

Exercise: Diminishing Resources**Dimension / TPI:** Resources / Proactive**Supplies:**

Pieces of paper made from a cut-up newspaper, or flip chart paper or A4 or 8½ x 11 sheets of paper. There should be a few more pieces of paper than there are participants to create abundance.

Time:

20 minutes

Set-up:

Spread the papers out on the floor widely. A few closer together so a person could hop from one paper to another. This game can be done with as few as 5 or 6; it works better with average size teams. With enough assistants there is almost no limit to the size.

Context:

The definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Teams wait until all of the resources are gone before they get creative and start to think outside the box (or "square" in this case). This is also a great systems experience. Once the game begins people are committed to the game and each other more than the result.

Instructions:

Here are the rules of the game. Please wait to hear all of the rules before beginning.

- Rule 1: the game begins when everyone has both feet on a square.
- Rule 2: When I say 'Change' everyone must move to a new square.
- Rule 3: The game begins again when everyone has both feet on a new square.

Ready? Begin

After two or three moves, begin to remove papers, forcing participants on to a smaller number of squares until new and different solutions are discovered. In most cases people will not start thinking "out of the box" (literally) until everyone is trying to stand, huddled over the last piece of paper.

Some people will feel if they can't get on a paper that they are out of the game. Simply ask, "Does everyone have both feet on a square? The game begins again when everyone has both feet on a square." This is sometimes hint enough to get participants to start looking for alternatives to the papers. A slightly stronger hint is to say, "You are not out of the game. Keep looking."

Notes:

Be aware of your fingers when taking up squares. Sometimes participants get aggressive. It is easiest if you stand behind a participant and lift the paper when they move.

Do not answer specific questions. Simply repeat the instructions. Sometimes early on, a participant will ask "Can more than one person stand on one square?" Simply repeat the instructions.

After you pick up a paper square, discard it so it can't be used to create new squares.

If people start creating new squares with paper at hand, say "creative idea, but you may use only existing squares."

When you remove squares, get people to move off them by saying something like, "I know you're getting really attached to this square, but guess what--it just disappeared--you'll need to find a new square."

Do not to set up an adversarial struggle with people who don't want to give up a square.

Debrief:

Questions

- What assumptions did you make?
- What rules did you make up (that weren't rules of the game)? The unspoken rules?
- What did you notice when the squares started diminishing?
- What did you notice about sharing squares in the beginning?
- When did it shift? What happened? What did that feel like?
- For the first person/people who tried a new idea for a square, what was that like?
- Did you tell anyone else? Why / why not?
- When others saw the first person, what did you think? (Breaking the "rules")
- How long did it take before everyone got it?
- What was that like?
- How does sharing (resources, ideas, etc.) or not sharing show up on your team?
- How does it contribute, or get in the way of, results?
- What did you learn about yourselves as a team?
- What could you do differently as a team to manage the resources that are available to you?

This is an excellent exercise to do right after lunch or after the afternoon break. It gets the blood flowing—figuratively speaking (hopefully).