

Applied Improvisation

Bobbi Block is a professional improviser. On any given weekend night she can be found walking onto an empty stage with her colleagues in front of an audience, and they have no idea what they're about to do or say! Then, working moment-to-moment, she and her fellow improvisers instantly create engaging stories and characters. The skills it takes to create those unscripted scenes — *listening, adaptability, focus/being present, trust, confidence, being open to outcome* — are the very skills needed to be successful in the workplace; specifically, in building relationships.

And those skills – contrary to popular belief – are not innate. Improv is *a set of skills* – like anything else you might learn: cooking, basketball, French – improv is based on a skill-set that can be *learned*. And to learn those skills, you must practice them. That's where an Applied Improv program comes in. It's an opportunity to practice the skills needed to successfully build authentic, flexible, collaborative business relationships. It sounds like a paradox — *practicing improvisation* – yet that's exactly what successful professional improvisational performers do. They practice.

In this program, through a series of fun, on-your-feet, interactive exercises founded in improvisational theater, participants practice the following skills:

being present (relaxed, undistracted, not thinking ahead)

reflective listening

committed collaboration

adaptability and flexibility when faced with disruption/change

confident decision-making without judgment of self or others

smooth recovery from mistakes

releasing inner scripts

expressively connecting with an audience (of 1 or 100)

A central concept of improvisation is '**Yes, and,**' the practice of accepting your partner's message and building on it. Practicing **Yes, and** conditions you to listen to and truly collaborate with your partner (your client, your stakeholder, your direct report, your peer). Instead of "*piling on*" (fueled by attachment to your own agenda) and getting nowhere, you are "*building on*" (fueled by your desire to connect with your partner) and making discoveries, *together*.

The program is designed to create a safe environment in which participants feel comfortable taking risks and behaving outside of their comfort zone. The program

focuses on exploring the *skills* of the improv performer, not about being an improv performer! No one is ever singled out to perform anything; all exercises are done in groups. The tone of the program is light and filled with laughter, yet is a powerful catalyst for self-development and relationship-building. Each exercise builds on the last, layering skills that can immediately improve interactions at work (and at home).

For a deeper dive into Applied Improv,
read blogpost: [The Great Improv Paradox](#) by Bobbi Block

Half-day to full-day program