

handbo **Ok.**

ideas for coaches or whoever



who are you?

You're not quite a project manager, though there's a project to be managed. You're not quite a leader, though there's leadership required. You're a facilitator, but you're not obliged to make things too facile. You're not a teacher, though you are a learner. You're an observer, but you're an insider too.

All of which means: you're happy in the face of contradictions. You know of ways to live with these ambiguities and help groups produce the best they can.

who's the boss?

The young people on the project are in charge. You work for them. They have all the powers of a regular client.

o... kay.

Young people frequently want to do the impossible. We want to encourage that spirit, and at the same time find ways to make their ideas real.

One Space Unlimited coach reacts to surprising ideas by saying “O... kay”. The O encapsulates his wonder and alarm... The three dots show him thinking about a viable way forward. And the “kay” is for kommitment. He’s going with it.

throwing shapes.

Designing the way we tackle the challenge is part of the challenge.

suggest.

Now’s not the time to tell a young person to do something, nor sell them some line of attack. One of the ways in which ideas become reality is via the generation of alternative paths. Being lost can be a great gift.

Ask open questions. Create a range of options with them. Offer suggestions. Let them decide.

Show them that they’re in control. You’ll be helping them to help themselves.

purposeful.

Space Unlimited projects are directed by the young people participating in them. For an observer unused to our approach, the lack of a traditional adult leader can imply that the process is directionless. But when given a real challenge, and with the support of a coach, young people own their process of discovery. Their sense of purpose creates direction.

conditions.

The conditions we assemble unlock the creativity. Coaches are here to affect the conditions.

space of our own.

Having a place to locate a project, gather its participants and store its materials, helps secure the project.

We associate activities with places, so a dedicated project space can act as an ambient facilitator.

If the space is different from what the young people are used to, so much the better.

“We shape our dwellings and afterwards our dwellings shape us.” (Winston Churchill)

“Dwell”:

- 1: to keep one's attention fixed
- 2: to spend one's time, live

abroad.

Being in an environment you're not used to, with different types of people, is an invitation to innovation.

suspending assumptions.

We all make assumptions – we couldn't function if we went back to basics every time we needed to respond to a situation. But in setting direction for a Space Unlimited project you can – and must – suspend your assumptions. You don't need to stop believing in them – just put them to one side. You've got a group of fresh minds on the case, so let them approach the task without your tinted spectacles.

pull focus not rank.

Sometimes a coach will remind the group of the project's goal, and ask if they're still focused on the goal. That's not because going off at tangents is bad, but because she's responsible for helping the team keep the project on track. Pulling focus gets the group back to the plan, and back to basics.

hands off.

We all want to help other people. But often the best way to help people is to let them tackle their problems themselves, while we remain present to give support when asked. Taking over a young person's task and doing it for them is not, in the end, helpful to their learning. Any distress we're alleviating is our own, not theirs.

it's a mindfield.

Any of these ideas could explode.

wrestling a problem to the ground.

Projects seem to spit out problems all the time. Some problems are small and easy to deal with, while others take a bit more pummeling. And some just look like total blocks to progress.

You can beat any problem by solving it, going round it, or breaking it into simpler problems.

Here are a few ways you can attack a problem:

Design and run an event.

Have an idea generation session.

Go for a walk.

Explain the problem without using words.

Look at some pictures.

Act out a scenario.

Invent a new kind of diagram.

Pretend the problem is an animal, or a car, or a country.

Ask someone outside the project what they think.

Jump to the end-result you're after, then work backwards in steps to see if you can sneak up on the problem.

Tie the problem to a balloon and let it drift away. Now it's gone, are there other kinds of problem in its place?

These might be problems you can fix more easily.

Have you seen this problem before, maybe in another part of your life? If so, what did you do? Is there a good name for this type of problem?

How would someone make money out of the problem?

If you wrote a musical about the problem, what tune would everyone be singing on the way out?

trust your instincts.

Your gut is right.

celebrating.

Space Unlimited is unusual in including “Celebration” as a stage in its project lifecycle. We decided that since the most successful projects we know all culminate in some kind of celebration, we’d make a point of it. You don’t need to stage a magnificent party with fire-eaters on stilts (though, if you do, send us the pictures). Mark the end of the group’s journey with a celebration that means something to the group.

by-products.

Watch for by-products of the team’s work, help to capture them and store them safely. People often benefit from spin-off ideas that emerge during the project. Sharing these by-products regularly with the business can help them to communicate the project’s progress and value to their audiences – and may even help them solve some related business issues.

renewal.

Bringing a project to a close can also involve seeding further projects, developing relationships or investigating new avenues.

The seeding activity does not have to be done too formally, although there may well be a business requirement for the young people who participated in the project to make a presentation on their experiences. Such a presentation can be an opportunity for seeding new ideas. Participants may also benefit from making some kind of seeding action, which might be a simple gesture or ritual, performed in private or in public.

innocent comment.

Young people see with clarity and communicate with directness. Innocent comments often carry great freight.