

The LEGO Serious Play Methodology: A Vehicle for Innovation and Creativity

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The **LEGO Serious Play Method** is a play-based problem solving and communication technique for helping groups be more effective. As a certified **LEGO Serious Play** Facilitator, I have had the opportunity to work with companies seeking to bring more women into technology, improve team morale, communicate mission, vision and values, and build new solutions to enhance brand loyalty – in an innovative way. Throughout the team building sessions, participants developed solutions and had fun in the process.

Major companies are involved in LEGO Serious Play Methodology. In a project called WomenBuild, a brainchild of Microsoft developer evangelist Asli Bilgin, we used the LEGO Serious Play methodology. The result was a team of 100 Microsoft women and men starting to craft solutions to address industry-wide barriers to attracting and retaining a diverse talent pool.

We also facilitated a Microsoft and Yahoo sponsored WomenBuild event with a group of 80 participants at a Grace Hopper Conference (the largest technical conference for women in computing) to gain additional insight into bringing more women into computing.

WomenBuild was designed to help foster creativity, team building, and community among a global network of software developers, especially developers who are women or from under-represented groups.

Peek in on the action – it looks like fun! But what are they really doing? If you peeked in on the groups during any of our sessions, what would you see? A group of adults gathered around a table, making little models using **LEGO bricks**. Looks like a lot of fun, but what they are actually doing is quite serious. Participants build the models in response to questions on individual identity, team identity, connections to other team members, and successful team behavior.

Once a model is built, participants give it meaning and create stories around the model. The use of

metaphor, imagination, and story telling are integral to the process. This process may result in the development of a set of guiding principles that allow a team to evaluate existing options and identify new ones, even when faced with tight constraints, complex situations, and unfamiliar territory.

*Sessions using The **LEGO Serious Play** methodology result in a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges the organization is facing.*

How does this work? The use of **LEGO bricks** simply enables participants to take a speedy shortcut to the core issue. The **LEGO bricks** enable you to become more creative and innovative as you look at your organization. The **LEGO Serious Play Method** helps with creativity and innovation by encouraging participants to look at reality in a new and objective way. The session is all about innovation and using your imagination.

What is innovation? It is the introduction of something new. According to Robert Rasmussen, my business associate and a main architect of **LEGO Serious Play**:

“Innovation fundamentally happens in one of two ways. It happens by chance or through a deliberate thinking process. Deliberate innovation is fundamentally connected to **imagination**. Imagination is the unique human ability to think about - and make mental pictures about **WHAT** has not yet been, but **COULD** be. Imagining is thinking (by yourself or with others) about the future. It is thinking about **HOW** things can be different from what they are now. It is thinking about **WHAT** does not yet exist.

Innovation is the result of using our imagination and the success of an organization is closely tied to its ability to imagine. Imagination is not the same as creativity – or fantasy for that matter. Everyone has the ability to imagine and therefore also the ability to make and create innovations – big or small ones.”

How could LEGO Serious Play help your organization? If you want to enhance the work with your volunteers, build stronger work teams, enhance work performance, develop new tools to improve customer service, look for ways to bring in more funders, or simply to find more ways to recognize employees and volunteers, the **LEGO Serious Play** method can help you unleash your creativity, imagination and innovative solutions.

What is your organization’s approach to innovation? How will you grow the business, improve customer service, bring in more donors, build high performance teams, grow your markets or improve processes? The **LEGO Serious Play** methodology just might be the tool to help you find the answers to your questions.

Yvonne Bryant Johnson is president and CEO of Bryant & Associates, LLC, an Atlanta based executive coaching, consulting and training company she founded in 1998. The company focuses on helping executives, individuals, and organizations achieve their customer service, organization and people goals by skillfully utilizing business expertise gained from over 25 years of corporate experience.