

4 experiments in the art of collaboration

Lessons from the world of jazz & improvisation

Alex Steele with the Improvise Quartet

Alex Steele (piano)

Steven Delannoye (sax)

Thomas Decock (bass)

Toon Van Dionant (drums)



inside the
brain of a jazz
musician



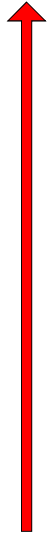
Improvisational skills & behaviours underpinning collaboration

Collaboration to bring about changes in **WAYS OF WORKING**
 how you *respond* to change; how you *instigate* change;
 how you bring about disruptive innovation

Collaboration to bring about changes in the attitudes & actions
 of your **CUSTOMERS**

Collaboration to bring about changes in your **COLLEAGUES & FOLLOWERS**
 how you collaborate, lead, engage, inspire & empower others

Collaborative skills & behaviours in **YOURSELF**
 how you tick; your inner world; private consciousness



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Experiment 1: **TRUST & BEGINNING A BEAUTIFUL CONVERSATION**



The **impro**wise quartet



4 strangers meet for the first time

Observe a 4-way 'jazz conversation' using the language of jazz

No rehearsal; no script

3 minute experiment:

4 musicians get to know each other; build trust; simultaneous co-creation, product design, product manufacture & delivery to the customer ... in three minutes

95% improvisation

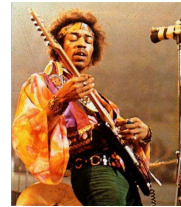


5% structure



for
you?

Not the style: It's the process



How does jazz work?

Observe us ...



**** World Premiere! ****



collaboration – ideas generation – engaging with others – introducing change
operating in the moment – risk – empathy – listening – leading – following ...

Like an orchestra?



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Experiment 1:
TRUST & BEGINNING A BEAUTIFUL CONVERSATION

Experiment 2:
**DEALING WITH THE UNEXPECTED:
THE COLLABORATIVE CHALLENGE**

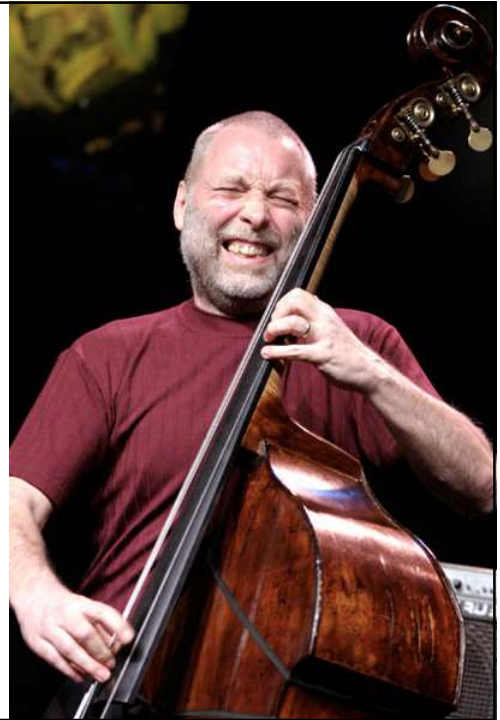


Jazz thinking for
dealing with the unexpected
 (proactive & reactive)

Listen deeply & stay in the moment

When the unexpected happens, deal with it –
 find value & learning in everything

Suspend judgement



Jazz thinking

There's no such thing
 as a wrong note!



Penicillin
 Alexander
 Fleming
 Mould killed
 bacteria



Post-it Notes
 3M
 Carpet glue



Teflon (PTFE)
 DuPont
 CFC refrigerants
 Waxy resin



John & Will
 Kellogg
 Stale wheat
 Sanitarium

Impact of 'the voice of judgement'

Intelligence tests, Harvard

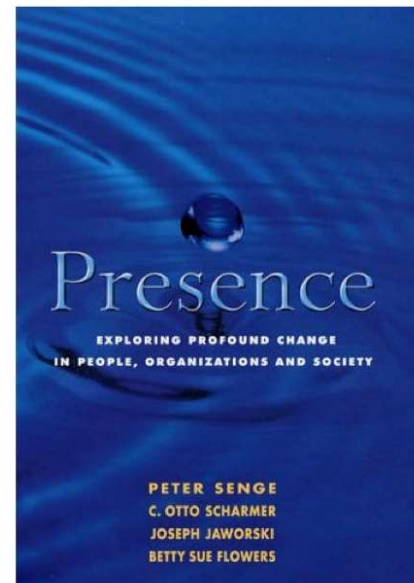
Up to age 4, **all children** are
at genius level

multiple levels of intelligence:

spatial, kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal,
mathematical, intrapersonal and linguistic

By age 20, percentage down to **20%**

Over 20, down to **2%**



Jazz thinking

Change your language

Quieten your **personal** and **collective** voices
of judgement

Don't block new ideas

yes and ...

yes but ...

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Experiment 2:
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Experiment 3:
CULTIVATING A BEGINNER'S MIND

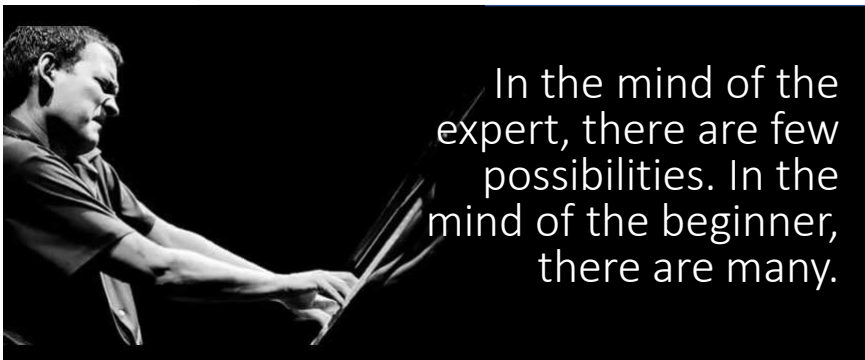


Jazz thinking

Stop being an expert!

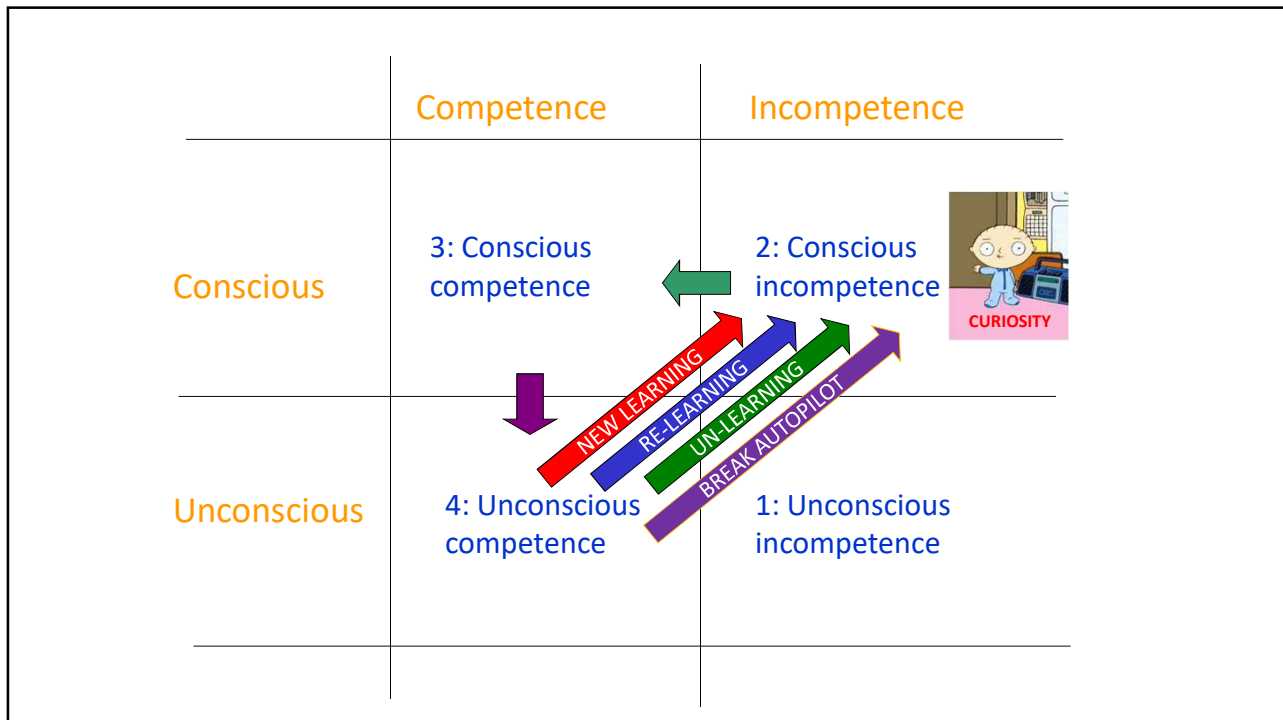
Cultivate a 'beginner's mind'

(in *yourself* & in *others*)



I don't know!

I'm curious!



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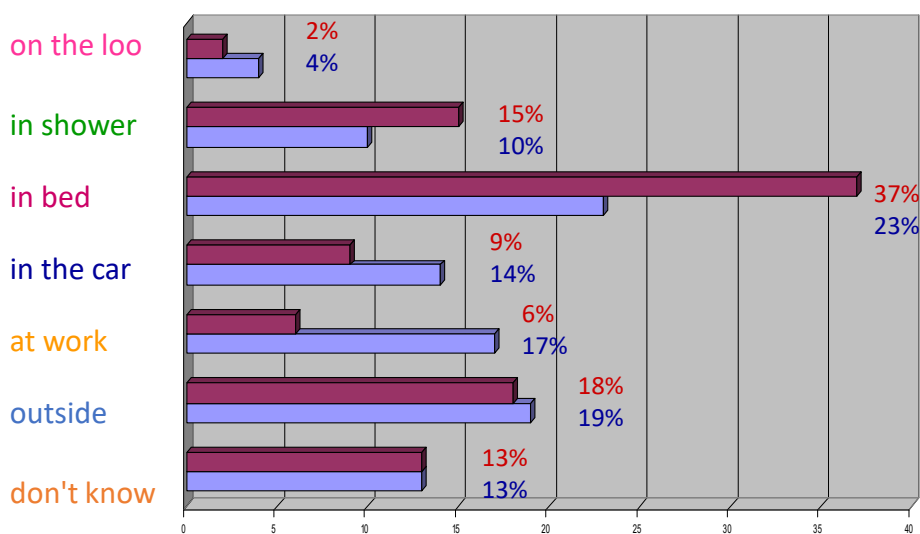
Experiment 4:
COLLABORATION THROUGH DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP



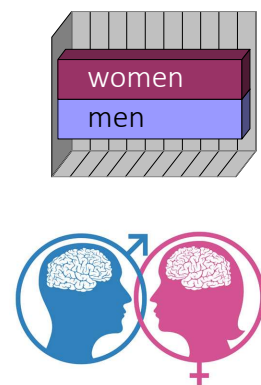


Where do people have their best ideas?

What state of mind are they in?



Source: BMRB survey for East of England Development Agency



Experiencing flow

There is immediate feedback to one's action

Action and awareness are merged

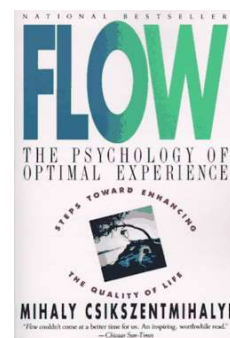
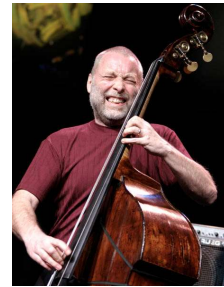
Distractions are excluded from consciousness

Self-consciousness disappears (the self expands through acts of self-forgetfulness)

There is no worry of failure

The activity is autotelic

Sense of time becomes distorted



Jazz thinking

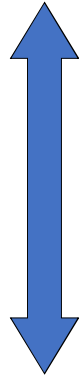
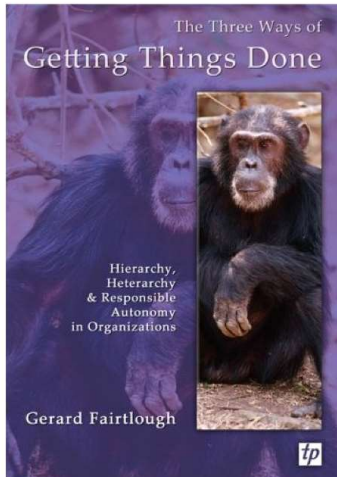
Make structures flatter

Practise distributed leadership



Heterarchy

Multiple rule – in an organisation with a heterarchical culture, **handing out leadership** will seem the natural way to do things



Responsible autonomy

A **self-organising, self-governing, adaptive, non-linear, complex** organism, organisation, community or system, which **adapts and evolves to create new order and coherence**

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 **improwise**
jazz & innovation

FEEDBACK FROM YOU!



Hi everyone. Thank you for taking part in this jazz session. I am writing a book about these ideas, and if you have any feedback about the session for me, I would love to hear it!

- What did it feel like to take part in the session?
- What were the most powerful messages for you?
- What new ideas might you try out in your work or other contexts in the future?
- Have you already tried any of these ideas out in your teams, and if so, what happened?
- And any other stories, feedback, or reflections you would like to share!

Thank you very much!

Alex

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