

Improvisation for Engineers Workshop

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Abstract

Workshop attendees will learn the fundamental techniques for improvisational acting including active listening, acceptance of other's ideas, serving the narrative, and commitment. Using these techniques, engineers can learn new ways to generate novel solutions to complex problems, build high-trust teams, brainstorm without critiquing, and overcome anxiety when public speaking. The emphasis of the workshop is on creativity and spontaneity, not performance.

1. Topic, theme and goals

Whether we realize it or not, we are all improvisers. Even though we may plan out our day, things happen that force us to re-evaluate, respond to a changing environment, and deal with chaos. We can learn exercises that help us improve our improvisational skills by looking to improvisational acting to see how actors can create scene work without a script, dynamically on the fly.

2. Intended audience and the preparation required of them

No preparation is required of the attendees.

The intended audience is software engineering educators.

3. Activities and format

The class is structured around a set of interactive, creative exercises. No acting skill is required, these introductory exercises are easily accessible by any conference attendee.

4. Anticipated time requirements.

This workshop is based upon a class given at Carnegie Mellon Silicon Valley. The original class is two hours long. Given the creative nature of the workshop, I do not recommend extending the duration of the class. In order to handle more attendees, it could be offered twice.