SESSION AT-A-GLANCE	WHO?	HOW LONG?
Introduction	Facilitator	10 minutes
The Game	Facilitator, audience	25 minutes
Debrief and Discussion	Facilitator, audience	15 minutes

Think Inside the Box Game

Why Use This Game

- To teach the importance of going beyond the most obvious result.
- To show that thinking creatively can be hard, but it can be done.
- To teach that teams working together can develop more creative solutions than individuals alone.

Target Audience

Senior staff, team members, and anyone else who will be involved in creating a new process or altering an existing process.

Type of Game

A competition among teams.

Key Concepts

- It is easy to get stuck in our thinking about any problem with which we are confronted. That's because our minds are programmed to think in a logical, linear fashion.
- Getting "unstuck" in our thinking is not easy, but we can learn to be better at it.
- Working in teams is one way to help get unstuck.

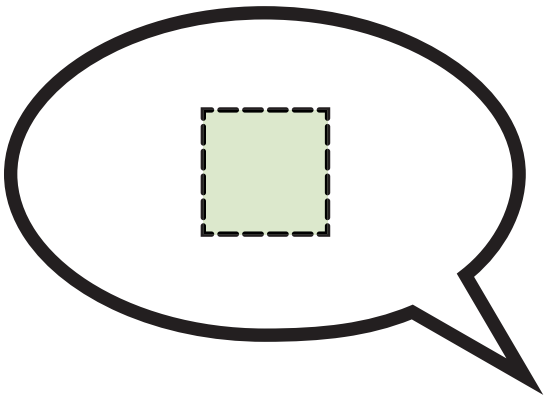
Source, History and Resources for More Information

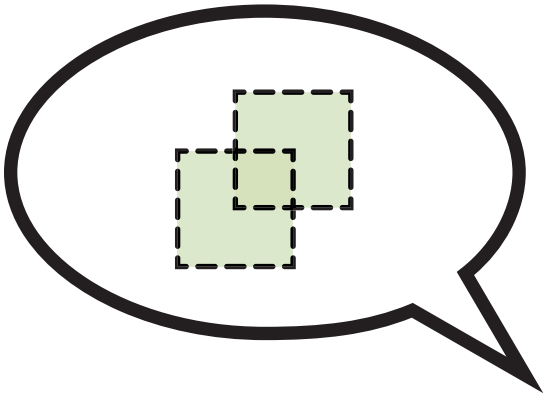
Information about this game comes from Qualis Health, the QIO for Washington State, and its Performance Improvement Support Center. For more information about creative thinking and quality improvement, see Plsek, Paul E., Creativity, Innovation and Quality, Milwaukee, ASQ Press, 1997.

Materials

For this game, you will need:

- A pad of paper and pens for each team (it helps to have pens of different colors for each team)
- Flip chart and markers to demonstrate the game and to record the key points of the discussion





Preparation

To prepare for this session:

- Familiarize yourself with the session's structure and content:
  - Read through the game instructions and key teaching points in their entirety.
  - Practice the game itself.
  - Practice presenting the key teaching points.
- Prepare the room:
  - Arrange chairs around a table or tables, set up to make it easy for the participants to work in small groups.
  - Distribute a pad of paper and pen(s) for each team that will participate.
  - Set up the flip chart so you can give the instructions and capture key points of the discussion after the game.

Playing the Think Inside the Box Game

Welcome and Introductions

To begin the game, welcome participants and thank them for their participation. If necessary, ask individuals to introduce themselves to the group.

Learning Objectives

Tell participants that by the end of the session they will:

- Understand that developing innovative solutions can be difficult.
- Understand what is involved in getting better at being innovative.
- Appreciate the importance of teamwork in promoting creativity.

Agenda

Provide a brief description of the session's primary components:

1. Background to the Think Inside the Box Game.
2. The game itself.
3. Debrief and discussion on what the game shows, and how its lessons can be applied to HIV care.
4. Feedback and close.

Background to the Game

Facilitator's note

Most people, most of the time, practice what creativity expert Edward de Bono calls "vertical thinking" – sequential, analytic reasoning based on established patterns of thought. This ability to build on what we already know makes humans able to handle situations of amazing complexity, but because we are always building on these established patterns of thought, vertical thinking is not very good for designing innovative solutions to problems.

For example, most HIV clinics have problems with no-show rates. Almost every clinic that works on this problem decides to address it by making reminder calls: our minds are set in this vertical pattern that people don't show for appointments because they forget, and this often masks our ability to address this problem more effectively.

To be better innovators we need to expand our ability to practice de Bono's "lateral thinking" – where we can take an image from one setting and pair it with an image from a completely different setting to create a new tool (Paul Plsek points out that the Ziploc storage bag resulted from lateral thinking. It combines two entirely different concepts – food storage and fastening of clothes – into one new creative idea that was a leap forward in the keeping of leftovers).

This game helps to introduce the concepts of vertical and lateral thinking, by presenting a puzzle that looks simple on the surface but quickly gets much more difficult. Participants work on the puzzle in teams, helping each other to think more "laterally" and finally agree on the solution. The game also gives teams a chance to practice good team behaviors, as usually one or two members get the solution more quickly and then must explain it clearly to the other team members – and that's not always easy!

Key points to explain to your audience:

- Introduce the concepts of vertical thinking – the logical way we usually approach problems, and lateral thinking – what we do when we are being creative.
- Explain that this game will help illustrate the difficulty we often have with lateral thinking and will help us begin to understand how to do it better (i.e., by working collaboratively).

The Game Itself

- Divide the participants into teams. Aim for 3 or 4 teams.
- Tell each team to copy you as you:
  - Draw a square on the flip chart.
  - Divide it into 4 quadrants.
  - Divide each quadrant into 4 quadrants.
- Tell each team to work together to count the number of squares that result.
- Each team will quickly come to "16" as the answer (most likely one individual will shout it out). Remind them to work as a team to develop the answer. Tell them to think seriously, count carefully and make sure everyone on the team understands the answer.
- Watch the teams. Note which one arrives at the right answer (which is 30 – see Attachment 1) first. Observe how the teams work together.
- When all teams have the answer or appear too frustrated to continue, call time. Ask the team that arrived at the answer first to work as a team to present the solution to the rest of the group.

Attachment 1

How on Earth are there 30 Squares?

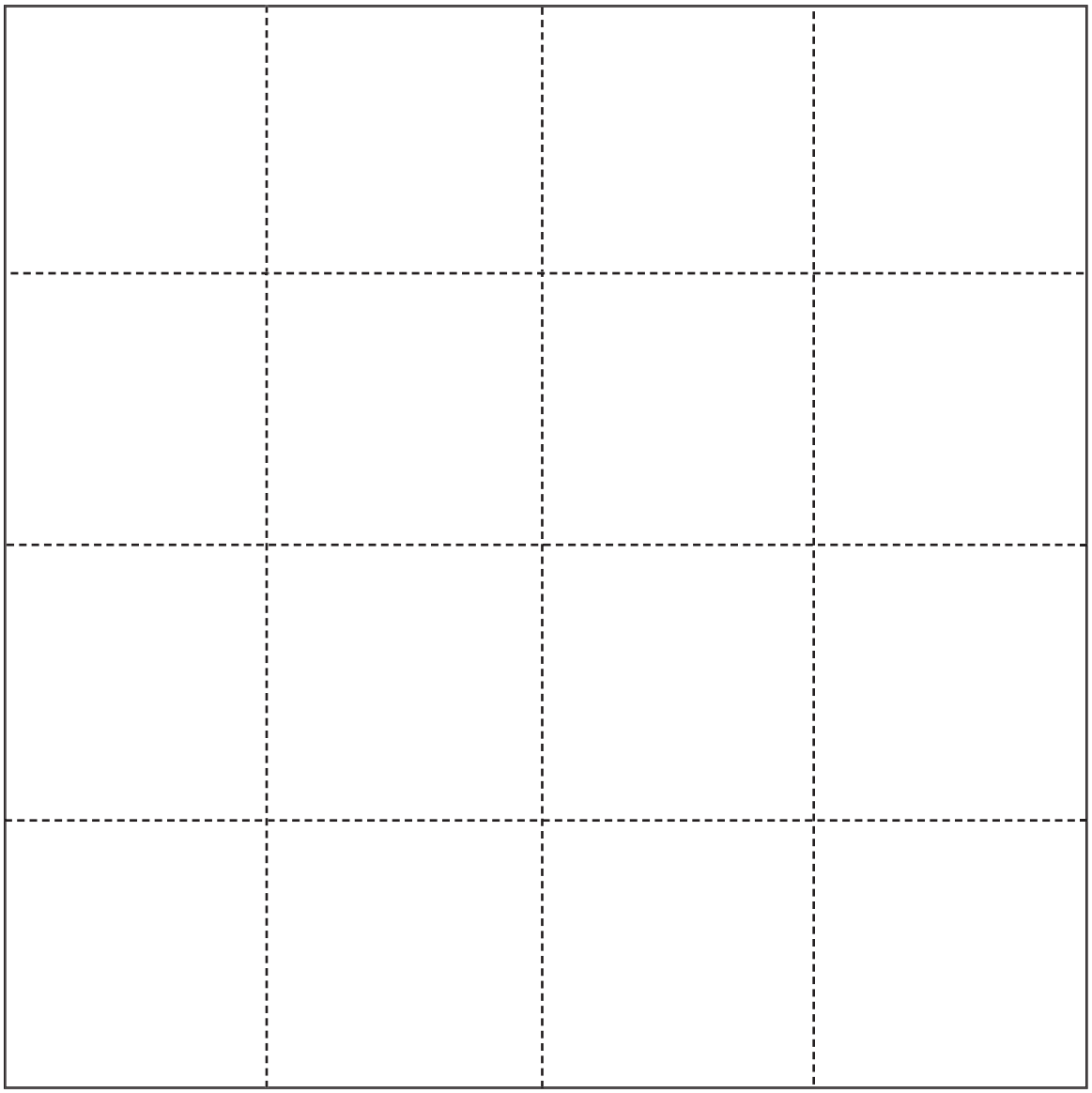
1 box that is 4x4

4 boxes that are 3x3

9 boxes that are 2x2

16 boxes that are 1x1

Total = 30



Debrief and Discussion

- Review results.
- Ask the team that is presenting to describe their team process:
  - How did they come to their solution?
  - How about bringing others on the team along? Add your own observations.
- Ask other teams to describe their experiences and the ease or difficulty they had with the problem.
- Discuss the application of what they have learned to their own HIV program.
  - What problems keep coming up again and again in the program?
  - What solutions have they tried? Have any of these truly been innovative?
  - How could they develop more creative solutions?
- You may want to suggest some answers here. Plsek's book includes lots of tools to strengthen groups' creative thinking capabilities. See the Reversals Game, below, for one suggestion. But even something as simple as benchmarking from another industry can help promote lateral thinking.

Feedback and Close

- Ask your audience for feedback on whether this session met its objectives. Take notes of their response on a flip chart, and keep it for your use in the future.
- Schedule an informal follow-up session with any audience member who wants clarification or more information on the game or the concepts you discussed.
- Thank your audience and congratulate them on their hard work and success.