
Changing Clay Exercise

A great exercise (if a little messy) for discussion **leadership impact, culture and change**. Time required depends on the size of the group, but set aside at least 15 minutes and up to 30.

You will need to clay/play-doh, a tray to put it on, some wipes and a tea-towel (or other way to hide the sculpture).

Instructions

Have a large piece of play-doh or clay on a tray under a tea towel, fashioned into an interesting shape.

One at a time, ask delegates to **privately** make one change to the large piece of clay/play-doh. No-one should see what the others did. Each person should just take 10 seconds. Then sit down.

Reveal the finished article.

Discuss what they have produced. How different is it to how it looked when they first saw it? Is it to everyone's liking? What doesn't look right? Is it how the 'first' people envisaged it? etc.

Discuss how EVERY SINGLE LITTLE THING that you do has an impact on others and affects the outcome, even if it is not your intention. Being aware of our behaviour and its impact is important especially during times of change.

Explain the 'shadow' cast by managers in terms of the impact of their behaviour on others and how they are perceived. In other words, explore the assumptions (and resulting action) that people make on the basis of their manager's behaviour (e.g. 'My manager looked at their watch as I came back to work a few minutes late – that means I'll get a telling off, so I'll keep a low profile'. (Actually, the manager might have just been looking at their watch.)

Explain that behaviour, and reactions to behaviour, create a culture. Cultures are hard to change, they take time. If you are dissatisfied with any aspects of our culture, you need to think about which behaviours are encouraging them, and challenge them