

Reversal

A practical supervisory skills exercise



Reversal is a very simple concept that is much more difficult to carry out than it might appear! A complex, 3D model can only be viewed by team members for very limited periods of time within a task time-frame. Every member of a team needs to bring information back from the model in order to re-create a completely accurate 2D plan...easy if you have great visual memory and spatial awareness: more demanding if you are challenged by a set of flat-pack furniture assembly instructions! In order to be successful teams need a shared strategy and good discipline. They need clear and specific instructions about their responsibilities, precise time-management and a shared process for recording information as it arrives.

Reversal is ideal for groups of 4 to 12 people, and typically lasts for 30 to 40 minutes. It is supplied with an assembled 3-D model, a lightweight magnetic board, a set of magnetic components and a full set of delegate briefing instructions and facilitator notes.

Reversal has elicited the following comments from recent participants...

"This is much harder than it looks..."

"I didn't realise how little information I could retain..."

"It is difficult ensuring people know exactly what they need to do..."

"You really do need a well worked out strategy..."

"Is this actually possible?"

...Yes, it is! Even on a boat! In the picture (right) members of TNT's Corporate Audit team complete the task under sail.



At its simplest, Reversal is an excellent introductory team building activity. It quickly shows differences in personal styles, levels of confidence and the ability to support each other within the team. It also requires basic project planning skills. However, the exercise is particularly valuable for use in supervisory skills training or to challenge anyone who needs to allocate workloads, monitor performance, build confidence and capability in team members and keep to time deadlines. A successful task leader in this exercise will apply all the skills required for effective delegation: assessing competence, briefing precisely, allocating an appropriate level of responsibility, checking understanding and monitoring performance without disempowering those engaged in the task itself.

An excellent use of Reversal was illustrated to us in a programme in which subject specialists were receiving trainer training in preparation for running technical skills training sessions. Individuals were asked to lead the Reversal exercise, using briefing, instructing and coaching skills to ensure that the team members they were working with were able to complete the task. Participants received feedback from the trainers around the effectiveness of their communication and the extent to which they were able to recognise and support individual learners' needs.

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