trusting and supporting employees is one fundamental step in fostering a creative work environment.
- Workers who feel unsupported have lower feelings of embarrassment because of their lack of agency over their work.
- Creating an environment where workers feel supported and trust one another directly counters many of the ill effects of fear of change.
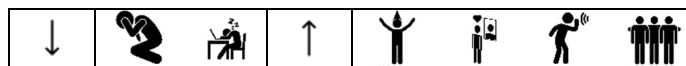
Attitude and Energy

A workplace which supports a joy and optimism is generally more productive and enjoyable and makes it less likely for employees to burn out (Goodman, 111). This joyful attitude is difficult to cultivate, especially in high-stakes or high-stress environments. One way in which improvisation principles introduce joy into the workplace is not through constant laughter, but by rewiring the choices employees make. In workplaces where employees feel undervalued and unheard, they are more like to become cynical and adopt "just make it to Friday" attitudes (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 77). Numerous academic studies show that when are approach your work negatively, you perform negatively (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 77). This observation seems obvious yet is often overlooked in many organizations in favour of managing risk and meeting timelines. This is not to say that employees must be forced to act happy, nor that feelings of worry or stress should not be talked about. In fact, this is saying the opposite. Feelings of negativity must be expressed, discussed, and dealt with before they transform into feelings of cynicism towards the company. By taking control of the energy in the room, employers can rewire the attitude within the workplace and therefore increase the chances of completing a project successfully.

It is not only the typical high energy "circle games" which position improvisation principles to energize teams and re-orient attitudes. Certainly, the physical energy of a workplace is important. Through the "chameleon effect", others in a meeting will subconsciously mimic they energy level of others (Bermant, 2013, 2). Rather than these typical energy boosting games, the core improvisational principle of creating purpose and stakes is central to fostering positive attitudes. When one first learns improv, one should expect to learn the game "One, Two, Three". In this game, players follow a simple set of rules. One, establish a location and action. Two, establish a relationship. Three, establish a conflict. This introductory game has fundamental rules which improvisors use for their entire career. You must establish what you are doing, who you are doing it with, and why you are doing it. You must create value within the scene by establishing *why what you are doing is important.* The audience is seeing this scene for a reason; what is that reason? A scene which focuses on a pair of estranged sisters hiking to the top of a mountain to find their long-lost father is far more interesting than a scene of two strangers learning how to make lattes. In one scene, there are stakes, purpose, and relationships. In the other scene, there are no stakes and we are watching a scene which involves an activity which we have seen thousands of times before.

This simple rule of establishing relationships and stakes creates energy because players now have a purpose for being in the scene, and audiences have a reason to care about the scene. This relates directly to the design thinking principle of "sense making". By giving employees context regarding a project, they can have a more meaningful experience. Imagine, for example, a recurring Tuesday brainstorming session in which employees feel as if each session does not result in progress. By following the "establishing" principle, employees understand that there is a strong purpose as to why the meeting is being held in the first place. This goal allows for employees to feel as if they have a stake in the meeting and are not there simply out of obligation. Interestingly, though frequency of meetings might not change, giving

employees a specific goal and reason behind the meeting has been found to re-energize participants and counter feelings of frustration and cynicism (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 128).

The main benefits of "Attitude and Energy" are as follows:

- Helps to create purpose within meetings and projects, countering feelings of frustration with the process.
- Mitigates feelings of fear of failure by directly telling employees the metrics they must follow to succeed.
- By outlining "what success looks like" at the beginning of a project, employees understand how their contributions impact the process and that certain mistakes do not constitute failure.

CREATIVITY AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Rapid Problem Solving

Many companies have a goal to "innovate" but become focused on the assumption that they will come up with one "good idea" which will solve all their problems. To ultimately achieve this innovation under intense time pressure, organizations are often forced to cling quickly to the first good idea they come across, often "lowering the bar" for innovation (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 125). It is important that companies do not rush into the solution step, but rather spend more time on group ideation. In fact, this is one way that design thinking and improvisation are deeply connected. Design thinking allocates up to 80% of the problem-solving process to "problem finding" and ideation, so that only the last part of the design process is focussed on a solution. Through the improvisation principles of divergent and convergent thinking, companies may be able to more effectively brainstorm solutions for their problems, overcome cynicism about the innovation process, and ultimately create products which are more innovative than they otherwise might have been.

When most individuals think of group ideation, they think of brainstorming. Brainstorming is a process where improvisational thinking is required and is one process which is improved be failure (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 125). Great brainstorming sessions require all individuals in the room to understand that the ideas being given can be outlandish, counterintuitive, controversial, imaginative, and so on. Without a supportive team environment, some of the best ideas are kept back because they might be dismissed as irrelevant. When the fear of failure is eliminated, and employees are encouraged to fail early and often, they have a greater chance in succeeding in the task they have been given.

Improvisation scenes often follow a format of divergent and convergent thinking. Divergent thinking offers choices, simply called "offers" in improv scenes. Divergent thinking allows ideas to radiate from a single point of origin, like a problem, challenge, question, or need (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 138). The more divergent improvisors get from the point of origin, the more "offers" they must play with and the more interesting the scene becomes. Creating new offers is high risk, high reward. For example, imagine an improvisation set where the point of origin was the relationship "recently exes". Right away, we would expect a scene of two recently divorced

bitter exes. We could then diverge to some more unique scene. For example, a scene about the letter "x" being created for the first time, becoming a "recent x". This is high risk, high reward. Will the audience get the joke? Will there be a funny storyline? Will my teammates support a more outlandish scene? Often, in an improvisation set, this risk turns into reward and performers are rewarded for their risks. This creates more opportunities for divergence and heightens the pleasure of the scene.

Regular improvisation practice can help to sharpen the skills for effective divergent brainstorming. Improvisors can quickly come up with a spectrum of ideas on a single point of origin and can often use their imaginations to follow through and explore that idea to its fullest. After diverging from a point of origin and creating many new ideas, any brainstorming session must move towards convergent thinking to solve the problem. Using convergent thinking, a team takes the time to focus ideas, remove "bad ideas", find the "best answer" and fine-tune concepts into workable solutions (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 138). If a group has established a climate of open communication and focus, the convergence phase is often very quick, as the team can work together seamlessly to prioritize what ideas are best. The divergent thinking phase is best for creative thinking, while the convergent phase takes that thinking and turns it into a new idea of a driver for innovation.

The main benefits of "Rapid Problem Solving" **are as follows**:
- Identify opportunities using divergent and convergent thinking,
- Problem solving not only becomes quicker – since worker's minds are sharpened – but more meaningful.
- Makes the problem-solving process a team effort. With an understanding that the divergent process means moving away from the point of origin, teams can tap into "yes, and…" thinking to explore all possibilities.

Empathy

The ability to feel the emotions of others is a powerful leadership trait, which engenders trust and builds supportive relationships quickly. By empathizing with others, leaders are more able to commit to and relate to their employees (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 36). Empathizing is also a core principle of design thinking (Dam & Siang, 2018). Empathy is crucial to a human-centered process and allows designers to set aside their own assumptions and gain insight into users and their needs (Dam & Siang, 2018). Empathizing is an important step in product development, since understanding of the users, their needs, and the problems can greatly improve products and speed up their development.

In improvisation, empathy is a core skill which improvisors use during character creation. They use these skills in two ways. First, they imagine themselves in the circumstances of a character. Second, they imagine that character in a certain situation. Using their empathy skills, improvisors can effectively take on a character's personality, physical nature, and moral stature (Bermant, 2013, 2). When taking on character development, players must ask themselves the

"magic if". Essentially, they must constantly ask "what if" during certain scenarios. They must ask themselves questions like "what if this character met a person opposite to them", "what if this character found their perfect job", and so on. By following the "magic if" rule, the improvisor can inhabit their character is better able to inhabit their character authentically (Bermant, 2013, 2). By seeing the world through their character's eyes, improvisors are constantly practicing empathy.

Empathy is as central to design thinking as it is to improvisation. In design thinking, empathy is often defined "developing a deep understanding of the problems and realities of the people you are designing for", which helps you better understand their needs, roles, and interactions (Dam & Siang, 2018, par. 2). Unlike traditional marketing, empathic research and design is not as concerned with specific facts, but rather their motivations and thoughts (Dam & Saing, 2018). Empathising is so core to the design thinking process that is often considered the first stage of the process. By observing, engaging, and empathising with the people you are designing for you come to understand their experiences and can ultimately create a more human centered product. Both improvisation and design thinking rely on these keen observations, and without deeply empathising with their users both processes ultimately fail.

The main benefits of "Empathy" are as follows:
- Gaining a better understanding of the user's desires and needs.
- Creating products that users want, versus what you think they might want.
- Inspiring connections to your brand, as users feel as if your products "speak to them".
- Better team dynamics, as empathising becomes common practice in the workplace.

GROUP CONVERSATIONS, COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTION
Listening

Perhaps one of the most essential skills one can gain from improvisational training is the ability to actively or intensely listen to others. Listening is often an undervalued skill yet is one of the most important collaborative tools a person can have (Goodman, 2008, 3). Many people engage in public speaking classes, presentation classes, and so on, but rarely does one see "public listening" classes available. Active listening shows that you not only care what the other person has to say, but that you are ready to add to it and expand upon what they are saying. Without engaging in active listening, we unconsciously drift away from the task at hand and begin to think of other tasks (Campbell, 2014). Learning to listen is of utmost importance, since without active listening there is no reacting, adapting, or engaging taking place.

An important distinction in this case is that hearing, and listening are two vastly different skills. Instead of listening to respond, individuals must learn to listen to engage with the words that are being said (Halpern et al., 1994, 39). A skilled improvisor must have the skills to listen to what is being said, but also what is being left unsaid. When one takes the time to consider their response, it is usually more intelligent and insightful rather than simply "knee-jerk" (Halpern et al., 1994, 39). Further, in an improvisation scene, the listening process never stops. After giving a response to their scene partner, the player must effectively evaluate the other player's reaction. How did their body language change? Did a new emotion come across their face? Where did their eyes look when I said that? In improvisation, listening is a full body process, and involves evaluating and analyzing your scene partner's actions constantly.
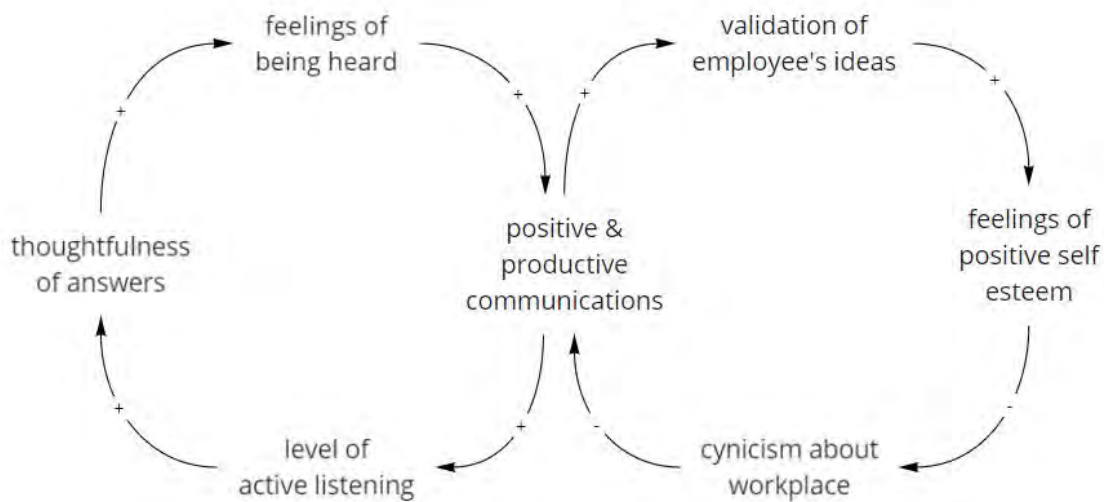
Figure 5: Cycle of Active Listening

The main benefits of "Listening" are as follows:
- Active listening involves a high emotional intelligence, as one must listen to what others are saying through the words, actions, and emotions.
- When one is actively listening to their partner, responses are more meaningful, honest, and relevant, and often can be removed of biases which they otherwise might have had.
- Makes the problem-solving process a team effort. With an understanding that the divergent process means moving away from the point of origin, teams can tap into "yes, and…" thinking to explore all possibilities.
- Listening upholds an environment where people are unafraid share their ideas, ultimately increasing opportunities for creative thinking or innovation.
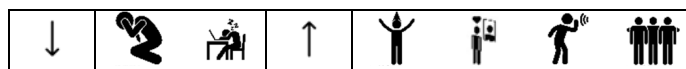
Shared Goals

Without a foundation of support and trust, teams' members can often feel afraid to speak up, since their input may not be valued (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 109). Establishing a base of support allows one to lay the foundation for meaningful communication, but becoming connected and bonded with teammates is a fundamental step in establishing strong group communication. Developing a level of tacit communication amongst teammates in an organization creates unique bonds and strengthens feelings of bonding, but also increases the potential for creative ideation due to an increase in psychological safety (Bermant, 2013, 2). This tacit communication increases feelings of belonging and value amongst teams, since they can feel as if they are a part of something (Bermant, 2013, 2).

"Raaaaararraagh"
–Chewbacca on the importance of clear communication in a team

In improvisation, these shared goals are often referred to as "hiving a hive mind". This does not mean everyone has a uniformity of thought, but rather that the team has a shared understanding of their goals. A hive mind can also significantly increase the psychological safety within teams, since there is an active "safety net" for members. They can rely upon their team to have their back regardless of how unusual their idea might be. For example, in example of the "recently exes" scene I spoke about earlier, the improvisor with the idea that they should play the letter "x" could confidently walk onstage, make the physical shape of an "x" without hesitation. Unlike the situation which I described before, the feelings of fear that their idea may not be understood is not there. The hive mind builds on the feelings of "yes and…" because individuals do not only feel like their idea will be supported, but it will be understood. If team has a strong enough hive mind, at least one other teammate will quickly join the other player onstage, supporting their idea by physically making another "x" and starting the scene.

This "hive mind" is created by exposure to one another, and through the personal bonds shared by teammates. It is possible to create these shared experiences amongst teammates, but for best results requires putting individuals outside of their comfort zone since uncomfortable experiences galvanize the group and help them to become stronger as a team (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 205). This is one reason why improvisation troupes often form strong hive-mind, as they are constantly being put in uncomfortable and risky situations considering the unscripted nature of their shows. There are certainly barriers to building a strong team bond amongst workplace groups, including pressures of time, lack of enthusiasm, interpersonal conflicts, differing interests, and so on.

The main benefits of "Shared Goals" are as follows:
- Facilitates a tacit understanding, short hand, and bond. Heightens feelings of belonging in the workplace (Mathew and Vijayalakshmi, 2017, 16).
- Can help to directly counter workplace cynicism, making way for opportunities to counter feelings of fear.

BREAKING DOWN SILOS & POWER DYNAMICS

Flexibility & Adaptability

The rapid rate of change in business results in an overwhelming amount of new information which is readily available to workers. From this rapid change and uncertainty rise an immediate need for adaptability and risk taking (Shochet, 2013; Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017). When a workplace loses adaptability and flexibility, silos arise and communication between departments falls. Further, workplaces which fail to be flexible uphold rigid and negative attitudes, including sentiments like "that is not my job" or "that is just the way that it is" (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 162). Though encouraging adaptability within an organization will not make roles and boundaries unneeded or meaningless, it does promote more cross-functional teams with higher inter-team communication. Those who can readily adapt to situations also have a unique skill wherein they can control negative perceptions and alter their actions accordingly. When adaptable people encounter negative situations or complicated problems, they are more able to respond in a positive way and rewire the perception (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 185). This skill is of the utmost importance within cynical organizations, so that negative situations can be looked at from a new perspective. By adopting an adaptable mindset, organizations can more easily tweak circumstances until they reach a desired outcome.

There is a common phrase in improv performance, "listen, react, adapt". Previously in this section I covered the concept of active listening. I also covered the "react" step, which is the "Yes" of the "Yes, and…" rule. Adapt, of course, is the third part of this phrase. In an improvised scene, one can never become too attached to their idea. Consider, for example, a scene where Person A is miming standing in the rain with an umbrella. Person B enters the scene and thinks the umbrella is a bouquet of flowers and says, "Wow, thanks for the flowers sweetheart!" Person A must now "listen, react, adapt" and adjust their plans for the scene. No longer are they a frustrated businessman standing in the rain, but instead they are an apologetic husband holding a bouquet of flowers. Adapting is an essential principle of improv. We can see this scene playing out in corporate offices, but perhaps in a slightly different way. Imagine a group working on a tough project and new information is introduced. Perhaps this is a news story, an idea from someone on the team, or a change in a competitor's product. Instead of recognizing the changes and adapting the plan, many organizations fall into a pattern of negative or dismissive thinking, positing that these changes are not applicable to their situation. This kind of dismissive behaviour can be as detrimental to a project as Person A blocking Person B's idea.

The main benefits of "Flexibility & Adaptability" are as follows:

- Teams can become more agile and responsive to new information or challenges.
- Teams flourish during ideation and experimentation phases, as they can more readily engage in experiments if they have a more adaptable and relaxed attitude.
- Teams become more flexible, allowing for better collaboration and communication.
- By fostering an environment with strong adaptability, teams are better able to respond to changes and organizations can fight feelings of fear of change.
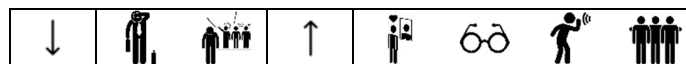
Surrender your Plans

The idea of flexibility and adaptability is intimately related to the idea of "Surrendering Your Plans". Surrendering your plans can be one of two things. First, connected to the idea of flexibility above, is surrendering your ideas if a new idea comes along. In both workplace interactions and in improvisation scenes, you might be tempted to negate new information simply because you are attached to an original idea (Goodman, 2008, 5). Being open to new ideas allows for a more collaborative, enjoyable, and creative process, compared to one where individuals are resistant to change (Goodman, 2008, 6). Must like the "yes, and…" rule, surrendering your plans does not mean throwing away hard work at the sign of trouble or change. Rather, it means finding opportunities to listen to new ideas, or combine ideas and thus exploring new ideas which arise at the intersection of ideas (Goodman, 2008, 6). Consider the example of Person A and Person B above. Imagine Person A had already established that it was raining in a line of dialogue when he came onstage, saying something like "Boy, another rainy day in Toronto." Perhaps Person B did not hear this offer, but in any case, comes into the scene and says "Wow, thanks for the flowers sweetheart!" Person A *could* surrender his earlier plans and accept the new offer. This scene would be fine, and the audience would likely forgive the earlier mistake. A better scene, however, is if Person A combines the two ideas, saying something like "Yes, and I ran five kilometers to your apartment in the pouring rain to give them to you!" By surrendering his original idea, Person A has eased some embarrassment and tension. But by accepting the new information and collaborating ideas, Person A has welcome Person B into a scene which is more creative *because* of Person B's input—not despite it.

Secondly, surrendering your plans can also look like surrendering attachments and past mistakes. This is one of the most fundamental rules from improv which can have powerful impacts on attitudes at work. Improvisation practice teaches key principles of self-awareness and self-compassion, since risk and failure are central to improvisation scenes. Throughout this section I have been describing scenes which, from the outside, are seemingly easy to perform and failproof. However, improvisation sets are riddled with failures and mistakes, with improvisors constantly forgetting to adhere to rules, mishearing offers, or having an off-night. As an improviser with a ten-year long career, I can not begin to count the number of mistakes I have made. What complicates these constant failures is the unforgiving and rapid process of an improvisation set. Often lasting more than twenty minutes and including just five players, performances are unforgiving to those who can not surrender to their past mistakes (Goodman, 1994, 163). Improvisation is a mental sport, and a bruised ego is as bad as a torn muscle. Improvisors must surrender themselves to these past mistakes and understand that bad scenes are out of their control. If they do not, they are ultimately doomed to continue to make the same mistakes (Goodman, 2004, 146).

The main benefits of "Surrendering Your Plans" are as follows:

- Teams have higher levels of internal cognitive evaluations.
- Teams have lower levels of social stigma associated with failure.
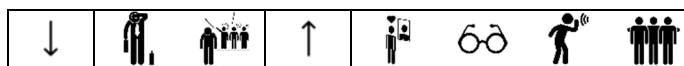
Sharing and Shifting Power

Employees feel cynical about their work when they perceive their efforts as not having an impact on the actions of the organization, which ultimately leads them to have less entrepreneurial spirit and creative energy (Cacciotti et al., 2016, 306). Much of this cynicism comes from their lack of power and agency over the decisions that they make, leading to lower feelings of self-esteem (Scott & Zweig, 2016, 204). Much of the power to combat these feelings lies in the hands of the leaders of the company, who can use traits like positive humour and creative interventions to empower employees. In many organizations, silos exist department-to-department, and even rank-to-rank. These rank-to-rank silos are especially concerning, as it halts most efforts from innovation if members of the team are unable to cross-communicate across rank. Organizations which fail to encourage cross-communication have lower morale, and it becomes more difficult to bridge the gaps between departments. If a framework for better communication is never created, employees will revert to their most overlearned and over practiced behaviours, like negative humour and cynicism (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 161-2).

If I could share my power, I would!
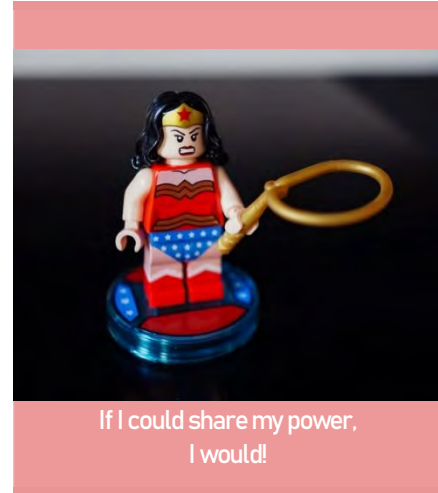
A key factor which limits cross communication is a conflict between individual agendas and individual perspectives. Agendas are a barrier to communication and collaboration, whereas perspectives are the lens from which an individual sees a situation. When someone's individual agenda is very strong, it becomes difficult for them to align with the larger process. If a team has silos amongst rank, it is very likely that each member of the team has an individual agenda which makes it difficult to align on any vision (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 29). In these cases, their perspective becomes their agenda. Consider a mid-level worker whose perspective is that a certain task is insurmountable. This perspective is certainly an acceptable one to have, and he could easily communicate these worries to his peers if he was comfortable doing so. However, in an environment where cross communication is difficult, this mid-level worker will be left to ponder his perspective alone. Ultimately, his individual agenda might be to quash the initiative altogether because he is afraid, he will fail. In this case, we can see how the inability to communicate shifts a perspective to an agenda. When many individuals on a team have differing agendas, it becomes very difficult to complete tasks.

The idea of sharing and shifting power is highly important in improvisation performances. Consider the same scene between Person A and Person B as described in this section. This scene becomes impossible to perform if Person A is unwilling to surrender their personal agenda (their idea of being stuck in the rain), or if Person B is unwilling to surrender their personal agenda (their idea of being Person A' s gleeful partner). Further, the scene is unwatchable if Person A continuously talks over Person B, does not listen to Person B's offers, or does not give Person B a chance to talk. Improvisation scenes require sharing of the stage and energy. Further, they require a shared agenda. If personal agendas supersede the group agenda, the scene becomes unwatchable. When players can share the stage harmoniously, scenes become enjoyable to watch and players are able to have more fun performing.

Sharing and shifting power is crucial in workplace settings as well. In experiments when individuals drew playing cards from a deck and the higher the card they drew meant their fictional rank was higher, those with higher ranks became hyper-focussed on their individual agendas (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 113). In this exercise, the group was asked to brainstorm solutions to a problem. The "high ranking" individuals became too focused on their agendas, were unable to focus on the exercise at hand, and therefore quickly slipped from divergent thinking to convergent thinking. Notably, when individuals were not given "rank cards", the group engaged in productive divergent in only half the amount of time. When individual agenda became more important than the team's mission, the mission failed (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 113). Conversely, in meetings when the group agenda superseded the individual agenda, the tensions of rank-to-rank conflict became less pronounced. When groups were united on their agenda, members were incentivised to be a part of the program because they cared about each other and felt their voices were heard (Kulhan & Crisafulli, 2017, 120).

The main benefits of "Sharing and Shifting Power" are as follows:
- Individual and group agendas become more united.
- Hierarchy is decreased, facilitating better problem solving and increasing idea sharing.
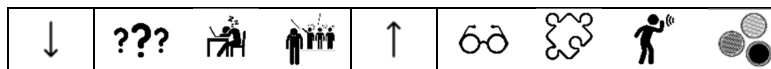
3

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

METHODS USED AND RATIONALE

The research methods for this project were chosen using inspiration from the "Futures Diamond" designed by Rafael Popper ("The Diamond", 2012, par. 1). On this diamond, various research methods are categorized on a horizontal scale of "creativity" to "evidence", and "expertise" to "interaction". The researcher wanted to find methods which represented a combination of each category, including "creativity + interaction", "creativity + expertise", "evidence + interaction", and "evidence + expertise". The methods used are described below.
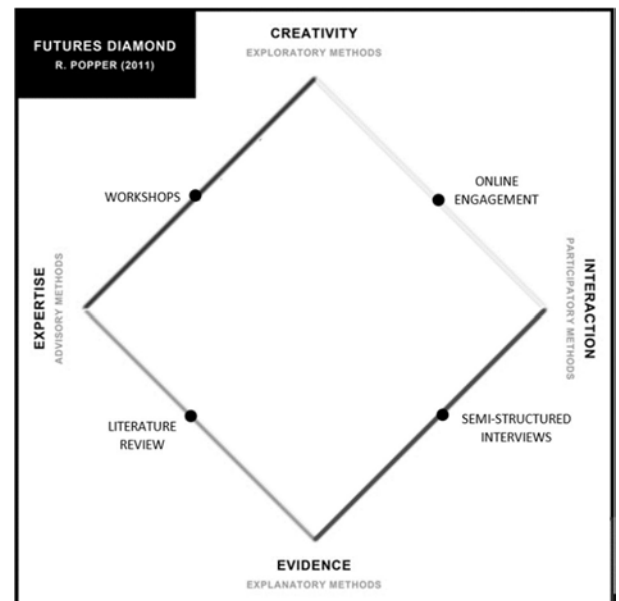
LITERATURE REVIEW
Evidence + Expertise

A literature review was conducted to provide the necessary context for this project. The analysis of the literature can be seen in the previous sections and informed the choice of methods and approach to the project. For a list of resources used, see the bibliography section

EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP
Creativity + Expertise

The workshop was held on the OCAD University Campus in the sLab space. Seven participants participated, ranging in age and gender identity. The participants were recruited via social media channels including the Strategic Foresight and Innovation Program's "Slack" and "Google Group". Participants were also recruited via professional networks like LinkedIn. Participants self-identified as individuals who had felt fear of failure in their current or previous employment positions. The informational workshop consisted of three design thinking methods three which will help to establish answers to my sub-research question: How does the combination of fear of change and change exhaustion lead to skepticism, doubt, and disillusionment of employees? How do these feelings impact productivity, loyalty, and attention to detail? The methods used in this workshop included a Rapid Post Up, a combination of Brainwriting and the Empathy Map, and the Iceberg Model. These methods and the findings will be discussed in specific detail in the next section.

Evidence + Interaction

Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted with Subject Matter Experts who worked in the Toronto Area. Participants voluntarily responded to the following prompt, which was posted on social media, LinkedIn, and the SFI Program's Slack Channel.

> "I am currently working on my major research project as a part of my Masters program. It is titled "Befriending the Boogeyman", and in it I develop exercises based on improv principles to help mitigate fear of failure in organizations. Right now, I am in the development phase, and am looking for individuals to interview for my project! I am reaching out here to find potential candidates. Do you know someone/ are you someone who works to motivate and inspire employees? Have you experienced fear of failure in your organization? Do you work to improve organizational cultures? Are you someone who has used improvisation in a professional setting? If you are someone/ know someone who fits that profile, please message me!"

The individuals interviewed are as follows:

Hartley Jafine
Applied Drama Learning Specialist/Coach, Sessional Lecturer McMaster University

Kelly Leonard
Executive Director, Insights and Applied Improvisation at Second City (SC) Works

Lee Smart
Partner &Creative Director at SmartLeese Creative, former Design Lead/Sr. Facilitator at SC Works

Lindsay Leese
Partner at SmartLeese Creative, former Corporate Workshop Facilitator at SC Works

Maya Cieszynska
Corporate Director at Bad Dog Theatre

Rob Oddi
Consultant and "Change, Culture, & Transformation Expert"

Sharon Rahmolo
Former Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer of McDonald's Restaurant's of Canada

Considering the interview format was semi-structured, the questions changed person to person and additional questions were asked throughout the interview process. The questions prepared by the researcher are as follows:

INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS FOR IMPROVISATION PRACTITIONERS

1. Can you describe the purpose/ mission statement of the [your] program? What happens during a typical day/workshop?
2. Speaking specifically about improvisation, what are some key improvisation principles that you think all organizations should follow?
3. How do you think improvisation can help an individual, or even an organization, overcome fear of failure?
4. How have you/ have you seen cynicism, doubt, or fear impact employee motivation?
    i. How have you seen these feelings impact the momentum of projects that you've consulted on?
5. When you enter an organization to facilitate a workshop, how do organizations generally react to your presence and your methods?
    i. Do you find that employees are generally ready to participate, or do they often engage in participations with a certain level of caution?
    ii. If there is caution, how do you counter these nerves?

6. What are some tips you would give to someone who is implementing creativity-based methods in the workplace? What are the main challenges?

INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS FOR CHANGE MANAGEMENT/HR EXPERTS

1. Have you seen cynicism, doubt, or fear impact employee motivation?
    i. What would you say is the most pressing impact of cynicism, doubt, and fear?
    ii. Have you seen it negatively impact organizational culture?
2. What do you think are some of the origins of fear in your organization?
3. Who or what is capable of fear mitigation?
4. What are some ways you have seen organizations alleviate cynicism, doubt, and fear?
    i. What are some of the most effective methods you have seen to alleviate these tensions?
    ii. Can you think of an example of when you saw an organization make a change to their culture?
5. How have you seen humour, creativity, and play alleviate organizational barriers?
6. What are some of the factors that limit using humour, creativity, and play in an organization?

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Creativity + Interaction

The online engagement was designed to engage individuals who had experience fear of failure in their current or past employment, asking them to think deeply about their experience. Rather than designing a typical survey, the researcher opted to use a method called "The 5 Whys" developed originally by Sakichi Toyoda. This method encourages participants to move beyond the surface of the problem and discover the root cause, since problems are tackled more sustainably at the source (Gray et al., 2010, 141). The guiding statement for this survey was "The work I do doesn't motivate me. Why?" I opted to begin the survey with a question of motivation to see whether participants would connect their experiences to the fear of failure, since lack of motivation is a major symptom of fear of failure.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Every effort was made to maintain confidentiality of participants throughout this survey. The semi-structured interview includes the names of interviewees, at their consent. However, the quotes are not attributed to each participant to avoid any unforeseen repercussions of the interview. Names were not collected for the Online Participation and identifying data has been scrubbed from the summary. The workshop summary does not attribute any data to participants and the names of participants will not be published. All data was stored on a private file on the researcher's password protected computer. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at the Ontario College of Art & Design, file number 101373, and clearance number 2018-62.

DATA ANALYSIS

EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP

The first exercise the group engaged in was a rapid post up exercise. This exercise posed the questions "How do employees behave in a culture which is afraid of failure?" versus "How do employees behave in a culture which is accepting of failure?" We then moved to "How do leaders behave in a culture which is afraid of failure?" versus "How do leaders behave in a culture which is accepting of failure?" Participants were asked to draw on their own experiences to answer these questions. The purpose of this opening exercise was twofold. First, to help provide a working definition of "fear of failure" as well as understand what that looks like in an organization, so that participants were operating from the same understanding and definitions. Second, this exercise helped the researcher to see some of the main impacts of fear of failure in the workplace from individuals who had experience toxic culture. For each question, participant had three to five minutes to silently brainstorm and write their ideas on sticky notes. Following the brainstorming period, the participants stuck the notes to a whiteboard. They worked together to group the sticky notes into similar themes, and then pulled four to five major characteristics to answer each question. On figure 10 in Appendix A, the yellow sticky notes represent the similar themes found by the group, and the center section representing characteristics of employees and/ or leaders who work within an organization which is either afraid of or accepting of failure. Something important to note is that the participants were told that each organization had the same level of success on products, not that one organization was more successful than the other. Despite their similarity of successes, the organization which is accepting of failure promoted a far more positive organization culture, defined by its innovation and psychological safety.

The major insights from this exercise were as follows.

- When organizational culture is afraid of failure, employees…
    - Are closed off, stressed, have low levels of communications, and have discord amongst one another.
    - Are frustrated and demotivated, and do not feel safe or happy in their workplace.
    - Prefer to keep ideas to themselves rather than sharing them.
- When organizational culture is afraid of failure, leaders…
    - Favour tradition and status quo, which aligns well with the high levels or bureaucracy and/or red tape found in organizations which are afraid of failure,
    - Are risk adverse, either micromanage or focus on the short term, or blame others for failures.
    - Show a lack of listening and/or care for their employee's wellbeing.
- In an organization which is accepting of failure, employees are…
    - Communicative, take risks, are more likely to innovate or think creatively, and are passionate about their job.

- Notably, many participants wrote ides about listening, laughter, and connection to one another.
- In an organization which is accepting of failure, leaders are…
  - Characterized by a connected and caring attitude.
  - Welcoming of opinions, sharing of responsibility
  - Have a high level of pride.
  - Are openness to try new things and are self-aware.
- Participants agreed that organizations which were accepting of failure were…
  - Conductive to team bonding, connecting, and psychological safety.
  - Environments where employees and leaders could engage more meaningfully in innovation and creative thinking, since each party was more comfortable with on another.

Exercise Two: Empathy Map

The next exercise in the workshop was the Empathy Map, a common design thinking tool. This tool is intended to help the group focus on the people involved in a project. Like personas, an empathy map helps a group focus on the most important element of a project, the people (Gray et al., 2010, 65). Continuing off exercise one, the participants were asked to imagine an employee who worked in an organization which was afraid of failure and had both employees and leaders who were impacted by this fear. The group explored each quadrant of the map, "Thinking + Feeling", "Hearing", "Seeing", and "Saying + Doing". Rather than performing a simple Post-Up like in the previous exercise, the group was asked to participate in a Brainwriting process. In the Brainwriting process, participants pass cards to one another in a predetermined pattern. When Person A hands a card to Person B, Person B reads this card and writes a new idea inspired by what this card says. Person B now passes this card to Person C, and so on. This process is a simple way to allow participants to generate, share, and build on ideas all at the same time (Gray et al., 2010, 82). This way of brainstorming acts like a silent conversation and is an interesting way to change up the typical individual brainstorming process. Following the Brainwriting, the group posted up their ideas on the board and worked together to sort them into different categories. These categories can be seen below in Figure 6 on the next page, where the coloured sticky notes act as the main category header, and the white stickies are the initial ideas posted up by the group.

Appendix B represents a summary of the findings for the empathy map. The main category header is represented under one organizing theme. In a workplace where employees are taught to be afraid of failure, participants agreed that these individuals had: low self esteem; high levels of embarrassment, shame and ridicule; high job dissatisfaction; an uncertain future; low motivation; faced high levels of bureaucracy; and felt low or no loyalty to the company which they worked for.

Low Self Esteem	Embarrassment, Shame, Ridicule	Job Dissatisfaction	Uncertain Future	Low Motivation	High Bureaucracy	Low Loyalty
Low self confidence	Gossip & bullying	High stress	Voiceless/ bland	Distraction	Micromanagement/ high monitoring	Employee turnover
Lack of self confidence	Inter-team gossip & bullying	Angry/ frustrated	Unimportant or replaceable	Boredom & Low Interest/ Motivation	Focus on hierarchy and individual achievements	Desire to leave
	No bonding/ connection among teammates	Physicality indicating sadness/ frustration		Low motivation & effort/ focus on time		
		Unhappy & Frustrated Workers		Task focused & no initiative		
		Anxiety & frustration		Lack of motivation/ boredom		

Think & Feel
See
Say & Do
Hear

Figure 6: Empathy Map Summary

Exercise Three: Iceberg Model

The final exercise participants engaged in during the exploratory workshop was the Iceberg Model. The Iceberg Model asks participants to imagine seeing an iceberg in the water. Only 10% of this iceberg is visible, leaving 90% of the iceberg hidden below. This method states that a problem has a similar structure, and as we delve deeper into the larger system, we can identify root cause and make smarter choices about where to intervene (Valicenti, 2017, par. 3). During this exercise, participants engaged in a moderated discussion about each layer of the iceberg, which was facilitated by the researcher. There are many variations on the Iceberg Model, but this exercise was best suited for Schein's Iceberg Model, since it focusses on the cultural aspects of an organization ("Management: perspective and practices", 2018). It contains three levels. First are the artefacts, which are the tangible representation of culture. These are represented on Figure 7 on the next page, using the key findings identified in the Empathy Map. Next are the values, which include beliefs, attitudes and philosophies which govern our behaviour. At the bottom of the iceberg are the basic assumptions which are often unconscious behaviours or points of view which govern how we see the world.
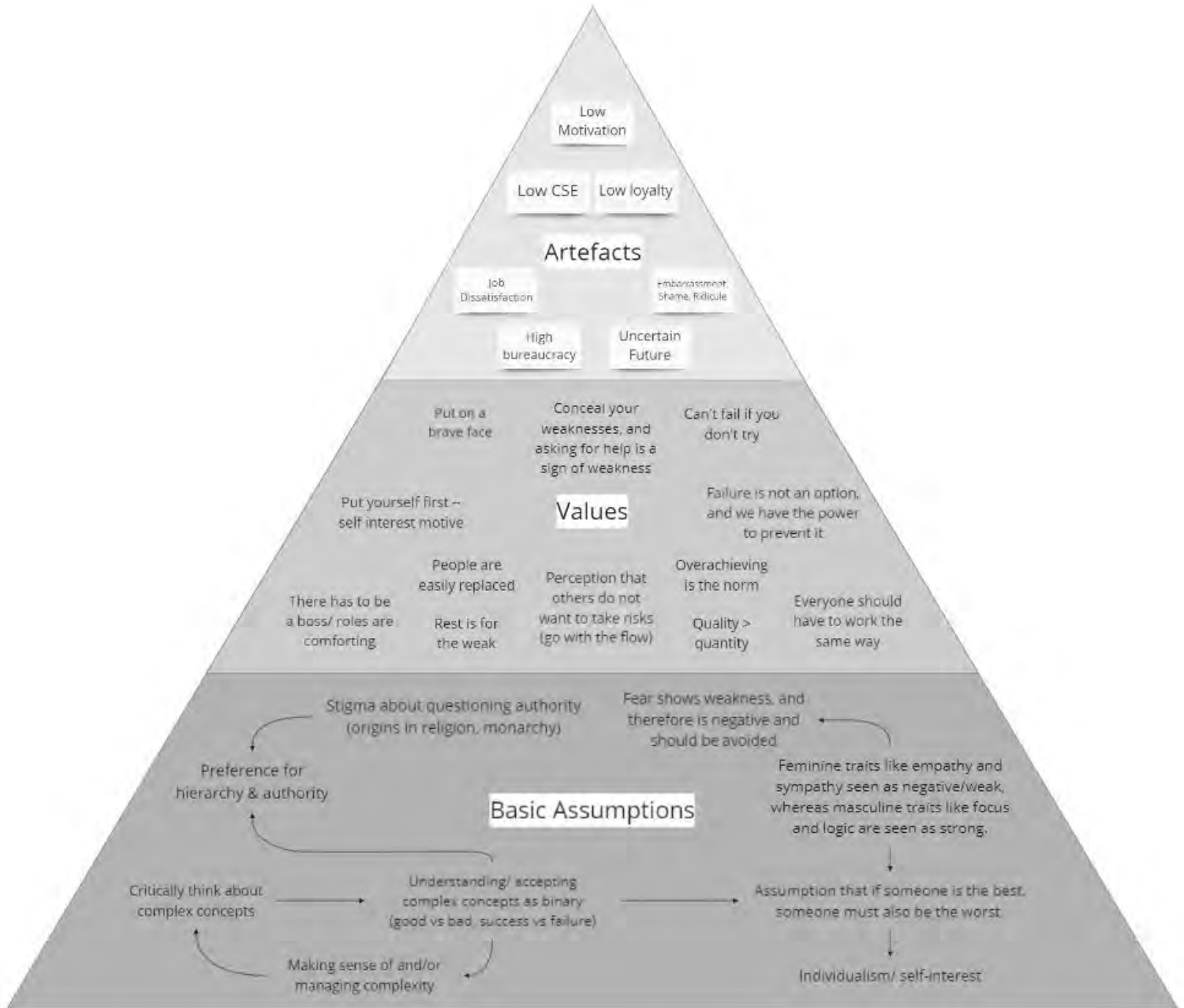
Figure 7: Full Iceberg Model

The key takeaways from values level are as follows.

- Strong emphasis on concealing emotions, individualism, and hierarchy.
- Failure is stigmatized and is meant to be avoided at all costs, so employees resort to overworking themselves and concealing their emotions to make sure the job gets done.
- Discussion stating that the job employees are so focussed on completing is often the wrong one, since the tasks are often formulaic and do not use critical and/or creative thinking skills.
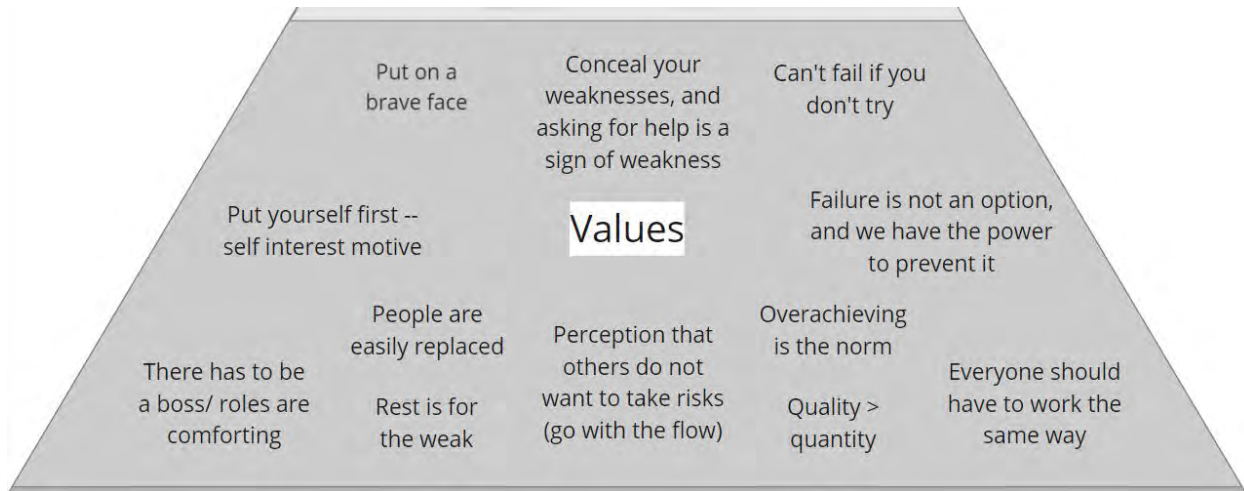
Figure 8: Zoom in on Values Level Results

The key takeaways on the basic assumptions level are as follows.

- Concepts are binary, for example, good versus bad or failure versus success.
    - Understanding topics as binary made it more difficult to manage complexity or sense-make, which ultimately lowered individuals critical thinking skills.
    - A preference for hierarchy. Participants said this preference for hierarchy was exaggerated by stigmas relating to questioning authority, which originated from religion and monarchies.
- A core assumption which says that if someone is the best, someone must also be the worst.
    - If there is only success or failure, it is better to remain in the middle and not become the "worst" employee. This belief system has key implications on individualism and self-interest.
    - Connection to feminine versus masculine traits. Participants all agreed that fear shows weakness and vulnerability, which are often associated with femininity. If femininity is viewed as negative, then it follows that traits like vulnerability and weakness – which are associated with failure – would also be viewed as negatives.
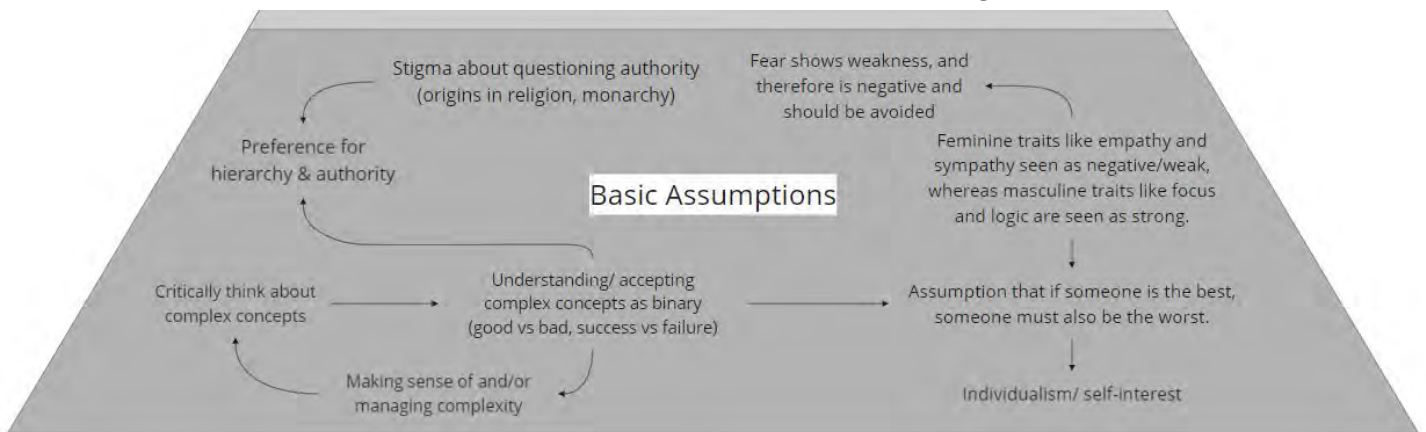
Figure 9: Zoom in on Basic Assumption Level Results

INTERVIEWS DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data collected in the interviews I use thematic analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis method which allows the researcher to jump between inductive and deductive reasoning (Cacciotti et al., 2016, 308). The basic themes reflect original interviewee statements, the organizing themes represent ideas, meanings, and inferences made by the researcher, and the global themes represent the principles categories derived from the interview texts. Since this analysis uses certain themes or patterns across an entire dataset, thematic analysis overlaps with other qualitative methods such as including grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis and discourse analysis (Cacciotti et al., 2016, 308). In the next sections I will summarize each organizing theme, describing the key skills organizations must build in order to mitigate fear of failure. These skills will be connected to improvisation principles and summarized at the end of each section. For a full summary see Appendix C.

- ● Attitude & Energy
- ● Group Conversations, Communication & Connection
- ● Creativity & Problem Solving
- ● Breaking Down Silos & Power Dynamics

Improved Communication

"The fear ignites from lack of communication, this is where it seems to begin. This lack of communication stokes the fear and people become free to imagine all sorts of things."

On the topic of communication, many interviewees talked about the power of clear and meaningful conversations. There was strong evidence indicating the direct and thoughtful conversations alleviate tension and communication, and that speaking with intent or honesty can help groups be more productive. When these lines of communication are not established, people begin to become frustrated, start to gossip, and anxiety sets in. Through improvisational principles, negative communication techniques can be required to become more positive. Many interviewees talked about the power of "Yes, and…" and how this mental framework encourages more exploratory and creative conversation. By shutting down points of view with a "yeah but" or "no" approach to communications, employees are less likely to share their opinions thus shutting down creative potential.

Skills Needed from Improvisation Principles	Support and Trust	Attitude and Energy
	Yes, and	Listening
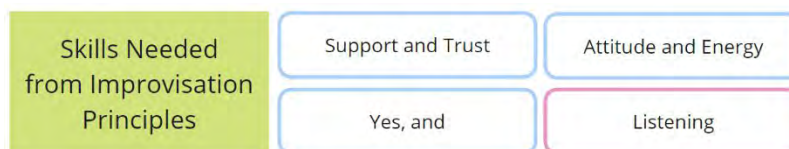
Dealing with Fear of Failure in the Workplace

"If you can allay the anxiety, people are surprised about what they can discover."

On the topic of dealing with fear of failure in the workplace, the topic of building resilience in the face of failure came up frequently. Though an organization may advocate for a culture which is accepting of failure, employees will not change their behaviour until there is substantial buy-in to that idea across the organization. Building resilience in an organization to learn from failure and accept it is difficult to do, agreed interviewees, but the capacity to do it comes from

constant practice and reaffirming this concept as an ideal. Improvisation principles like shared goals and support and trust certainly would provide teams the ability to build this resilience. Interestingly, although improvisation is seen as "making things up", improvisation principles and games can provide a framework to safely explore an idea. On interviewee spoke about the idea of being creative within the box, an idea which often comes up in conversations about innovation – how do we create a better mousetrap? Organizations must build capacity to better outline what the "box" which they innovate within is, and how they might be creative within that box.

Skills Needed from Improvisation Principles	Shared Goals	Empathy
	Rapid Problem Solving	
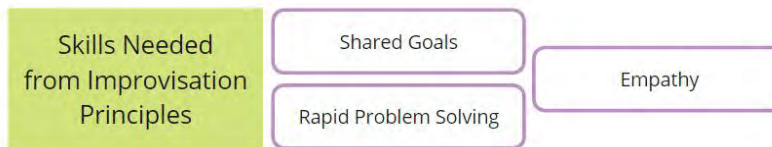
Impacts of the Fear of Failure

"We are wired to first to think about what is wrong with an idea, poke holes and think of limitations."

A major impact of the fear of failure included results-oriented thinking. Interviewees often spoke about the failure of many groups to engage in divergent thinking, and instead focus on quick wins or the first good idea they had. Based on a combination of responses from interviewees, design thinking concepts and improvisational principles, the best thinking does not happen through convergent thinking alone. Groups must take the time to properly think out an idea, explore its possibilities, and then reach a possible conclusion. Without engaging in this approach, most groups simply maintain the status quo and fail to innovate.

Interviewees also spoke at length about the harmful power differentials which came about as a result of the fear of failure. In most instances, they addressed the idea that employees felt afraid to share their ideas because they might be shut down, or that participants did not feel safe participating in an improvisational workshop if their boss was present in the room. The fear of failure reinforced harmful hierarchical stereotypes, like the boss is always right, mistakes are to be punished, and so on. Hierarchal structures also propagate the idea that certain individuals have the right to speak more, with "80% of the talking done by 20% of people". In these kinds of group conversations, lower-ranking employees shut down and are unable to share their ideas.

"By being rewarded by doing the same things over again leads to boredom and dissatisfaction."

Several interviewees reinforced the idea that an organization which is afraid of failure will have high employee turnover due to dissatisfaction and boredom. Organizations which fail to counter these feelings often lose their most creative thinkers to competitors. The employees who stay are often "gossip a lot", "become more individualistic", "[do not] uptake new processes]" and "do as little as possible". This ultimately becomes a great cost for the organization, as they lose their best employees due to a toxic work environment.

Skills Needed from Improvisation Principles	Support and Trust	Sharing and Shifting Power
	Yes, and	Listening
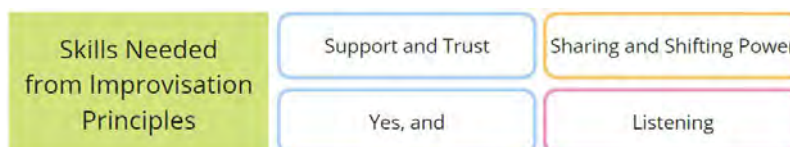
Dealing with Change

"Change often goes hand in hand with innovation."

Interviewees spoke frequently about how creative thinking and/or improvisation improves the adaptability of employees. By practicing improvisation principles, employees can "rebrand" failure as learning opportunities and become more accustomed to changes in the workplace. This increased adaptability gives employees the ability to become more resilient in the face of constant change, as well as more comfortable with the possibility of failure.

"A strong culture embraces diversity of thought,
if 10 executives agree the same way there is probably 9 of them too many."

Another concept which came up frequently on the topic of dealing with change was the importance of diversity of thought within an organization. Cultures which embraced diversity and/or diversity of thought were said to create a more positive environment. Further, these organizations promoted more diverse ideas, approaching problems from many different angles. Diversity of thought is a core principle in both design thinking and improvisation, as diverse teams bring different kind of expertise to the table, helping to create more robust divergent and convergent thinking.

Skills Needed from Improvisation Principles — Support and Trust — Flexibility and Adaptability — Empathy — Shared Goals
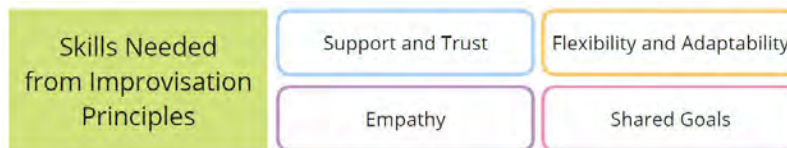
Creating Psychological Safety

"The conflict is going to happen no matter what… it's the ability to sit and talk it through and listen, organizations that encourage that is an important factor."

On the topic of creating psychological safety, the concepts of better group relationships and group security came up frequently. Interviewees spoke time and time again about the importance of listening within groups, emphasizing its role in making individuals feel psychologically safe, valued, and empowered. Even though group situations often have conflict, either form external and internal sources, the ability to communicate meaningfully was marked as a simple skill which can solve complex problems. Especially in intergenerational workforces, listening to one another is of upmost importance. Stereotypes about Baby Boomers versus Millennials, for example, are often untrue, but can be left unchecked if these two groups fail to actively listen to one another.

The interviewees also spoke at length of creating a psychologically safe space. Most often, this was spoken about by improvisation consultants who get brought into an organization to facilitate a workshop. For the workshop to be facilitated smoothly, they had to tell the participants that the workshop was a safe space to explore ideas and be silly. Extrapolating this concept to an organization, employees must be taught that it is safe for them to share their ideas. This can not be done through words alone, but also through action. One way to facilitate this feeling of safety, as indicated by interviewees, includes buy-in from leaders. If leaders behave as supervisors or superiors throughout the brainstorming process, it is likely that

employees will feel as if they are being monitored and therefore will be less likely to participate. By engaging in exercises, leaders show that they see value in the exercise, allowing participants to feel comfortable participating.

Skills Needed from Improvisation Principles	Attitude and Energy	Sharing and Shifting Power
	Yes, and	Listening
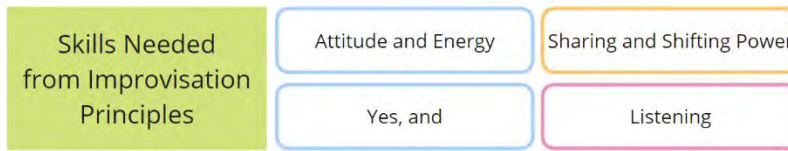
Innovation and Problem Solving

"Change comes when people have an a-ha moment. When they have a relaxed state, they can generate the a-ha moment."

By mitigating the fear of failure, participants agreed organizations might see benefits in employee's motivation, creative thinking, and adaptability. Once employees feel psychologically safe and see examples of success, the behaviour of the individuals within the organizations starts to change. Once individuals start to change, these new feelings of positive thinking disperse throughout the organization thus creating a more positive and safer place to work in. Once individuals feel positive and psychologically safe, they become much more open to creative thinking, idea sharing, and are more likely to form bonds with their colleagues.

Further, once employees feel relaxed, they can start having real breakthroughs on products. Working from a place of tension, as discussed before, encourages employees to stick to the status quo for fear of being punished. Once an organization becomes safe enough for employees to share their ideas, it is possible for true innovative thinking to begin. Further, by promoting a more positive working space, employees become less cynical about the organization as they feel valued and see more benefits. This results in more bonding and sense of belonging among colleagues, more motivation, and ultimately less turnover.

Skills Needed from Improvisation Principles	Attitude and Energy	Rapid Problem Solving	Shared Goals
	Empathy	Listening	Flexibility and adaptability

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

The online engagement gained a modest amount of participation with nine participants engaged. The breakdown of these participants is as follows:

WHAT SECTOR IS/WAS THE JOB YOU ARE THINKING OF?

33.30% 33.30% 33.30%

Public Private Non-Profit

WHAT AGE ARE YOU?

11.10% 22.20% 11.10% 55.60%

18-24 25-34 35-44 55+
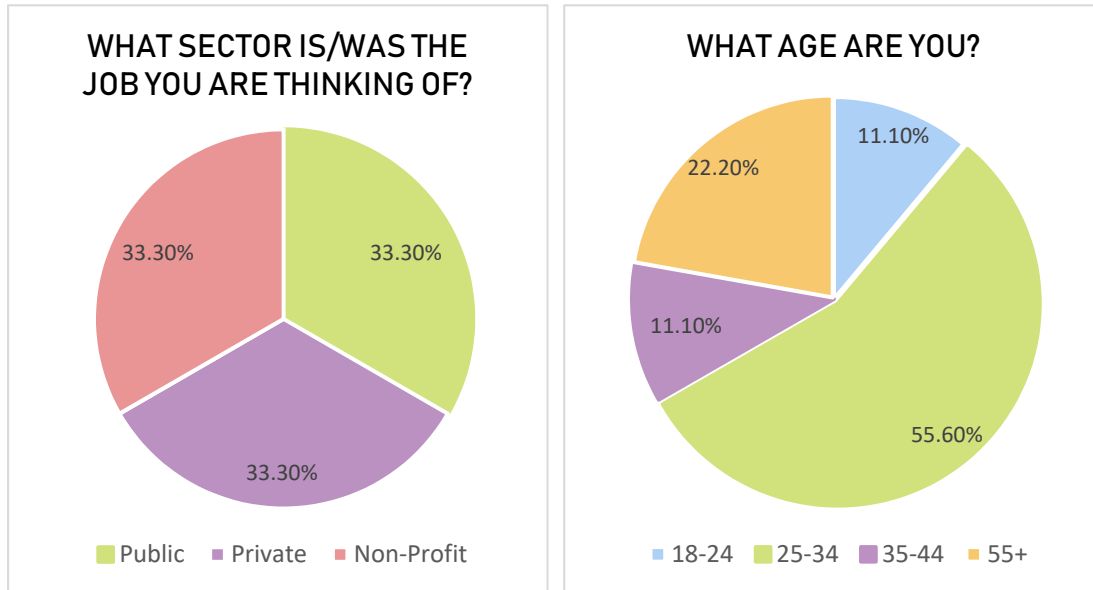
Participants were also asked "How often do/did you feel a lack of motivation or negative feelings towards the job you are thinking of?" The results were high, with 88% of participants saying they felt frustrated at least 50% of the time. The exact breakdown is as follows:

AMOUNT OF TIME FEELING LACK OF MOTIVATION
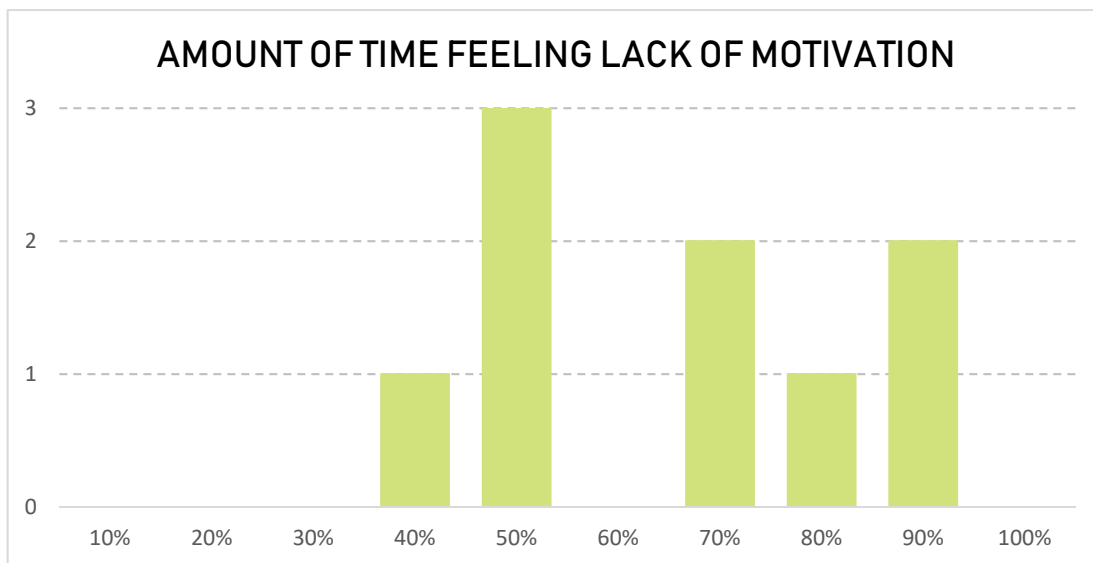
The following is a summary of each participant's response to the survey. Following the 5 Whys format, the final why is meant to give the most meaningful insight into the problem (Grey et al., 2010, 141). This being so, each participant's summary is based on the final answer they gave, helping the research gain a deeper understanding regarding lack of motivation in

the workplace. The yellow sticky note represents a high-level summary of their most meaningful insight from each participant. For a full summary see Appendix D.

THE WORK YOU DO DOESN'T MOTIVATE YOU. WHY?

I am undervalued — Feel undervalued in the company, as if their skills are not being seen and their voices are not being heard.

No chances to learn — Lack of capacity to learn, which indicates higher levels of stress and failure to provide resources for people to succeed. Perhaps this organization is too short term focused.

High levels of bureaucracy — High levels of bureaucracy makes it difficult to explore new ideas and makes the employee simply check boxes or follow rules.

Sporadic work — Sporadic nature of work makes it difficult to feel valued or to care about the project.

Pressure of economy — Participant struggled with the exercise, but noted that toxic culture made achievements feel like failures. Further, their focus on the economy shows that the pressures of the economy put pressure on workplaces.

Controlling leaders — Strong focus on controlling leaders who did not allow the employee to feel creative. The participant mentioned the concept that "that is how things are done around here", a common phrase which characterizes risk averse behavior.

Poor communication — Poor communication and hiring practices makes people feel undervalued and does not tap into their skillset.

Fear of regret — Strong fear of regret, which originated from the idea of not wanting to be pigeon-holed. Importantly, this person left the organization due to its risk-aversion.

No challenge — Not enough challenge, the participant does not feel like their workplace is tapping into their skillset.

Figure 10: Five Whys Summary by Participant

From the online engagement, it was very clear that there were three core reasons why people felt unmotivated in their workplace, all of which were symptoms of fear of failure.

1. Lack of opportunities to grow and learn. Participants said they felt undervalued, could not grow, and did not feel challenged. They could not grow in their role simply because they had to follow strict guidelines and never had the chance to innovate or think creatively.
2. Poor leadership. Leaders were controlling, followed bureaucratic rules, and failed to communicate with or inspire employees. This theme came up strongly in the interviews as well, indicating that leaders could use lessons from improvisation principles to communicate better and share their power.
3. External pressures made it difficult to feel motivated. These include things like the sporadic nature of work, the pressure of the economy, and fear of regret. Since the participants' workplaces failed to provide an internal environment which was resilient against these external pressures, the workplace succumbed to these pressures. This engagement showed that there is a need for better learning and/or creative thinking opportunities, improved and/or engaged leadership, and resilience against external pressures.

MAJOR INSIGHTS

Based on the evidence from the primary research, the most pressing impacts of the fear of failure in the workplace are as follows:

- High stress
- Preference for hierarchy and status quo
- Low levels of communication, leading workplace culture characterized by secrets and blame
- Low levels of self esteem, leading to unhappiness in current position
- Low levels of motivation, leading to poor quality work
- Employee turnover or lack of loyalty
- Very poor listening skills
- Low levels of bonding leading to bullying and discrimination

If fear of failure is mitigated using creative methods, the benefits are as follows:

- Higher creative potential and opportunities to explore ideas
- Employee buy-in on ideas leading to more participation and interest
- Higher levels of diversity of thought
- Shared responsibility and honesty
- Opportunities to grow and to learn
- Bonding amongst employees, increasing connection to workplace
- Increased risk-taking and innovative behaviour

The key connections to improvisation principles are as follows:

- Need for a shift towards openness and exploration, characterized by an environment where team members are attentive to new ideas
- A shift towards a "yes, and…" mind-frame
- Cultivation of an environment where employees trust one another and feel comfortable sharing even the most outlandish ideas
- A need for an increased ability to brainstorm more fully and from many diverse perspectives
- Empathy towards other employees and the customer must be developed
- Improved listening skills are greatly needed
- Teams must share the same goal, and understand specifically what that goal is
- Related to a shared goal, individuals must come to understand their value within the team and know what value they bring
- Evening out of hierarchy, characterized by an environment where power which is shared and shifted amongst the team members
- Improved ability related to flexibility and adaptability, characterized by a willingness to put aside old ways of doing things in favour of experimentation

Based on these key impacts, both positive and negative, the criteria for success for the exercises I create are as follows:

- Optimization of energy economy, characterized by clearer objectives, learning opportunities, opportunities for growth.
- Opportunities to express opinions and explore ideas, without being governed by hierarchy or the expectations of creating solutions.
- Improved communications and chances for bonding, characterized by positive humour and sharing of ideas.
- Improved stress management and adaptability.
- Retraining internal cognitive biases to boost self esteem.
- Increasing psychological capital.

EXERCISES

USING THESE EXERCISES

Why exercises: The main reason why I chose to design exercises as a part of this project is because using exercises aligns well with how basic improvisation is taught. Having taught improvisation for over three years, I have developed several curriculums to build improviser's skills and take them from a beginner level to more advanced levels. From this experience as an improv educator, I understood that the best way to build improvisation skills is to do so implicitly through gameplay, rather than explicitly through scene work or direction. Using games which are heavily restricted by rules allows individuals to focus on one specific skill, like characterization, physicality, object work, and so on. I saw this same kind of pedagogy being used in works like *Gamestorming,* where skills like creativity, play, strategy, and so on were being built through various games, rather than through something like a training manual or a lecture. Learning by doing, while being guided by specific rules and thematic outcomes, was a core tool for learning in both corporate contexts (in *Gamestorming)* and in improvisational contexts and seemed like a fitting way to teach improvisational principles to organizations.

Why use these exercises: These exercises are designed to mitigate the feelings associated with fear of failure within an organization, thus improvising skills like; listening, adaptability, communication, positive humour, flexibility, power dynamics, motivation, attitudes, and self esteem. If you work in a team within an organization which is struggling with the negative impacts of fear of failure, these exercises can help your team become more resilient, positive, and energetic in the workplace. Used infrequently, or not to their full potential, these exercises can instil better connections among teammates, bringing more humour to the workplace and mitigating some feelings of cynicism. Used at their fullest potential, these exercises can help alleviate toxic organizational culture and change it into one which is more positive and supportive, ultimately facilitating higher motivation and employee retention. These exercises, in general, break typical patterns of thinking allowing for creative thinking which increases the innovation potential in a workplace.

How to use: These exercises are designed to be used in combination with one another to build a full workshop, or in isolation during a typical meeting. Each exercise works best for 5 to 15 employees, but most can be adjusted to include more or fewer participants. Each exercise has a suggested play time and suggested combinations with other exercises. Each exercise also outlines which improvisation principles it accentuates and outlines its purposes and proposed outcomes. Users are encouraged to choose exercises based on the skills they are looking to improve amongst employees, rather than simply based on time constraints.

When to use: These exercises can be used at any point during a project, once an issue with fear of failure has been found. For best results, these exercises should be used at

the outset of the project to forge positive connections as soon as possible. However, these exercises have been designed to be picked up and used at any time by a team, so users can certainly use them at any time.

Where to use: These exercises are designed to be easy to use in any office with minimal equipment. Most exercises use sticky notes, markers, paper, and a whiteboard. The whiteboard can be substituted large pieces of paper, a black board, and so on. For best results, use in a room large enough for every member of the team to sit at the same table and see each other's face.

Who to credit: These exercises are free for anyone to use, and are intended for iteration, alteration, and distribution. I appreciate credit and/or citation when these methods are used, but this is not necessary during a workshop facilitation. If the user wishes to contact me for clarification on these exercises, for facilitations, and so on, you can contact the researcher at kristenjoanwebster@gmail.com.

The main inspiration for these exercises comes from the book *Gamestorming* by Dave Gray, Sunni Brown, and James Macanufo. These exercises are not a representation of the content of the methods in *Gamestorming,* but rather are inspired by the layout of the book and how the book is designed to be used. The layout of *Gamestorming* is accessible and easy to understand, displaying instructions very clearly with helpful illustrations of the methods. The book itself is designed to allow the reader to easily construct a workshop by pulling from different sections of the book, choosing a game for opening, exploring, and closing (Gray et al., 2010). This design makes running an effective workshop accessible to almost everyone. I took great inspiration from *Gamestorming* in the design, construction, and layout of my exercises.

I denote exercises in this project as exercises rather than methods, and it is critical to note the difference. The different names refer to the level of rigor to which these exercises were developed and tested. I developed these exercises through a generative research process. Generative research is a "focused effort targeted at a deeper understanding of user needs and desires, and concept development through participatory design activities" (Hanington, 2010, 3). Through two rounds of co-creation, I gained a better understanding of the user needs for these exercises which made them stronger and more helpful for teams. However, due to the scope of this project I did not extend the development process enough to fully optimize these exercises. Though they are strong exercises which the researcher believes will help organizations, they have not undergone the evaluative research necessary to cement them as established methods.

The process to develop my exercises is as follows. After completing the data analysis, I created a set of criteria based on the data which outlined what might make a successful exercise. These criteria can be found on page 56. Based on these criteria, I designed twelve exercises which supported these criteria. To design these exercises, I analyzed the success criteria, improvisation skills, negative impacts of fear of failure and positive impacts of a creative workplace by grouping the various bullet points into several thematic groups. After these thematic groups were created, I reflected on these groups and wrote various existing improvisation games, corporate methods, and design thinking methods under each group for inspiration of what my exercise might ultimately look like. Based on these various games, I came to understand how each exercise might be constructed, what gameplay might look like, and

what themes each exercise might need to hit. For example, one major thematic group was "active listening", and based on the games and methods listed under this group, I knew that the exercise I developed must have some sort of parameter on who could speak, how they spoke, and how what they said was recorded. I also knew that there should be some sort of pressure put on the listener, since they needed to be coached to listen carefully and "gamifying" the listening process ensured that this would happen. These two factors combined resulted in the base for the Idea Draft game, in which two people have a conversation while the third is forced to listen, recording their conversation onto playable cards.

Following this initial idea-capturing, the instructions for these exercises were written by hand on index cards, accompanied by drawings of how the exercise might work. These twelve exercises were tested with a non-for-profit organization over the span of three hours. During this workshop, I acknowledged that these exercises were in beta. I facilitated the methods and asked for feedback, which participants wrote on index cards after each exercise. I collected these index cards and analyzed them after the workshop. This feedback was focussed mostly on the construction of the exercise and defined where certain exercises should be strengthened or combined with one another. Additionally, this feedback allowed me to realize where my design criteria was not being met, allowing for the creation of new exercises altogether. Following this beta test of my initial exercises, I refined them into the nine exercises which follow this introduction. These exercises were then tested with a public sector team over the period of three hours. This feedback was much more direct, as the exercises were more developed and had strong instructions and themes. This feedback related mostly to the flow of the exercises, where instructions needed to be clearer, and how to make the language and/or themes of the exercise more inclusive and/or accessible.

All the exercises are of the researcher's own design. I pull inspiration from various corporate methods, design thinking methods, improvisation games, as well as from other unique and/or niche origins; these inspirations are cited in the text. However, these exercises are not derivatives of these cited methods, but simply are inspired by them.

ESTABLISHING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

It is important that groups establish a safe space before engaging in these exercises. Though these exercises will still have some benefits without establishing a safe space, they will not be as beneficial as they might have been. Establishing a safe space is personal to each organization, but in general the following points, gathered from primary research, will help a facilitator to establish as safe space:

- Clearly communicate the desired outcome of the exercises and the purpose of the meeting. Let people know that their participation is appreciated, and that this is an iterative process with no expectations of a solution or answer by the end of the workshop.
- Consistently ask if anyone has any questions and be willing to explain concepts many times.
- Acknowledge feelings of awkwardness and express the idea that these feelings are natural. Encourage participants to work through these feelings, reminding them that innovation often comes from a lack of comfort.
- Include management in the meetings, encouraging them to participate fully and enthusiastically. Consider talking to management before, asking them to participate earnestly in the exercise and not to pull rank.
- Use techniques like post-up and/or hand raising to ensure all voices are being heard.
- Try not to set strict time limits to allow room for idea exploration.
- Actively acknowledge the safe space at the beginning of each meeting. Follow up on ideas or outcomes of the meeting so participants feel heard.
- Thank participants for their input, consider applauding if appropriate.

ROLE CALL

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
Trust & Support, Empathy, Shared Goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
2 to 15

PLAY TIME
15-45 minutes, depending on number of players

PURPOSE
Role Call is a useful exercise which helps employees communicate to their leaders what they need in order to feel fulfilled in the workplace. This exercise can be used to boost self esteem among employees and promote bonding, since employees share their positive feelings about one another. This exercise also boosts feelings of belonging and motivation, as employees are given opportunities to communicate what works about their current job and what might be done to empower their skills.
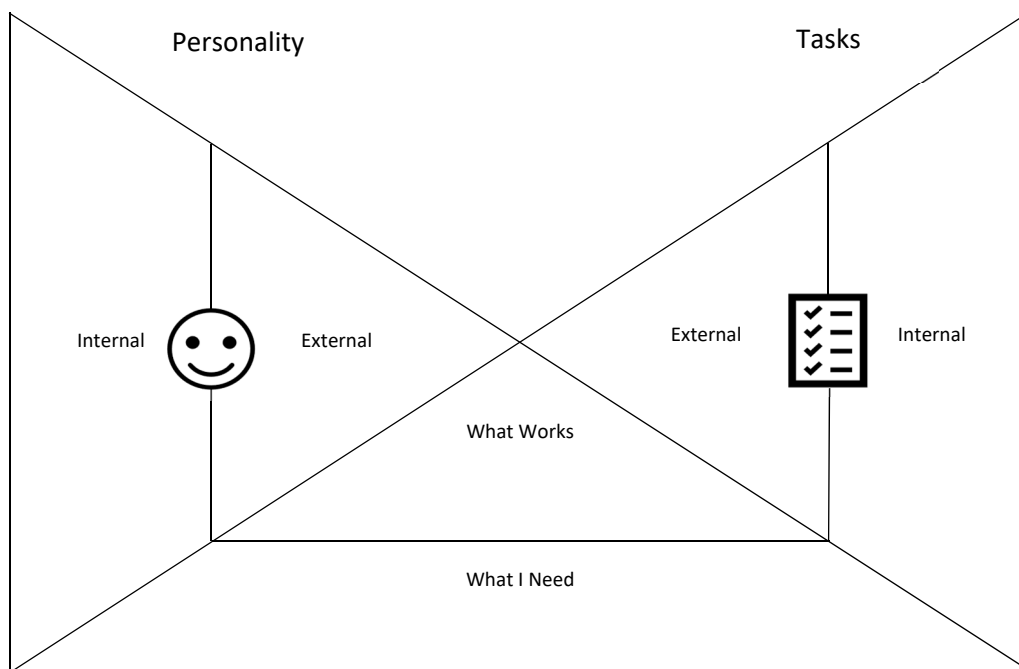
Figure 11: Role Call Exercise Layout

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Either print out the Role Call sheet found in Appendix E or have participants hand-draw a copy. If you plan to use sticky-notes for this exercise, ensure that the paper is big enough to contain the sticky-notes. Give one sheet to each participant and ensure that they put their name in the middle.

2. Have participants fill out the "Internal" sections on both the "Personality" (left side) and "Tasks" (right side) parts of the sheet. Internal personality might include traits and interests which the participant feels describes them best (e.g extroverted, organized, honest). Internal tasks include employee's strengths, weaknesses, and areas of professional development which employees want to build (e.g strong at graphic design, wants to develop public speaking skills).

3. Participants fold over the "Internal" sections of both the "Personality" and "Tasks" sections so that only the "External" triangles are showing.
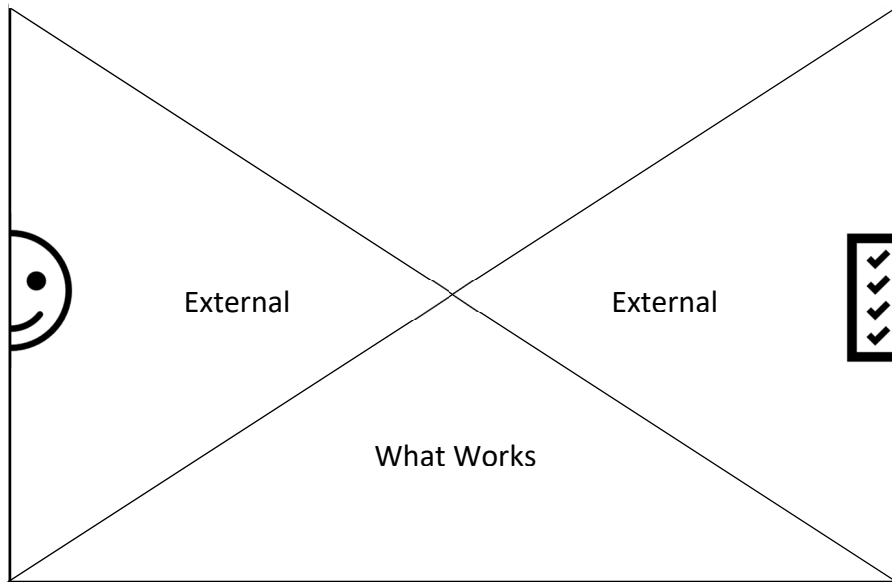
Figure 12: Role Call Layout Folded

4. Ask participants to move around the room, filling in the "External" triangles on both "Personality" and "Tasks" for each other participant. For "Personality", participants should write traits which they see in each participant (e.g. trustworthy, creative). For "Tasks", participants should write what they see as their colleagues' strengths at work, as well as describe what they do day to day (e.g. excellent at graphic design, creates outreach materials).

> NOTE: Participants should only use positive adjectives to describe each other. For a list of adjectives, see Appendix F.
> If participants agree with something which is already written, they can simply add a check mark to indicate their agreement to an idea.
> If space is restrictive, ask participants to pass the sheets to each other in a circle, until the filled sheets return to their owners.

5. Once the sheet is returned to its owner, participants unfold the hidden area and see how their internal and external selves match up. Encourage participants to note the differences between the internal and external selves.

6. Based on their external "Personality" and "Tasks", employees fill out the "What Works" category pertaining to their job. Perhaps their creativity aligns well with their graphic design work, or perhaps their organization skills align with their data

management. The "What Works" category acts as a place to write what individuals find fulfilling about their job.

7. Participants now fill out the "What I Need" section. Perhaps their job description does not match their internal personality, or there are certain skills they have which others do not see. For example, if someone wrote that they are an extrovert who loves public speaking, but their colleagues failed to recognize this, this participant might write "I need chances to engage my extroversion and use my public speaking skills".

8. Allow time for discussion among employees. What about this exercise was surprising? What did they learn about their external self? What skills do they want to develop?

STRATEGY

Emphasize to participants that this exercise is not only about communicating their wants and needs to leadership, but also supporting the actions of their colleagues. Each section fulfills a purpose, helping employees gain self confidence, bond with one another, learn about themselves, and communicate what they need to feel more fulfilled in their job. Ensure there is meaningful follow up after the exercise as well. For example, as participants could type up the bottom triangle and email the facilitator or set up appointments with leadership to discuss their findings. This exercise is best used in conjunction with the Ability Grid (next page).

COMPATABLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES

Ability Grid, QWRCs, Public versus Private

INSPIRATION(S)

Johari Window (corporate method), Party Quirks (improvisation game), Empathy Map (design thinking method)

ABILITY GRID

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
Support & Trust, Listening, Shared Goals, Share & Shift Power

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
5-15
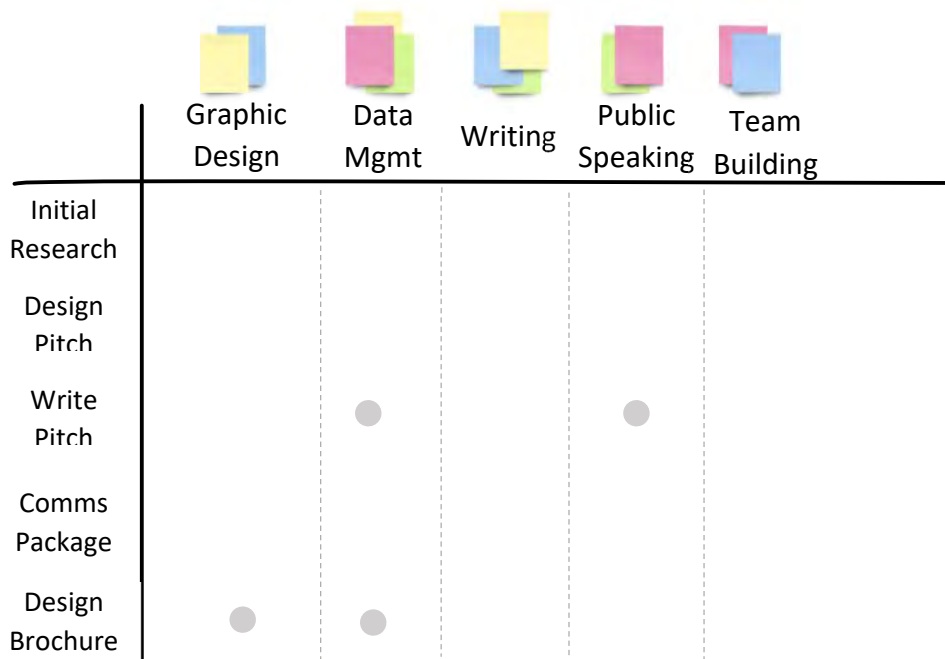
PLAY TIME
30 to 90 minutes

PURPOSE
Ability Grid is both a strategy and communications tool, helping leaders and employees find out for what tasks their talents are best used. This tool promotes communications among team members and allows participants to find opportunities which best use their skills and tap into their interests. The Ability Grid is designed to increase employee motivation and job satisfaction and help them to use their energy economy better.

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Draw a table with "Skills" along the top x axis, and "Jobs" listed down the y axis.
2. Ask participants to list their skills or strengths on sticky notes. This can include skills they currently have, or skills which they would like to develop.

	Graphic Design	Data Mgmt	Writing	Public Speaking	Team Building
Initial Research					
Design Pitch					
Write Pitch		●		●	
Comms Package					
Design Brochure	●	●			

Figure 13: Role Call Layout Example

3. Participants will next post their skills up on x axis of the table, grouping together skills which multiple people share.

4. As a group, list all the jobs which need to be done to complete a certain project along the y axis of the table. These tasks can either be listed sequentially or posted randomly to be sorted later.

     NOTE: This list can be completed beforehand to save time during the meeting. If this approach is taken, it is recommended that employees have the chance to give input into this list to increase buy in.

5. Once the x and y axis are filled, begin to populate the Ability Grid. To do this, move down the y axis task by task, checking off which skills will be needed to do a task.

	Graphic Design	Data Mgmt	Writing	Public Speaking	Team Building
Initial Research					
Design Pitch	●		●	●	
Write Pitch			●		
Comms Package	●				●
Design Brochure	●	●			

Figure 14: Role Call Layout Analyzed

6. Once the Ability Grid is completely populated, take note of instances when skills are matched to very few jobs, and vice versa.
7. As a team, decide what other jobs or tasks might be created to stimulate skills which otherwise are not being used. In addition, ask what skills need to be developed to best complete the project. Be sure to document these ideas for future use. Allow the group time to absorb and discuss these ideas.

STRATEGY
Remind participants at the beginning of the exercise to write their strengths and skills from their own perspective, rather than what they think will best support the project. If they focus only on what might help the project, they are losing chances for learning or professional development. Ensure that there is a strong follow-up to this exercise, creating jobs to stimulate skills or learning opportunities to create new skills.

COMPATABLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES
Role Call, Build the Box, QWRCs, Public versus Private

INSPIRATION(S)
Affinity map (corporate method), RACI Matrix (corporate method), Strategy Rollout (design thinking method)

BUILD THE BOX

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
"Yes, and…", Attitude & Energy, Rapid Problem Solving, Shared Goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
5-15

PLAY TIME
15 to 45 minutes

PURPOSE
Teams often think they need to innovate "out of the box", but often times innovating "inside the box" creates a more innovative and disruptive product. Build the Box encourages teams to frame their problem area and create a "playing field" to innovate within. By better understanding the parameters of a project, teams know "where they play" and can create better innovations within this field. This exercise creates a shared understanding of goals and parameters, and brings everyone on board from the beginning of a project, creating higher levels of buy in.

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Draw a box like the one pictured below. Work with the group to label each side of the box, matching the labels listed on the example below.
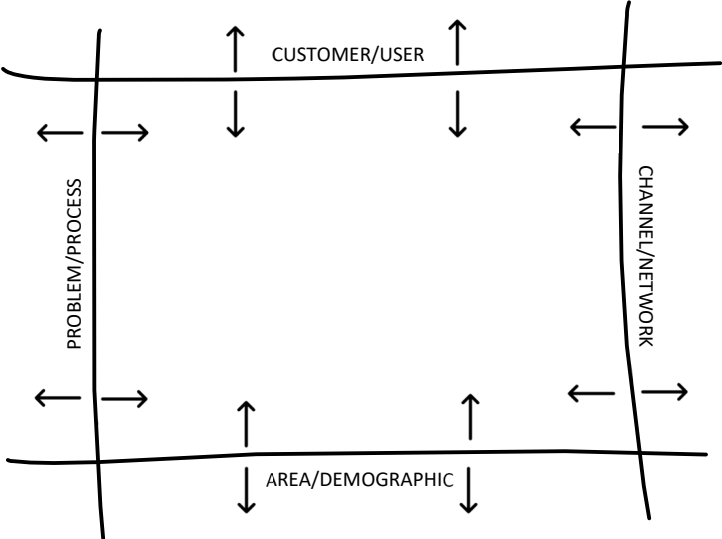
Figure 15: Build the Box Layout

2. Starting with Customer/User, brainstorm ideas in either direction to make the user base either more specific or broader. Write these new ideas in a list, to keep track of all ideas.
For example: Young Adults in Ontario
                                            Teenagers in Ontario
                        Original customer: Teenagers in Toronto
                            Teenagers between 13-15 in Toronto
                            Female teens between 13-15 in Toronto
3. Follow this process for each side of the box.
4. Once each side of the box had been expanded and contracted, pick the level on each side of the box which makes the most sense for the project. This can be completed through discussion or through voting. Ensure that this process is democratic, using voting techniques like "Dot-Mocracy".
5. Draw your new box and discuss the implications of this new box on the project.
6. Circulate your findings team-wide.
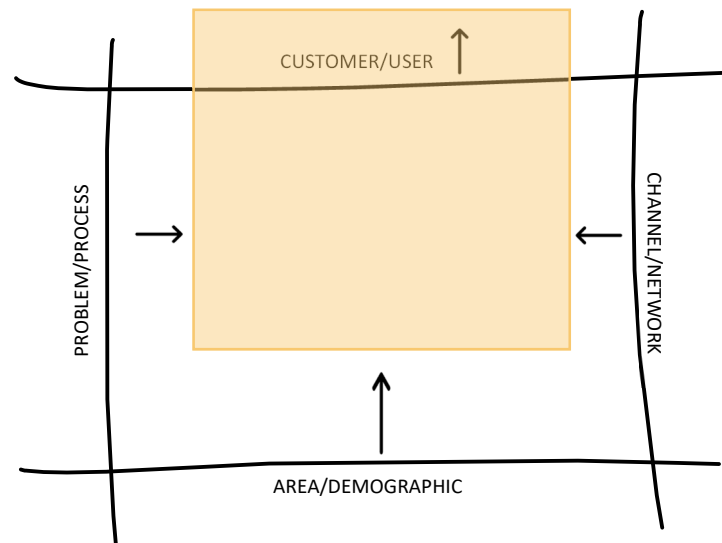
Figure 16: Build the Box Layout Analyzed

STRATEGY

Try to push ideas to their fullest and go as many layers more specific or broad as possible. This will allow for a more accurately defined box and will support more innovative ideas. Remind participants not to get too caught up in the wording, since the exact phrasing of the layers can be fixed after the exercise.

COMPATABLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES

Ability Grid, Idea Draft, Solution Roulette, Question Scrambler

INSPIRATION(S)

More Specific/ Less Specific (improvisation game), Strategic Choice Cascade (corporate method)

QUESTION SCRAMBLER

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
"Yes, and…", Attitude & Energy, Flexibility & Adaptability, Surrender Your Plans

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
2-15

PLAY TIME
5 to 20 minutes

PURPOSE
Question Scrambler is a quick, fun game to help groups break out of rigid feelings and open their minds up to the possibility of different ideas. By introducing new solutions and ideas into the problem framing process, participants learn flexibility and adaptability skills. Using Question Scrambler, groups can ask better questions and come up with better solutions.

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Write the original question group has agreed upon in the middle of the board.
2. Write a new question directly above the current question, by altering the question slightly to make it broader. Continue this process at least three times or until the question is as broad as possible. Do this directly below as well, making the question more specific. Continue this process at least three times or until the question is as narrow as possible.
3. Starting at the new, very broad question, write a new question above that question that is slightly more specific, but different than the one just below it. Continue this process making the new question as narrow as possible.
4. Continue this process starting at the very specific question, making it as broad as possible.
5. Repeat this process as many times as desired, creating new patterns of broad to specific or specific to broad questions.
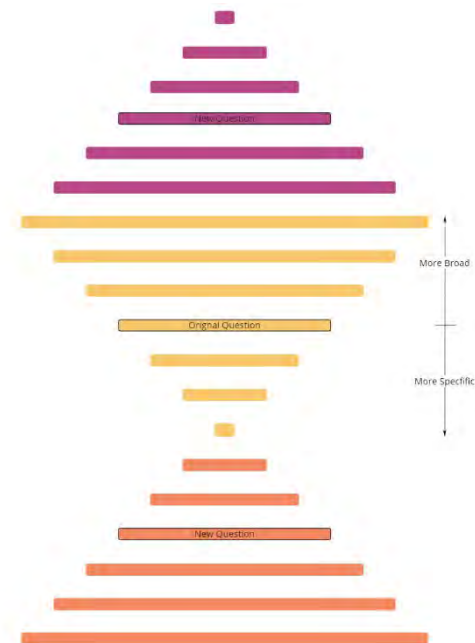
STRATEGY
Encourage participants to be creative and put their preconceived notions to the side. Remind them of the benefits of this process, since creating a well-defined question with the correct level of specificity can help give groups a clearer understanding of the project.

COMPATIBLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES
Build the Box, Solution Roulette

INSPIRATION(S)
More Specific/ Less Specific (improvisation game), Strategic Choice Cascade (corporate method)

FLIP FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
"Yes, and…", Support & Trust, Attitude & Energy, Empathy, Rapid Problem Solving

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
5-15

PLAY TIME
15 to 30 minutes

PURPOSE
This quick and fun exercise helps employees talk about their concerns regarding a project in a creative way, helping to facilitate a conversation about their worries or fears. This exercise uses humour and fun to build bond between employees, giving tools to quickly talk about an issue without feeling too vulnerable or nervous. Drawing a personification of the problem allows for creative storytelling, making an accessible form to draw analogies and talk about an issue using a reference most people will understand.

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Decide what you want to draw a personification of, either an abstract or specific topic.
2. Divide the participants into several groups and assign a part of the body to each group. This could simply be "top and bottom half", "head, torso, legs", and so on.
3. Ask the participants to draw each body part in the time allotted and come up for reasons why they chose to include each part of the drawing. Maybe the hair is messy because he is stressed, or he has a stain on his shirt because he is careless. Throughout the drawing process, encourage participants to stretch their ideas by asking probing questions on what the figure looks like, is holding, is saying, and so on.
4. Bring the group back together and build the monster from head to toe. As each group to describe the body parts they drew. Be sure to applaud each group. Discuss the monster. What makes it a monster? What did we learn?
5. If time allows, flip the monster. Repeat steps 2-5 but draw the best version of your topic as possible.

STRATEGY
Watch out for negative humour and move towards positive humour whenever possible. Remind participants not to be drawing a real person, listen closely to conversations to avoid this. Manage the conversation carefully to avoid ableist comments, since the analogies people bring up might reference physical abnormalities as negative traits.

COMPATIBLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES
QWRCs, Idea Draft

INSPIRATION(S)
Exquisite Corpse (collaborative drawing game), Draw the Problem (corporate method), Flip It (corporate method), Pre-Mortem (corporate method)

ROLE QWRCS

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
"Yes, and…", Empathy, Flexibility & Adaptability, Share & Shift Power

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
1-15

PLAY TIME
15 minutes for exercise, plus discussion time

PURPOSE
Having empathy for others is often an underestimated skill but has immense benefits during the innovation process. Role QWRCs (pronounced quirks) acts as a tool to help get into the mind of another person before or during a roleplaying exercise.
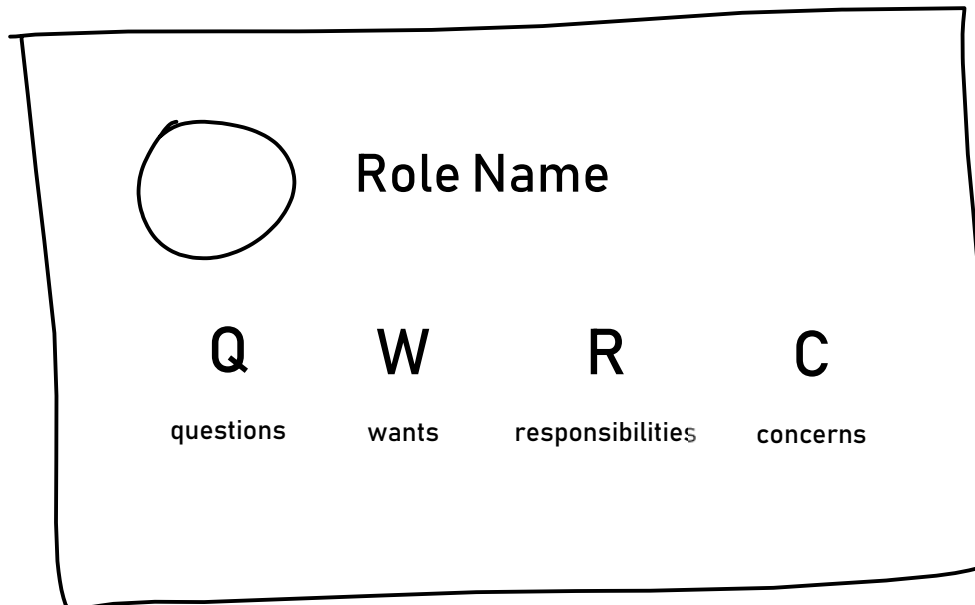
Figure 17: Role QWRCs Layout

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Assign a role to each participant. Some overlap is okay. These roles could be users, stakeholders, clients, or other employees involved in a project.
2. As participants to give their role a name, describe the role, and draw a picture of the role. This material can be prepared beforehand if you are pressed for time.
3. Have participants fill out each section for the role.
   > Q describes questions and represents any questions a user might have about your product. These questions could be logistical, operational, or practical.

W describes wants and represents what a user might want out of your product. These wants could be emotional, job related, interest based, and so on.

R describes responsibilities and represents the duties your user must perform every day. This does not have to relate to your product.

C describes concerns and represents day to day worries that your user might have. This does not have to relate to your product.

4. Ask participants to get together in groups and describe their findings. The discussion could be about summarizing their ideas or working together to brainstorm more ideas. If desired, steps 1-3 can be done as a group instead of individually.

STRATEGY

Encourage participants to take their time creating the QWRCs and emphasize the idea of getting in the headspace of the role, like giving the role a name, profession, and so on. Watch out for negative stereotyping of QWRCS; if dealing with marginalized groups consider performing some demographic research beforehand. If stereotypes still arise, consider performing another round of QWRCs asking participants to rethink their personas.

COMPATIBLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES

Build the Box, Flip Frankenstein's Monster, Idea Draft, Public vs Private, Solution Roulette

INSPIRATION(S)

Welcome to My World (corporate method), Stakeholder Analysis (design thinking method), various characterization and character-building games (improvisation)

IDEA DRAFT

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
Empathy, Listening, Flexibility & Adaptability, Sharing & Shifting Power

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
9 - 15

PLAY TIME
30 to 60 minutes

PURPOSE
Idea Draft is a unique exercise that combines empathy, listening, and brainstorming to help groups come up with new, unique ideas. Idea Draft allows groups to borrow ideas from within their own team to build better solutions and have interesting new conversations.

Figure 18: Idea Draft Gameplay

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Group participants into groups of three and assign each group an area of expertise. This can be an area which all participants share expertise in, or participants can engage in roleplaying to understand this area of expertise better.
2. Two participants engage in conversation around a certain probing question, while another listens and captures their ideas on index cards. The probing question can be about a problem, product, or a brainstorm for an idea. The person listening should write one idea on each index card. The listener strictly can not talk or engage in the conversation and must only take notes. The listener is essentially creating a "deck" of ideas from the conversation they are hearing.
3. Have each group mark their stickies with a distinct shape or colour.
4. All groups gather into a circle. The facilitator collects all the cards, shuffles them up, and begins to pass them around in the circle. As the cards are being passed around, groups will work together to grab new cards to create a new "deck" which they can

use to solve their problem. Groups want to collect a diverse range of cards (preferably with one of each colour and/or shape) in their deck.

5. After the groups have collected their decks, they are given time to talk to one another about the deck that they created. Why did they choose the cards that they did? How do these ideas work together to improve on their original understanding? What areas of expertise can they get from other groups to add to their own? Ensure one member of each group is taking notes on this conversation. Open to wider discussion about lessons learned and discoveries made.

STRATEGY
Coach listeners to translate ideas into language which is generic enough for any group to use.

COMPATIBLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES
Build the Box, Flip Frankenstein's Monster, Role QWRCs

INSPIRATION(S)
Card drafting games (e.g. Magic the Gathering, Marvel Legendary), Three Person Endowment (improvisation game)

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
Rapid Problem Solving, Flexibility & Adaptability, Surrender Your Plans, Share & Shift Power

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
5-15

PLAY TIME
15 to 45 minutes.

PURPOSE
Public versus Private is a fun game which helps designers recognize the gaps between what they want their product to do versus what it does. By removing any influence of what the product is supposed to be doing, Public versus Private shifts power into the participants hands and allows them to honestly voice their opinion about how a product influences them.
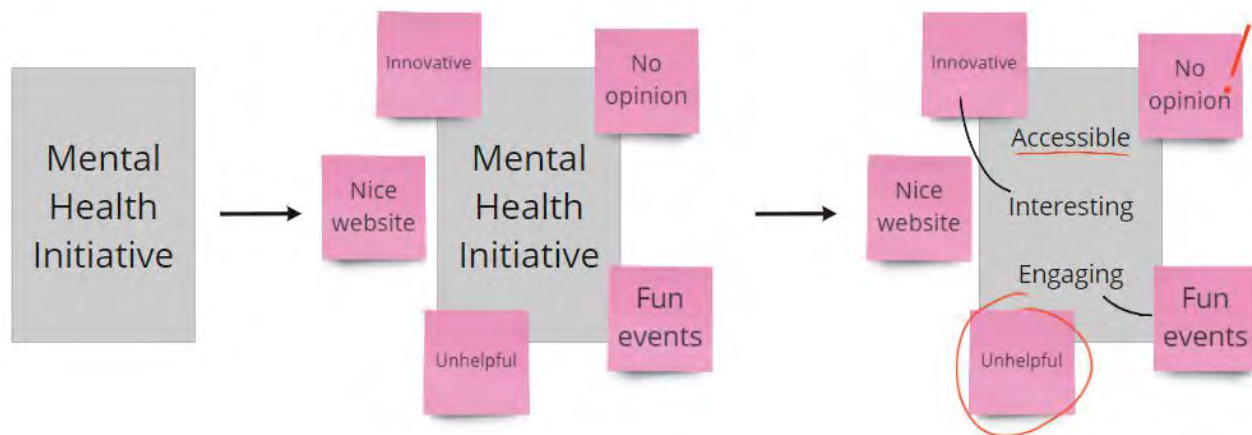
Figure 19: Public versus Private Gameplay

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Prior to the meeting, the facilitator will write 4 concepts/ products onto pieces of paper which they want to hear participants' opinions on. These can be products, internal initiatives, or projects. On the back of the sheet of paper, the facilitator will write the major elements/factors which users or employees should be aware of. For example, the facilitator would write Mental Health Initiative on the front of the paper and on the back they might write words like Accessible, Interesting, Engaging (or whatever major factors employees should know).
2. Post these 4 concepts around the room. The product side should be facing out, e.g. Mental Health, with the major elements/factors hidden against the wall.
3. Ask participants to circulate with a pile of sticky notes, posting up their opinions on what they see as the major takeaways from the product, initiative, or project.
   > NOTE: If participants are brainstorming on an external facing product, consider combining this exercise with role-playing and allow participants to write what they believe their role would think about the product.

4. One by one, flip the paper over to reveal what was on the other side. Discuss where there are similarities and differences. Make note of where the differences are harmful, helpful, or surprising. The new insights can help the team pinpoint where the branding/storytelling of the project matches, where it needs to be improved, or if a completely new story needs to be told.

STRATEGY

As participants to be as honest as possible (but not rude) with their answers, because their feedback gives a true understanding of how the product or initiative is being received. Coach participants to even write "no opinion" or "I don't know" if they have no opinion.

COMPATIBLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES

Role Call, Ability Grid, QWRCs

INSPIRATION(S)

Johari Window (business method), Party Quirks (improvisation game)

SOLUTION ROULETTE

IMPROVISATION SKILLS DEVELOPED
"Yes, and…", Attitude & Energy, Listening, Rapid Problem Solving

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
3-15

PLAY TIME
5 to 20 minutes

PURPOSE
Solution Roulette is a quick, fun, and silly exercise to get participants into a creative mindset. Designed to encourage laughter, Solution Roulette facilitates team bonding. On a symbolic level, Solution Roulette helps participants understand how bringing in an unlikely idea can help projects, ultimately facilitating a culture of "Yes, and…" and an increased desire to listen to everyone's ideas.

INSTRUCTIONS
1. Before the meeting, come up with one problem that needs to be solved (e.g. the branding on the website is weak). Build a deck of cards with many diverse nouns on it; the more unique the better. A bank of words can be found in Appendix H. The number of cards is at the discretion of the facilitator, with each card taking a minute of time.
2. For small groups, this can be done altogether. For large groups, split into groups of about six.
3. Pose the problem to the group, and flip over the first card. The noun gets subbed in as the thing fixing the problem. (e.g. How might a cowboy fix our weak branding problem?). As participants to yell out ways that the noun might fix the problem (e.g. A cowboy would be a straight shooter and tell it like it is, making the story of our brand clearer). If the facilitator prefers, the cards can be different stakeholders or clients who are impacted by this problem. This allows for some roleplay and empathy work.
4. Continue flipping the cards until the deck is finished.

STRATEGY
This participation can be facilitated in various ways. Participants could be pointed at and must come up with an idea, participants could raise their hand, throw a ball to whoever is next, and so on. Try and ensure that many people come up with an answer as possible. Note that it is not about finding the funniest answer, but instead coming up with a creative solution.

COMPATIBLE WITH THE FOLLOWING GAMES
Build the Box, Question Scramble

INSPIRATION(S)
Banana Banana (improvisation game), Forced Analogy (corporate exercise)

5

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this paper, I have attempted to answer the question "How might we combine design thinking and improvisation principles to mitigate the negative impacts of fear of failure in an organization?". The answer for this question culminated in nine unique exercises designed to mitigate feelings of fear of failure in the workplace.

In Part One, I established that most organizations operate within a broken system, wherein the organizational culture prohibits failure making employees stick to the status quo. Although organizations stuck to the status quo, they still demand innovations from employees, leading to a lack of motivation, increased cynicism, and employee frustration. I positioned improvisation principles as a possible technique to intervene in these situations, since its lessons directly counter the negative impacts of fear of failure. I established that organizations recognize that their organizational culture needed help, and that they would spend millions of dollars on remedying this problem. I acknowledged that these current solutions were not working, and that there was a need for a more sustainable intervention – much like the exercises I designed.

In Part Two, I laid the groundwork for the problem area, identifying the negative impacts of fear of failure. I outlined how feelings of cynicism, lack of motivation, and disillusionment in an organization oftentimes comes from internal cognitive biases. These biases are established by social pressures and could be retrained given the proper interventions. I next outlined my definition of humour and explained how humour can alleviate the negative impacts of fear of failure.

Following this discussion of the problem area, I spent some time uncovering the connections between improvisation principles, design thinking, and positive organizational culture. This discussion ameliorated the many benefits of improvisation, and how it closely relates to and compliments design thinking.

In Part Three, I outlined and examined my primary research. I showed my findings methods by method, outlining the major takeaways in each case. Finally, I examined all the research methods and outlined my criteria for success. Using these criteria for success, I designed my exercises.

In Part Four, I laid out my exercises as a mini-booklet for teams to use. Each exercise had brief but pointed instructions, an outline of its benefits, and tips for best use. These exercises are also accompanied by work sheets and helpful hacks in the Appendices. These exercises were tested with various teams to test their flow and effectiveness.

At the conclusion of this process, analysis, and design, I can conclude that the exercises I designed meet their criteria of success and have the potential to mitigate the negative impacts of fear of failure within in organization.

Many organizations find themselves at a crossroads. They know they must innovate to remain relevant but are faced with an organizational culture so afraid of failure they refuse to take the risks in order to innovate. This organizational culture gives way to the kinds of attitudes discussed in this report; lack of motivation, low self esteem and organizational cynicism. I position my exercises to counteract these feelings, with improvisational principles as the core inspiration. Let us reconsider Figure 2 from earlier in this report.

Figure 20: Figure 2 Revisited

Examining this figure, we can see how my exercises are able to circumvent the negative impacts of fear of failure, and ultimately alleviate organizations of these feelings altogether. My exercises use the applied improvisation principles labeled in pink at the top right of the figure, which eventually leads to mending the break wherein employees did not feel motivated and stimulated in their workplace. These new positive feelings ultimately increase pride in the workplace, leading to more creative thinking thus boosting the culture of innovation. When a culture is more innovative it is possible to break the status quo, ultimately leading to creative products or initiatives which are more sustainable in the long-term. When an organization is doing well economically, it follows they are more likely to take risks since they have more leeway and might be more relaxed. The more risks they can take, the less an organization is risk averse, which ultimately decreases feelings of fear of failure. My interventions have the possibility of increasing positive organizational feelings and decreasing organizational fear of failure and/ or risk aversion.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS

Though these exercises were tested and adjusted to participant feedback, these exercises are still in their infancy. Feedback from participants indicates that these exercises meet the criteria for success outlined by the researcher. However, to validate this feedback a more thorough level of testing that is beyond the scope of this MRP. I suggest it would be best to conduct further workshops across a broader range of participants, exposing an increasing number of users to these exercises and allowing them to evolve. Further, a more clinical approach to feedback might be used if these exercises were developed further. This might look like a trial which follows the use of these exercise over a period, such as a fiscal quarter, and measuring participant's levels of risk aversion, team bonding, motivation, and cynicism before and after their participation. This level of research is beyond the scope of this project, and the researcher would need to partner with a researcher familiar with social psychology to properly carry out a clinical study.

The exercises might also be translated into a more creative format in future iterations. This might include a card game, wherein the exercises listed here, and perhaps others, are created in to a portable deck of cards. This deck of cards would allow participants to take these exercises anywhere and choose exercises at random to build their creative thinking capabilities. By gamifying the workshop process, participants might find more opportunities for humour and joy. This deck of cards format might also be more useful for consultants, who could transport these exercises anywhere easier than carrying a booklet or accessing a link online.

AND SCENE!

In improvisation, you are never free of fear. You are always taking risks. Improvisation troupes work together to build bonds and improve techniques to make the reward worth the risk. You learn to look at the dangers associated with failure, embrace them, and run with them. Rather than this being an individualistic battle, nobody is considered the "star" or "hero", and everyone must face the fear together.

Every person, team, or organization have their own kind of Boogeyman. Acknowledging the stigmas within and toxic elements of an organization can be a daunting task, but speaking these fears often helps to put them to rest. Instead of hiding from the Boogeyman or pretending he does not exist, you open the closet doors and let him walk right into your life.

You befriend the Boogeyman.

BONUS PIECES

WORKS CITED

A SYSTEMS THINKING MODEL: THE ICEBERG - Northwest Earth Institute. (n.d.). Retrieved November 9, 2018, from https://nwei.org/iceberg/

Anderson, J. R. (2008). *"Yes, and…!" Assessing the Impact of Theatre-Based Improvisational Training and a Simulation on Work Group Behavior*. Miami University. Retrieved from https://etd.ohiolink.edu/ap/10?0::NO:10:P10_ACCESSION_NUM:miami1217826279

Applied Improvisation Network |. (n.d.). Retrieved October 29, 2018, from http://appliedimprovisation.network/

A/r/tography as methodology | Artistic Intellect. (n.d.). Retrieved October 27, 2018, from http://artisticintellect.com/2013/08/05/artography-as-methodology/

Atkinson, J. W., & Litwin, G. H. (1960). Achievement motive and test anxiety conceived as motive to approach success and motive to avoid failure. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *60*(1), 52–63. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0041119

Ben, R. (2013, December 21). 6 Ways Improv Aligns With Mindfulness. Retrieved November 23, 2018, from https://medium.com/all-things-improv/six-ways-improv-aligns-with-mindfulness-c9578bb3b1f3

Bermant, G. (2013). Working with(out) a net: improvisational theater and enhanced well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *4*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00929

Cacciotti, G., Hayton, J. C., Mitchell, J. R., & Giazitzoglu, A. (2016). A reconceptualization of fear of failure in entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *31*(3), 302–325. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2016.02.002

Campbell, C. (2014). Improv to Improve Interprofessional Communication, Team Building, Patient Safety, and Patient Satisfaction. *Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) Projects*. Retrieved from http://repository.usfca.edu/dnp/27

Cann, A., Zapata, C. L., & Davis, H. B. (2009). Positive and Negative Styles of Humor in Communication: Evidence for the Importance of Considering Both Styles. *Communication Quarterly*, *57*(4), 452–468. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370903313398

Dam, R., & Siang, T. (n.d.). 5 Stages in the Design Thinking Process. Retrieved October 27, 2018, from https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/5-stages-in-the-design-thinking-process

Erdil, O., & Müceldili, B. (2014). The Effects of Envy on Job Engagement and Turnover Intention. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *150*, 447–454. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.09.050

Executive. (2013, April 4). Why Canada just can't shake its risk aversion | Financial Post. Retrieved October 13, 2018, from https://financialpost.com/executive/why-so-glum-chum-canadas-net-optimism-falls-below-u-s-for-the-first-time

Gkorezis, P., Petridou, E., & Xanthiakos, P. (2014). Leader positive humor and organizational cynicism: LMX as a mediator. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *35*(4), 305–315. https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-07-2012-0086

Goleman, D. (2004, January 1). What Makes a Leader? *Harvard Business Review*, (January 2004). Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader

Goodman, K. (2008). *Improvisation for the spirit: live a more creative, spontaneous, and courageous life using the tools of improv comedy*. Naperville, Ill.: Sourcebooks. Retrieved from http://www.ECU.eblib.com.au/EBLWeb/patron/?target=patron&extendedid=P_370630_0

Gray, D., Brown, S., & Macanufo, J. (2010). *Gamestorming: a playbook for innovators, rulebreakers, and changemakers* (First edition). Beijing Cambridge Farnham Köln Sebastopol Tokyo: O'Reilly.

Halpern, C., Close, D., & Johnson, K. (1994). *Truth in comedy: the manual of improvisation* (1st ed). Colorado Springs, Colo: Meriwether Pub.

Hanington, B. M. (2007). *GENERATIVE RESEARCH IN DESIGN EDUCATION*. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Carnegie Mellon University School of Design.

Johari Window - take the test online. (n.d.). Retrieved November 22, 2018, from https://kevan.org/johari

Kahneman, D. (2013). *Thinking, fast and slow*.

Kathleen, T. (2015, September 11). Using Comedy Improv as Therapy for Anxiety -. Retrieved October 13, 2018, from https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/09/comedy-improv-anxiety/403933/

Kelley, T., & Kelley, D. (2013). *Creative confidence: unleashing the creative potential within us all*.

Kulhan, B., & Crisafulli, C. (2017). *Getting to "yes and": the art of business improv*. Stanford, California: Stanford Business Books, an imprint of Stanford University Press.

Kumar, V. (2013). *101 design methods: a structured approach for driving innovation in your organization*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Lafley, A. G., & Martin, R. L. (2013). *Playing to win: how strategy really works*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Review Press.

Lee, Y. S., Chang, J. Y., & Choi, J. N. (2017). Why Reject Creative Ideas? Fear as a Driver of Implicit Bias Against Creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, *29*(3), 225–235. https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2017.1360061

Lorne Micheals. (n.d.). *Ashlee Simpson on SNL*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RrLAgi_mBY

Madson, P. R. (2005). *Improv wisdom: don't prepare, just show up* (1st ed). New York: Bell Tower.

Management: perspective and practice. (n.d.). Retrieved November 11, 2018, from https://www.open.edu/openlearn/money-business/leadership-management/management-perspective-and-practice/content-section-0

Mathew, H. E., & Vijayalakshmi, V. (2017). Changing Definitions of Work and Play: Importance of Workplace Humour. *Psychological Studies*, *62*(1), 12–20. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12646-017-0395-9

One-half of working population unhappy in job: Survey | Canadian HR Reporter. (n.d.). Retrieved October 13, 2018, from https://www.hrreporter.com/article/27461-one-half-of-working-population-unhappy-in-job-survey/

Schraeder, M., Jordan, M. H., Self, D. R., & Hoover, D. J. (2016). Unlearning cynicism: A supplemental approach in addressing a serious organizational malady. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, *24*(3), 532–547. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-05-2013-0674

Scott, K. A., & Zweig, D. (2016). Understanding and mitigating cynicism in the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *31*(2), 552–569. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-01-2015-0023

Serrat, O. (2017). Harnessing Creativity and Innovation in the Workplace. In O. Serrat, *Knowledge Solutions* (pp. 903–910). Singapore: Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-0983-9_102

Sharma, A. (2017, September 7). No Wonder Canadians Hate Their Jobs: A Lot Of Our Work Is Meaningless. Retrieved October 13, 2018, from https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/arash-sharma/no-wonder-canadians-hate-their-jobs-a-lot-of-our-work-is-meaningless_a_23200391/

Shochet, R., King, J., Levine, R., Clever, S., & Wright, S. (2013). 'Thinking on my feet': an improvisation course to enhance students' confidence and responsiveness in the medical interview. *Education for Primary Care*, *24*(2), 119–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/14739879.2013.11493466

Singh, S., Corner, P. D., & Pavlovich, K. (2015). Failed, not finished: A narrative approach to understanding venture failure stigmatization. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *30*(1), 150–166. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.07.005

Sloane, O. (2013, April 2). Top 25 Improvised/Unscripted Movie Scenes - IMDb. Retrieved January 1, 2019, from https://www.imdb.com/list/ls051744377/

Tate. (n.d.). Cadavre exquis (exquisite corpse) – Art Term. Retrieved November 29, 2018, from https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/cadavre-exquis-exquisite-corpse

Tews, M. J., Michel, J. W., & Noe, R. A. (2017). Does fun promote learning? The relationship between fun in the workplace and informal learning. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *98*, 46–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2016.09.006

Thomas, K. (n.d.). Canada Has a Disease Called Risk-Aversion and It's Going to Take a Cultural Shift to Propel Us Forward. Retrieved October 13, 2018, from https://techvibes.com/2014/04/23/canada-risk-aversion-cultural-shift-propel-forward-2014-04-23

Walberg, R. (n.d.). Why Canada just can't shake its risk aversion | Financial Post. Retrieved November 23, 2018, from https://business.financialpost.com/executive/why-so-glum-chum-canadas-net-optimism-falls-below-u-s-for-the-first-time

West, S., Hoff, E., & Carlsson, I. (2017). Enhancing team creativity with playful improvisation theater: a controlled intervention field study. *International Journal of Play*, *6*(3), 283–293. https://doi.org/10.1080/21594937.2017.1383000

What Does The Iceberg Model Even Mean? (n.d.). Retrieved November 11, 2018, from https://www.foresightdesign.org/blog/2017/6/14/what-does-the-iceberg-model-even-mean

Zukin, D. C., & Szeltner, M. (2012). Talent Report: What Workers Want 2012, 99.

IMAGE CREDITS

ICONS[2]

Created by Gan Khoon Lay
from Noun Project

Created by Gan Khoon Lay
from Noun Project

Created by Gregor Cresnar
from Noun Project

Created by Hadi Davodpour
from Noun Project

Created by Gan Khoon Lay
from Noun Project

Created by Adrien Coquet
from Noun Project

Created by Gan Khoon Lay
from Noun Project

Created by Lucas Helle
from Noun Project

Created by Roselin Christina.S
from Noun Project

Created by Gregor Cresnar
from Noun Project

Created by Adrien Coquet
from Noun Project

Created by Luis Prado
from Noun Project

Created by Stephen Plaster
from Noun Project

PICTURES

Ilnur Kamilullin
Unsplash.com

Paul Wallez
Unsplash.com
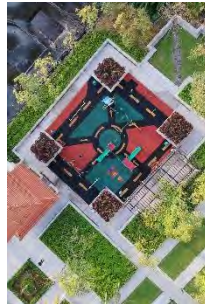
Gaddafi Rusli
Unsplash.com

Yu62ballena
Pixabay.com

Philip Veater
Unsplash.com
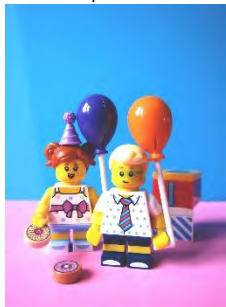
@helloimnik
Unsplash.com

@helloimnik
Unsplash.com

---

[2] Some icons sourced directly from Microsoft Word clipart library, and therefore are not cited here.

@freestocks
Unsplash.com

Zhen Hu
Unsplash.com

Lily Banse
Unsplash.com

Sid Verma
Unsplash.com

James Baldwin
Unsplash.com
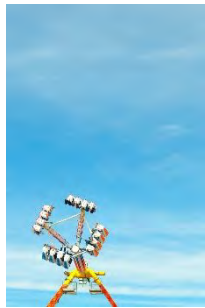
Scott Webb
Unsplash.com

Jean-Philippe Delberghe
Unsplash.com

Engin_Akyurt
Pixabay.com

Figure and illustration design completed on https://www.realtimeboard.com

APPENDICES AND EXTRAS
APPENDIX A: RAPID POST UP SUMMARY

This figure represents a summary of the Rapid Post Up exercise completed during the informational workshop. The right side and left side with the yellow sticky notes represent the organizing themes, and the middle section represents the "headline summary" of these organizing themes. This figure is a direct digitalization of what participants wrote during the workshop.

In a culture which is...

Afraid of Failure

throw each other under bus	defensive	keep to themselves
do not question	competitive w/ colleagues	timid & apologetic
risk-adverse	tense & stressed	defensive & secretive

How do employees behave?

Closed off	Communicative
Stressed	Risk taking
Low communication	Innovative & creative
Discord among employees	Passionate

Accepting of Failure

collab-orative	sharing thoughts, talkative	desire to try new initiatives
joke around & have fun	be vulnerable, connect to each other	listening to one another
relaxed, laughing	less hierarchy	innovative

Afraid of Failure (leaders)

stressed, busy	cons. & risk averse	afraid of change
respects hierarchy & experts	egotistical & defensive	perfect-ionist
plays blame game	time mgmt	micro-manage

How do leaders behave?

Tradition & status quo	Connected & caring
Risk adverse	Welcomes opinions
Micromanage & output/ short term focused	Shares responsibility & is proud of team
Blame & low accountability	Open to try new things
	Self aware

Accepting of Failure (leaders)

empowers employees	united team spirit	open, great listeners
motivated by employee's interests	invites opinion	vulnerable
challenge team to try new things	aware of self and org.	focused on people not process

Figure 21: Rapid Post Up Summary

APPENDIX B: EMPATHY MAP SUMMARY

Figure 22: Empathy Map Summary

Think and feel?

Angry/ frustrated — This project is a trainwreck — Irritated

Frustrated, unmotivated — Uninspired — Think all the projects are lame

Voiceless/ bland — Robotic

Lack of self confidence

"No." — Deafening silence of no one standing up for themselves

Uncomfortable — "I wonder if anyone cares I am here?"

Inauthentic — Tired — Think of all the things in their life that could be better

Worthless, untalented

Fake enthusiasm

No bonding/ connection among teammates

Undertones in conversations (hidden intentions)

Fake compliments — Fake laughter

Talk about the weather

Lack of motivation/ boredom

Yawning

Their own inner dialogue — Phones ringing — Silence

"I need a break"

Hear?

Anxiety & frustration — Footsteps as my boss walks by

Inter-team gossip & bullying

"Have you finished that report yet?" — Sighs of frustration — Teammates nagging each other

"This is how you do your job" — Tension from the meeting next door

Talking behind backs

Critiques — Complaints

Swearing — Gossip

Focus on hierarchy and individual achievements

I want to be the boss

Low self confidence — Desire to leave

Brag about their "accomplishments"

Task focused & no initiative — Says nothing — "Erm... never mind."

Dreams about working elsewhere

They compare how much time they put into work

Check gantt charts, project's progress — Stick to their desk — Try not to be noticed/ get attention

Looks for new jobs when boss is gone

Make fun of each other for "stupid" questions

"I have a better way of doing this but no-one wants to hear" — Sits at desk and does what they are assigned — I only wear black, white + grey to work

Say and do?

This figure is a direct representation of the empathy map compiled during the informational workshop. The coloured sticky notes in each section represent organizing themes, and the white sticky notes represent initial ideas.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWS SUMMARY

As discussed in the body of the text, I use thematic analysis to summarize the interview data. In this Appendix one will find these summaries. This first table represents a full summary of the data.

- Basic themes reflect original interviewee statements
- Organizing themes represent ideas, meanings, and inferences made by the researcher
- Global themes represent the principles categories derived from the interview texts

TABLE 1
FROM BASIC TO ORGANIZING TO GLOBAL THEMES

BASIC THEMES	ORGANIZING THEMES	GLOBAL THEMES
. More productive communications . More insightful communications . More compelling conversations	Depth of communication	Improved communication
. Connecting to coworkers . Supporting employee needs	Ease of communication	
. Learning to contribute meaningfully . Rewiring "critique first" mentality	Rewiring communication	
. Building resilience . Becoming comfortable with anxiety . Becoming comfortable with ambiguity . Creating value and buy-in	Coping with failure	Dealing with fear of failure in the workplace
. Recognizing obstacles	Assessing failure	
. Rushing the brainstorming process . Favouring implementation	Results oriented thinking	Impacts of the fear of failure
. Desire to feel in control . Reliance on hierarchy . Ego and status . Cultural shift and "mob mentality"	Harmful power differentials	
. Increase in apathy and misalignment . Employee burnout . Increase in employee turnover	Commitment	
. Interacting with change . Adapting to learning curves	Increased adaptability	Dealing with change
. Inviting multiple points of view . Increasing employee buy-in . Welcoming feedback	Diversity of thought	
. Improved ability to listen . Building support . Building trust	Group relationships	Creating psychological safety
. Recognizing boundaries . Facilitating a safe space . Mitigating inter-team conflict	Group security	
. Leaders as a role model . Facilitating supportive leadership	Leadership	
. Improved motivation	Motivation	Innovation and problem solving
. Building creative thinking . Building capacity to discover . Breaking tradition	Creative potential	
. Moving quickly on opportunities . Creating an "aha moment"	Adaptability	

Table 2 contains quotes which represent the global theme of improved communication. Table 2 has three organizing themes; depth of communication, ease of communication, and rewiring communications. The quotes represent an interviewee either discussing the need or importance of the organizing themes or advocating for a certain way to introduce the organizing them into the workplace.

TABLE 2
REPRESENTATIVE EVIDENCE: IMPROVED COMMUNICATION

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTATIONS	ORGANIZING THEMES
"[Use] comedy to create compelling conversations and we use improvisation as a way to make individuals and groups more collaborative and creative."	Depth of communication
"If your business involves human beings interacting with other human beings, improvisation will make those interactions more productive, more insightful and more engaged."	
"The fear ignites from lack of communication, this is where it seems to begin. This lack of communication stokes the fear and people become free to imagine all sorts of things."	
"A barrier came up and the two employees had to work together to figure out how best to communicate."	
"Specifically, when it comes to communication, it is more around trying to be concise and being clear and speaking with intent."	
"…there are no wrong answers, everything is a possibility."	
"The fear ignites from lack of communication, this is where it seems to begin. This lack of communication stokes the fear and people become free to imagine all sorts of things."	Ease of communication
"Just allowing the employees to speak openly and speak to other leaders if something is not right and know that something is going to be done about it."	
"Establishing a way of communicating so people can get out of their own way."	
"We are wired to first to think about what is wrong with an idea, poke holes and think of limitations… "Yes and…" helps frame it up, separate the two processes, separate the idea generation from the implementation, and be very distinct about that and have the safety and thinking that this really think this is going to happen, and give them permission to be creative and know that it isn't something we really have to do right now."	Rewiring communications
"Get beyond thinking of yes and as two words, and to help people understand the true meaning of it… contribute and build upon what is heard. This is the part that people really struggle, with, what is a contribution?"	
"Stories can only grow when we let them, but we live in a 'yeah yeah yeah, but' world."	
"Essentially the big highlight is yes and, look at how you can build any of the work you are doing allows creativity and momentum to move forward."	
"There are two cavemen who are pushing a wheelbarrow and the two wheels are square. This other caveman comes running behind them with a round wheel and says he has a better solution. The two cavemen say no, don't worry, we got this. Stop, pause, and listen to a different opinion in the spirit of continuous improvement."	

Table 3 contains quotes which represent the global theme of dealing with fear of failure in the workplace. Table 3 has two organizing themes; coping with failure and assessing failure. The quotes represent how an interviewee recommends one deals with the fear of failure in the workplace, or how they mitigate some of its negative impacts.

TABLE 3
REPRESENTATIVE EVIDENCE: DEALING WITH FEAR OF FAILURE IN THE WORKPLACE

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTATIONS	ORGANIZING THEMES
"No one can successfully improvise when they are in their fear or shame brain. And you can't just tell someone not to be fearful. They need to experience failing forward - rebounding. Improvisation builds resilience and grit. In improvisation one learns to see all obstacles as gifts and to find ways to make mistakes work for you."	Coping with failure
"Just the anxiety and the out of control feeling versus the creative aspect of it. If you can allay the anxiety, people are surprised about what they can discover."	
"Values are important to have, that tell employees why they should work with one another, if they can explain their culture and values, they need to be able to explain it very simply."	
"Theatre and improv can be used to build communication, listening, empathy, and how it can be used to deal with ambiguity to build creativity, especially in a healthcare workshop."	
"It's harder to see these concepts on paper, and you have to see these in action to become a believer."	
"The biggest challenge is the buy in, and the other thing is to start small. It is big to say you want to run an improv workshop, it's easier to say let me run a small workshop at the beginning of the meeting. Then you can say "hey that went well, let's try that again". Buy in is a big challenge, as a facilitator you need to be open that it might fail. You will need to learn from that, and not use that as a representation as a value of the work."	
"This also comes from a framework not being provided. We were talking about change in organizations, when there is a lack of framework people feel like it is chaos. With any improvisational game there is a framework, sure think outside of the box and inside. Be creative inside the box."	Assessing failure

Table 4 contains quotes which represent the global theme of the impacts of fear of failure. Table 4 has three organizing themes; results oriented thinking, harmful power differentials, and commitment. The quotes represent the key ways in which the interviewee sees/ has seen the fear of failure impact organizational culture.

TABLE 4
REPRESENTATIVE EVIDENCE: IMPACTS OF THE FEAR OF FAILURE

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTATIONS	ORGANIZING THEMES
"You see things get shut down because people say no, we try to take away that judgement and build."	Results oriented thinking
On the brainstorming or creative thinking process "They say 'that's how we do things around here'"	
"When people are afraid to take risks, it's the fear of the unknown that stops people from being able to do it."	
On why leaders didn't innovate sooner: "Knowing that it wasn't going to be a quick win, it was more of a journey to continuous improvement, growing and improving."	
"We are wired to first to think about what is wrong with an idea, poke holes and think of limitations."	
"[A team usually brainstorms] three things and then run out of ideas -- they think that is it. There is so much more beyond that.	
"Everyone wants a quick cheap fix. The best work doesn't happen that way. To make a more creative workplace requires more creative efforts - that takes time (not always a lot of money, but sometimes money as well)."	
"The senior team needs to be bought into the fact that this isn't one and done, [otherwise the training is useless]"	Harmful power differentials
"If they're seeing their leaders [have a bad attitude], they think that's normal and acceptable."	
"[Traditionally] 80% of talking done by 20% of people."	
"…people tend to become afraid when they are in a position where they're unsure how to respond to either a leader or a boss or a peer who has differing point of view."	
"If a leader is not embracing [a positive environment], if people see others shut down they are not going to have the confidence to stand up and express their experiences or points of view."	
"Lots of times people say they wish their boss could to hear things and wish people will back down. Fear is transmitted culturally."	
"By being rewarded by doing the same things over again leads to boredom and dissatisfaction."	Commitment
"If you are cynical about a space there is less motivation or risk taking. If you're cynical or critical about the organization one might imagine that they become disconnected and not seem like part of a collective. When people are disconnected it is not a team that is working together to support each other."	
On how employees behave when there is a fear of failure: "Lack of engagement, they do as little as possible, they quit. Gossip a lot… And lack of support, people become more individualistic. And so that makes it difficult for organizations to have alignment, having apathy, no uptake for new processes, and quitting! This is a huge cost to organizations when they don't take care of [their culture]".	

Table 5 contains quotes which represent the global theme of dealing with change. Table 5 has two organizing themes; increased adaptability and diversity of thought. The quotes represent the key ways in which the interviewee sees/ has seen organizations deal with change.

TABLE 5
REPRESENTATIVE EVIDENCE: DEALING WITH CHANGE

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTATIONS	ORGANIZING THEMES
"Remember, improvisation is a pedagogy - so the playing of the games is where the learning occurs."	Increased Adaptability
"We all experience learning curves, we get tyrannized by the idea what implementation is going to look like."	
"Change often goes hand in hand with innovation."	
"If you are telling people about the fear then the change will never happen."	
"If people are stuck in the current and the transition, nothing will change. Once people go through all that change together, then you get the organizational change."	
"I think philosophically it is about rebranding failure as learning. How taking risks are reframing the perspective about what the experience is. Instead what did I fail it is what did you learn."	
"A strong culture embraces diversity of thought, if ten executives agree the same way there is probably 9 of them too many. You always want to have people who are coming at it from different angles and expressing a different point of view."	Diversity of Thought
"If a leader embraces the notion of differences and perspectives and opinions and thoughts of those that they are working with, it creates a positive environment."	

Table 6 contains quotes which represent the global theme of creating psychological safety. Table 6 has three organizing themes; group relationships, group security, and leadership. The quotes represent the key ways in which the interviewee sees/ has seen leaders or facilitators create psychological safety.

TABLE 6
REPRESENTATIVE EVIDENCE: CREATING PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

REPRESENTATIVE QUOTATIONS	ORGANIZING THEMES
"Improvisational practice not only makes you a more generous listener, it focuses you on all the listening that goes beyond words. It's provides individuals with a greater understanding of their own agency within any human interaction and it teaches groups how to get the absolute most out of group creation." On the benefits of "yes, and…" "really being present, listening deeply" "I've seen it, I've talked to people who've experienced it, it comes down to the ability of others to listen. God gave us two ears and one mouth more so than our mouth. People need to listen to others a lot more." "The conflict is going to happen no matter what, there is always going to be a conflict on how to handle something, it's the ability to sit and talk it through and listen, organizations that encourage that is an important factor." "If you think about what's happened in the workplace generationally, in many workplaces there are three maybe four generations working together. How do these generations work together and listen to one another?" "Be hungry for listening."	Group relationships
On implementing new ideas or workshops into the workplace "The biggest challenge is the buy in, and the other thing is to start small. It is big to say you want to run an improv workshop, it's easier to say let me run a small workshop at the beginning of the meeting… Buy in is a big challenge, as a facilitator you need to be open that it might fail. You will need to learn from that, and not use that as a representation as a value of the work. That's okay." "Let them know that it is a safe space and let them know what is expected of them." On safety in improv "it's about showcasing through each exercise that keeps happening, there is no expectation placed upon you. You are in a safe space and everyone is enjoying it as it is." "Having a safe place & environment, what happens here, you are not going to be ridiculed or penalized." "The science is pretty clear on this one: psychological safety is a prime element in employee motivation and productivity. We've seen it within our work as well. Improvisation is a pro-social practice that creates a "Yes, And" mindset."	Group security
"If a leader embraces the notion of differences and perspectives and opinions and thoughts of those that they are working with, it creates a positive environment." "The whole notion of listening and hearing what people have to say, a strong leader are able to do that, and are able to understand the workplace morale by understanding what is really going on in an organization. By asking the right questions you get the right answers."	Leadership

Table 7 contains quotes which represent the global theme of innovation and problem solving. Table 7 has three organizing themes; motivation, creative thinking, and adaptability. The quotes represent the key ways in which the interviewee sees/ has seen improvisation and/or creative interventions inspire innovation and problem solving.

TABLE 7
REPRESENTATIVE EVIDENCE: INNOVATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING

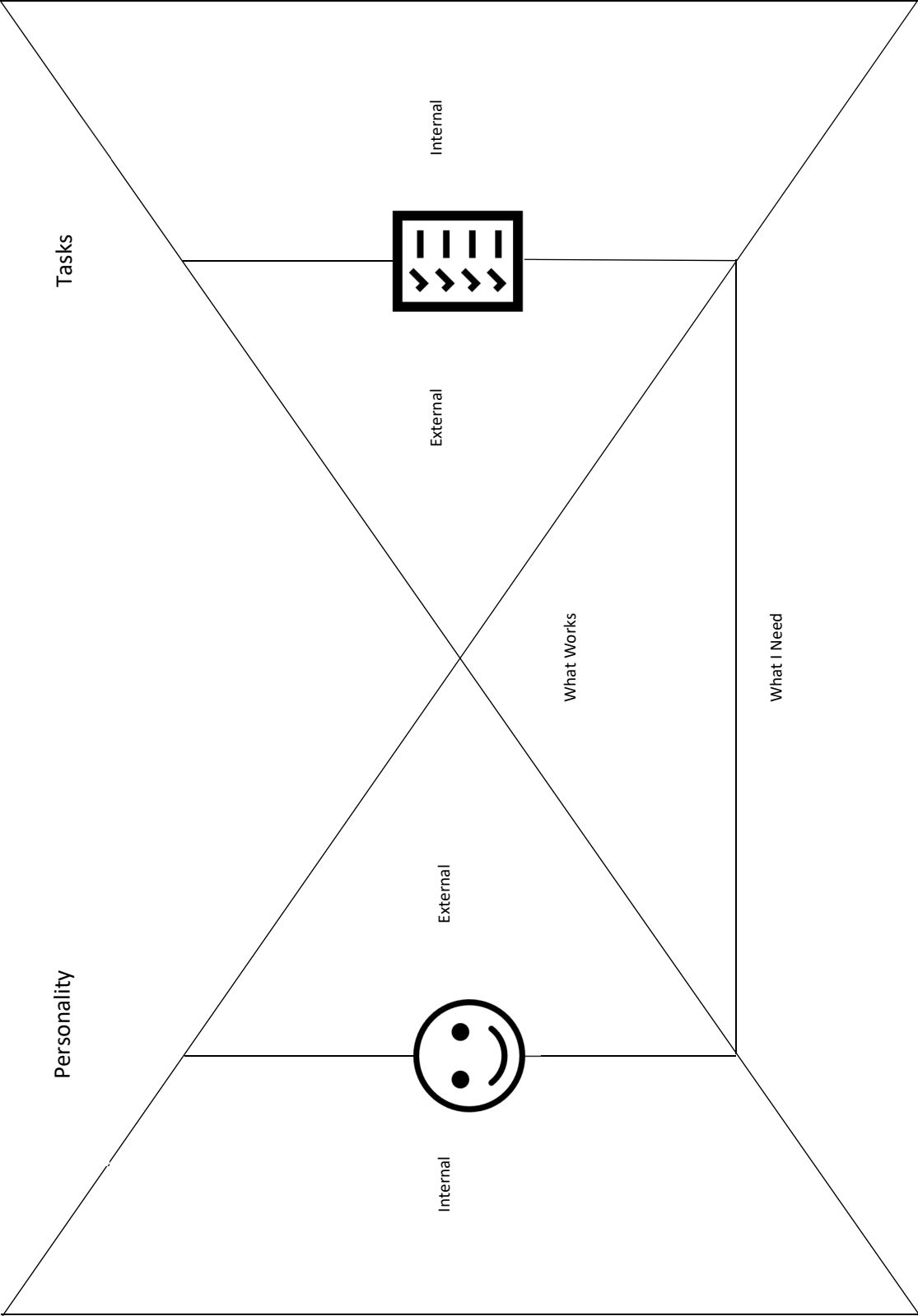| REPRESENTATIVE QUOTATIONS	ORGANIZING THEMES
"Psychological safety is a prime element in employee motivation and productivity."	Motivation
"[Once employees see an example of success] This fueled the motivation and people weren't cynical anymore, and [helped us to be] a big player in the market."	
"Change management is all about when organizations going through change… People have lack of motivation, they stop caring, they go on vacation and I'm brought in to help the organization."	
"I guess if you are cynical about a space there is less motivation or risk taking. If you're cynical or critical about the organization one might imagine that they become disconnected and not seem like part of a collective."	
" 'Yes, and…' helps frame it up… and give them permission to be creative and know that it isn't something we really have to do right now."	Creative thinking
"Essentially the big highlight is yes and, look at how you can build any of the work you are doing allows creativity and momentum to move forward."	
"A lot of organizations say they want their employees to be creative, but I think that part of it is finding the time to do it."	
"It is a process that is not run like a traditional meeting, everyone has the chance to build and share."	
"In a period of discovery, when that is communicated and people have the safety, they are much more willing."	
On the topic of changing a value proposition/ offering a new product: "Listening to what employees had to say, the CEOs had an "aha" moment."	Adaptability
"Change comes when people have an aha moment. When they have a relaxed state, they can generate the a-ha moment. [With humour] you relax people and then ask them to generate a moment."	

APPENDIX D: 5 WHYS SUMMARY

This figure is the direct collection of responses from the Five Whys online survey. Each column represents a new layer of inquiry. Each participant's first response is in the left most category, and each subsequent response is in the next column to the right and one spot down (to be read in a descending diagonal line left to right).

	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?	WHY?
My skills are not being used to their fullest				
Because there is too much to do in too short a time.	People don't know what my skills are			
Because it is monotonous.	Because I am still learning and it takes me a long time to do things	My job title and description doesn't really capture what I actually do		
Because it feels uncertain/temporary.	All the tasks feel like the same	Because that is how you learn	Job titles are too narrow, or too vague.	
Didn't get to use my skills, or feed my own interests. The work culture there was also toxic and negative, even if you ended up doing something great, it felt like you failed regardless.	Because since this is a public institution they don't have the budget to hire full time or commit to yearly/extended contracts	Because of the way projects are structured	Because you have to do things to learn how to do those things faster	I am more than a job title
Because I did not feel I was able to influence the organization	Because the industry was not the type of industry I should have been in, but it was easy money, easy work.	Because they rather have various employees part time working on multiple sporadic projects	Because of public policy requirements	Because nothing ever happens according to plan
Not always challenged enough - Just because I only have a few years of experience, does not mean I don't have just as much qualification as someone with more than me. My experience is high quality but because of the quantity, the jobs and work I do are usually me settling... Too easy	Leaders did not engage with me, only with my bosses	No sure - something about the economy?!	Because projects are very varied and not consistent throughout the year	Because policy is antiquated
I felt that the company I was working for was pigeon-holing me in a direction that I really did not have time to accept as where I actually wished to be headed. I required time to get there on my own and not have upper-management push me there for their own gain.	Bad hiring practices! Traditional HR asks you to boil yourself down to a 1 to 2 page paper and that does NOT do justice to anyone. It puts someone who is capable of much more in a position with a very small scope...	I do not know why for sure, I think it is because that is the way the job was done in my company	X	Because only q few clients require longer contracts, while others (the majority) need very concise work For about 3 months or less
It does not challenge my intellect.	I was at an interesting part of my career where I felt that if I didn't take the time to pause and reflect about what I was doing, I would look back in 30 years and regret where I was.	I think it's a generational thing. Older generations have this notion that time is the "be all-end all" of experience. Not understanding that today things move quicker! This dynamic pace makes it that "experience" is gained much faster than before.	Because this method of top down leadership worked	X
	It is too easy.	I had spoken to more senior people at the company I was working in and they all gave me this advice, because they had regrets about their own careers and I could see how my career path mirrored theirs	X	The company was successful so it worked for it and for the leaders
	It is repetitive and boring.	Simply put, I was able to take some time aside and recognize that the work I was doing at the company was not exciting me anymore and my initial drive was just routine near the end.	X	X
		I have been doing it for too long.		I saw how my internal thoughts had changed over the course of 5 years and I did not want to regret where I was headed in life.
		I am not motivated to change jobs.		

Figure 23: Five Whys Summary

APPENDIX E: ROLE CALL PRINT OUT

Tasks

Internal

External

Personality

External

Internal

What Works

What I Need

APPENDIX F: POSITIVE ADJECTIVES

Able	Idealistic	Reflective
Accepting	Independent	Relaxed
Adaptable	Ingenious	Religious
Bold	Intelligent	Responsive
Brave	Introverted	Searching
Calm	Kind	Self-Assertive
Caring	Knowledgeable	Self-Conscious
Cheerful	Logical	Sensible
Clever	Loving	Sentimental
Complex	Mature	Shy
Confident	Modest	Silly
Dependable	Nervous	Spontaneous
Dignified	Observant	Sympathetic
Energetic	Organized	Tense
Extroverted	Patient	Trustworthy
Friendly	Powerful	Warm
Giving	Proud	Wise
Happy	Quiet	Witty
Helpful		

(https://kevan.org/johari)

APPENDIX H: WORD BANK

Airplane	Globe	Radio
Apple pie	Grandmother	Recipe
Astronaut	Hairdresser	Rockstar
Baby	Historian	Security guard
Ball cap	House	Shovel
Birthday cake	Ladder	Spiderman
Bumblebee	Lawyer	Supermarket
Bus driver	Loaf of bread	Teddy bear
Canoe	Makeup	Teenager
Cell phone	Map	Tennis racket
Chef	Mom	The Queen
Cookie	Owl	Thermometer
Diamond	Pair of high heels	Ticket
Doctor	Physical trainer	T-shirt
Eel	Piano	Warlock
Elephant	Poet	Willy Wonka
Farmer	Polaroid	Window
Fisherman	Racing car	Wonder Woman
		Wrench