

Open-space Learning in Real World Contexts*

Workshop Practice: Dragons' Den

1. Description:

Dragons' Den is an activity loosely based on the BBC television show of the same name. The idea is that participants pitch, sell, or otherwise offer for scrutiny, some element of their work to a group of initially neutral (this can be calibrated according to the nature of the task) 'dragons'. It's perfectly possible to use members of the group as dragons, but it is more effective to bring in outsiders. This activity works as well for pitching ideas as it does for inventions or products. It is important to limit the time for each presentation, and students can pitch either individually or in groups. If the whole activity is 'in group' it is important to debrief thoroughly after the event.

2. Learning possibilities:

Participants face questioning on their knowledge and ideas at differing levels of difficulty. Participants are required to think and prepare carefully. Participants must 'think on their feet', and develop skills of persuasion, and the ability to present clearly.

3. Examples:

For a postgraduate module in Cultural Entrepreneurship: a version called 'The Risk Factor' in which students have to pitch a product, sell an item, or offer advice, on material completely new to them before they enter the room.

For English Literature: students select a literary theory and argue its merits to a group of dragons.

For Chemistry: students work in teams of three; each team receives a chemistry problem and a real world scenario. They research the problem together and present their findings in their real world roles to a panel.

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