

Project Eureka

Explain that something major is about to happen in the organisation, code-named Project Eureka. Only the Executive Committee know about it, but you have heard about Eureka 'on the grapevine', and will share the information with the group.

Write down what Eureka is on a piece of card (Prince William is going to visit your organisation to tour the facilities, meet the workforce, and present the Chairman with an award for public service), and say that you will reveal it shortly. But to make it a challenge, you would like the group to figure it out for themselves. So you have prepared a series of 'clue cards'.

Split the whole group into 4 groups (or just 2 if numbers are small), and give each person ONE clue card.

Allow about 5 minutes for them to discuss in small groups, what they think Eureka is. Then combine the groups to create just two groups, enabling them to share information, and allow a further 5 minutes discussion.

At the end of the 10 minutes, reconvene, the full group and ask: What is Eureka?

The probability is that the entire Group will have jumped to the wrong conclusion — and they will fear the worst.

Remind them that Project Eureka is fictional.

Card 1

- The Executive Committee were called to a special meeting last week at short notice, and the meeting lasted for well over an hour.

Card 2

- National television carried out an exclusive report on breakfast news today that one of your major customers could be on the verge of bankruptcy.

Card 3

- The production/sales figures from one of the Divisions in your organisation have been below budget for three months in a row.

Card 4

- A major 'clean-up' campaign is going to be announced later today to make sure that the offices/factory are in their most presentable condition.

Card 5

- The Chairman has made three times more overseas trips than normal during the past year, and has been a regular visitor to the Far East.

Card 6

- Two weeks ago, two men who looked like consultants were given a detailed tour of the site by the Chairman's Personal Assistant. They made a lot of notes, and were not introduced to anyone else in the organisation.

Card 7

- The Chairman has asked for two new flagpoles to be erected outside the front of the main reception.

Card 8

- One of your major competitors announced last week that they intend to open a new plant in the Far East.

Card 9

- The Chairman's wife has been seen around the building a number of times recently, often looking fairly anxious.

Card 10

- A recent proposal to the Executive Committee, for fairly modest investment in a new piece of equipment, was put on hold.

When presented with the above facts, many groups will conclude that the business is in trouble, and about to be sold, possibly to a foreign company, or even closed down and moved overseas.

However, the truth is that Prince William is going to visit your organisation to tour the facilities, meet the workforce, and present the Chairman with an award for public service.

After the exercise, briefly discuss why delegates came to the conclusion they did, and then discuss the facts that delegates were given, and consider 'the truth':

Card 1:

- The Executive Committee met to hear about and to plan the Royal Visit, not to consider a take-over bid.

Card 2:

- Television often carries adverse business reports. This does not mean everyone should automatically panic.

Card 3:

- There are always differences between the plan and the performance, but these can usually be resolved without major problems.

Card 4:

- The site has to be made ready for the Royal Visit, not to attract the best price.

Card 5:

- The Chairman has been travelling to win export business, not to open a new factory overseas.

Card 6:

- The two 'consultants' were security experts checking out the site for the Royal Visit.

Card 7:

- The Chairman wants to fly the Union Jack alongside the company flag on the day of the Royal Visit, not the flag of a Far Eastern nation.

Card 8:

- Major competitors are always doing something new. So what?

Card 9:

- The Chairman's wife will be personally involved in the Royal Visit.

Card 10:

- Investment proposals are put on hold for all kinds of reasons. It is not a sure sign that the place is about to be closed.

It is also possible to explore other learning points/opportunities other than those mentioned in the main document such as the need for managers to:

- formalise information and ensure that everyone has the same information
- engage in regular face to face with their teams through a period of change
- instil enthusiasm in the team
- stop rumours starting through ambiguity

- instils loyalty by all being 'in it together'
- provide opportunity for discussions
- make change processes easier
- enhance the company culture
- stops backward thinking
- feedback issues in a structured way

Virtual Variation

This can easily be done virtually, but you will need to share each piece of information individually with delegates (e.g. through private chat). Put them into 2 break out rooms and let them discuss what they think is happening.

Then allow further discussion in full group – allow them to challenge each other's conclusions.

Write the answer on a slide to share after the discussion.