



When the money talks

Trainer's guide

Learning outcomes

The main topic

Digital communication has been steadily gaining importance in many aspects of our lives, even more with COVID-19 restrictions. Online communication tools continued to develop very quickly and became a necessity in many sectors, especially in the age of social media. In entrepreneurship, digital communication can be divided into internal communication (within an organisation or group) and external communication (with customers and target audiences).

Pedagogical objectives

- Participants will evaluate and criticise internal communication strategies.
- Participants will develop critical thinking, analytical and cooperation skills.
- Participants will understand the impact of internal miscommunication.
- Participants will improve their understanding of digital communication mediums and their advantages and goals.
- Participants will know how to draft an effective communication plan.



Frame

Type

Physical ER with documents and a locked box

Timeframe

1 hour (including briefing and debriefing)

Participants

Minimum: 3 participants

Maximum: 6 participants

Topics

Digital communication; internal and external communication; advertising

Skills required

Game Master

- Adaptation (for the final phase discussion)
- Understanding of adequate communication strategies and components of an effective communication plan

Participant

- None



Game Master's role

For this escape game, the Game Master should have an active and guiding role, supervising the participants' progress and providing hints if necessary to give all players a fair chance at succeeding and to ensure adequate learning and understanding of the topic before, throughout and after the escape game.

They should act as the eccentric, playful and wealthy investor who saw the potential of their advertisement start-up and wants to help but wishes to see them prove their worth. They should discuss with participants throughout the escape game, especially during phases B, C and D, encouraging reflection and assessing the team's work. They should also guide participants in case they struggle for too long on a task or if they go in the wrong direction, maintaining a fair level of difficulty by adapting their interactions based on the group's progress and engagement.

For that, they should simply "trap" the group in the room, explain the brief context of an advertisement startup that struggles to survive in the industry, and then ensure that they understand the context and stakes before letting them explore the room as the countdown starts. They can also recommend that participants write down their findings (on a whiteboard or paper pages) to facilitate the final phase.

After the set time (40 minutes) has passed, the Game Master should organise a debrief to clear up what the participants have learned, regardless of whether they successfully solved the matching phase or drafted an effective communication plan or not. They can go back to analysing each document to assess that the participants are able to justify their answers and explain their reasoning behind each choice.



Inclusivity check

To ensure this escape game is inclusive and accessible for participants with learning disorders or disabilities, consider the following key elements:

- ✓ **Physical accessibility:** Ensure the venue is wheelchair accessible and that all the necessary items are reachable (not too high or far to access).
- ✓ **Visual and auditory support:** Ensure that the materials use large print, high contrast, or digital formats compatible with screen readers. If videos are involved, provide subtitles or interpretation.
- ✓ **Simple and clear instructions:** Use clear, concise language and visuals. Avoid complex wording to support participants with learning disorders.
- ✓ **Flexible participation:** Offer varied roles that cater to different strengths, allowing participants to choose tasks that suit their abilities and foster responsibility without becoming overwhelming.
- ✓ **Sensory considerations:** Avoid sensory triggers like loud noises or flashing lights. Provide a quiet space for participants needing breaks to refocus.
- ✓ **Support and adjustments:** Be ready to offer extra assistance, specific hints and guidance or tailored support based on individual needs.
- ✓ **Feedback loop:** Collect feedback from participants to continuously improve adaptability, accessibility and inclusivity.



Hints and solutions

Phase A

Hints

- Your lovely advertisement start-up has been struggling for a while and losing clients because your communication strategies aren't effective... I can save your company but only if you prove that you can identify communication issues and create an efficient digital communication plan.
- Can you find anything in the room? Like in these drawers/folders/boxes?

Solutions

- Annex documents hidden around the room in drawers, folders and boxes.
- A whiteboard or paper pages on which to take notes to organise the search.

Phase B

Hints

- Did you find anything in the room? Maybe in these drawers/folders/boxes?
- This team lead, Steve, communicates a lot, but does he do so efficiently? Communication is the key to success - or failure, in this case! Did you pay attention to the details? Can you figure out why it went wrong?
- Maybe if you align the messages correctly, you'll see the solution.
- Focus on the emails that matter - what's relevant to the main project?



Solutions

- The document (Annex 1) includes 7 emails (numbered) about different projects and a Google Doc with meeting notes on Project Phoenix.
- Match the symbol on the locked box (a bird with a flame) with the name of the project in the meeting notes: Phoenix. Only some of the emails specifically relate to that project, while the others are irrelevant to the order and code but relevant to the communication issues to identify.
- The dates of the emails are missing; the order can be identified as such:
Email 4 comes first with the kick-off meeting.
Email 1 follows up on that meeting.
Email 5 highlights a delay.
Email 7 confirms deadlines.
- Using the code **4157** unlocks the box which contains Annex 2.
- The planning sheet (Annex 2) has the same logo as some emails.
- That planning sheet can be completed based on the information in Annex 1: participants should notice that some information is missing from the emails and the meeting notes, and some remarks cause conflicts, delays and stress, leading to a discussion about internal communication issues.
- The answers and topics of discussion with the Game Master would surround the content of the planning sheet, which should look like this:



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Project name	Phoenix
Client name	?
Project start date	?
Project scope	Focus on the client's new feature integration
Target audience	?
MEETINGS (date and time)	
Kick-off meeting	Monday (10 AM)
Second meeting	Thursday – delayed to Friday (10 AM)
DEADLINES (+ team members in charge)	
Client approval	?
Project timeline	Wednesday - by Carter
Budget estimate	Thursday - delayed to Friday morning - by Al
Feedback review	Wednesday morning - by Becca
Client update	Monday - by ?

Notes: Improvements? Conflicts? Questions?

- Specify the names of the project and client in the emails
- Provide more information on the project scope and team's responsibilities
- Announce the kick-off meeting in advance to ensure all team members can plan
- Warn team members about availability for the week to avoid delays
- Avoid intimidating/pressuring/guilty remarks and encourage teamwork
- Avoid asking questions about different projects on the same email thread
(in reply to all team members) to prevent confusion and keep the topic clear



Phase C

Hints

- Did you find anything else in the box? That's my next task, a more colourful and playful one. Let's see if you can solve it and explain your choices to me!
- Now that you've sorted out the internal communication issues, let's see if you can think externally. Who are your customers? And more importantly, how do you talk to them?
- You should be able to pair the products with the right medium and the right people, or you won't be able to work as an advertising company for much longer!
- Notice that there are many more target audience cards than the rest... That means you could target different groups for the same product, but that also means you can't use the same medium in the same way for different targets.

Solutions

- The document (Annex 3) includes 3 sets of cards: 6 product cards, 6 digital communication cards and 24 target audience cards.
- Participants need to associate each product with the proper communication medium and its target audience. Each product can correspond to 2 different mediums and multiple targets, but some are clearer and more relevant. The correct associations won't involve all the target audience cards, and the aim is to ensure that participants can justify their choices: Why would this product be suited for this target audience? Why would that communication



medium be more effective than the others in reaching this target? What demographic within that age group would be the specific target?

- The answers and justifications should be based on the following:
 - ActiMove fitness app would be promoted on TikTok or Instagram (highly visual platforms, influence and follow trends, popular with youth) to reach Gen Z and millennials who tend to be more active and health conscious.
 - DeMore accessories would be promoted on TikTok or Instagram (highly visual platforms, influence and follow trends, popular with youth) to reach Gen Z, millennials and professionals who are interested in fashion.
 - HeroTech gaming gear would be promoted on YouTube (vastly used by gaming community, collaborations with streamers and e-sports events) to reach millennials who tend to be more invested in gaming.
 - EcoLife supplies would be promoted on Facebook (opportunity for detailed descriptions and community engagement, used by older folks) to reach millennials and Gen X who tend to be more conscious of environmental issues or seek effective home supplies.
 - SecuBot home security would be promoted on Gmail or LinkedIn (personalised campaigns, outreach to professionals in real estate) to reach millennials, professionals and Gen X who are likely to be homeowners.
 - Play2Learn smart toys would be promoted on Facebook or Gmail (personalised campaigns, popular platform among educators and parents) to reach professionals and Gen X who work in education or have children.



- The participants can justify the choice of communication medium by specifying the strategy: collaborations with content creators, sponsored posts, direct ads, choices based on case studies, customer feedback, etc.

Phase C

Hints

- You've learned so much so far, and you seem to understand how internal communication works and how to reach out to customers! Now, can you put it all together? Draft the outline of a digital communication plan, including internal and external aspects, and convince me that you can work it out.
- Your company's future depends on this plan, so make it coherent and effective. How will you keep your team on the same page while reaching your customers? Prove your worth!
- You can use anything in this room to build your plan, such as the whiteboard/papers/documents you already analysed.

Solutions

- Using a whiteboard or paper, participants must create a draft and outline of a digital communication plan addressing both internal and external challenges based on the elements highlighted and discussed in the previous phases. That plan should include:
 - o **Internal:** Use tools like Slack for instant messaging, Google Drive for file sharing, Zoom for remote meetings and emails for administrative tasks.



Establish regular check-ins (weekly meetings) and ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities in all team communications.

Organise communications on each project to avoid confusion or overlap.

- **External:** Create targeted strategies based on products and audiences; identify specific demographics, age groups and interests to select the right medium (e.g. TikTok for younger, health-conscious audiences; Instagram for fashion and visual products; LinkedIn and Gmail for professional and older demographics with more formal communications).

Collaborate with creators or other companies to reach specific audiences instead of regular ads or sponsored posts.

Establish a clear rhythm, frequency and timeline for communication based on the available products and content.

- Participants must then present their plan to the investor (Game Master), who evaluates its feasibility and coherence based on the principles they've learned throughout the game.
- If the Game Master is convinced, they congratulate the team on securing a contract that'll save their company, then offer insight into why their communication plan would work and how it could be improved. If they fail, the investor playfully critiques their plan, offering advice on how to strengthen communication moving forward. Whether they succeeded or not, the investor reminds them that communication is the key to any successful business and what they've learned will be crucial as they move forward.



Brief and Debrief

Brief (before the game)

Briefing is very important before entering an escape room. It is the moment where you explain the rules and how it works for those who don't know the game.

It also allows you to set the context and universe of the game, introducing the beginning and explaining to the players their mission. In this case, the Game Master would be in charge of ensuring that participants understand the context and what they have to do (during phase A) and will guide and confirm their answers throughout the escape game.

Don't forget to highlight the timeframe in case the participants don't pay much attention to the countdown and to potentially remind them of it, especially if they take too much time and haven't reached phase D as it gets too close to the end.

Debrief (after the game)

Debriefing will allow you to receive feedback on your scenario and see what needs improvement. It will also allow you to see what players learned and remembered from this game session and to ensure that they understood the reasoning behind the solutions they provided.

A good practice is to take some notes from players' and your experience so that you can go back to this information later.



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