

SKILLS ON THE MARKET

AIM

The proposed activity is aimed at simulating the job market reality and developing better understanding of how easy or difficult it is to 'sell' ones own skills.

RESOURCES NEEDED

- Post-it notes or small square papers in 2 different colours (3 of each colour for each participant)
- Pen for everyone to write with
- 5 candies per participant
- Stopwatch to measure time
- Whistle (optional)
- Space to move around (exercise can be performed indoors or outdoors)

IMPLEMENTATION STEP-BY-STEP

STEP 1: Distribute 3 post-it notes/papers of each colour to all participants

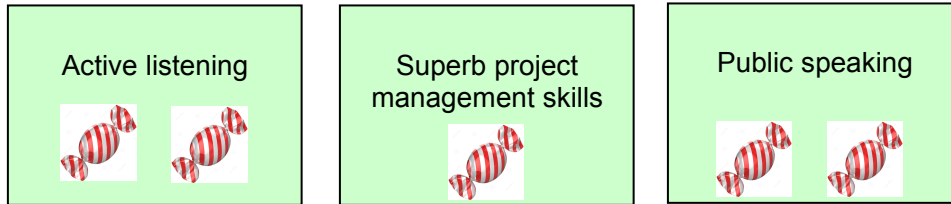
STEP 2: Ask participants to write down the following information:

Skill that you already have, you are proud of and would like to share it with others.	Skill that you already have, you are proud of and would like to share it with others.	Skill that you already have, you are proud of and would like to share it with others.
Skill that you would like to develop / improve on, etc.	Skill that you would like to develop / improve on, etc.	Skill that you would like to develop / improve on, etc.

TIPs:

- Assign appropriate timing to allow participants enough space for reflection.
- If necessary, explain what SKILL is and provide examples e.g. active listening, communication in a foreign language, skills in creating animated movies, etc. If participants find it difficult to name a skill, ask them to write down something they are really good at.

STEP 3: Distribute 5 candies per person and ask for these to be assigned to the green notes, depending on the value that participants place on a given skill e.g.



STEP 4: Once ready, explain the process of the exercise to the group:

Imagine that you are on the market! What is a market? What happens there? (ask participants for feedback).

In the next 5 min, your task will be to approach as many people on the market as possible in order to:

- 'sell' your skills - try to get the best 'price' (number of candies) for these, starting with the value you have already assigned with the candies.
- 'buy' the skills that you are searching for.

TIPs:

- When on the market participants try to get as many skills and as much money as possible. When doing so, they need to try and match skills that they wish to develop/improve on (yellow cards) with those being sold on green cards.
- Only green cards are being swapped together with candies. Yellow cards stay with participants and are their 'guide' in the market.
- Reselling new skills is possible - everything depends on the strategy...if participants thought of any ;)

STEP 5: When ready, invite participants to stand up and open the market.

TIPs:

- Length of time assigned to the market exercise depends on you and on the size of the group. The bigger the group, the more time should be allocated. Try not to be too generous, though. The purpose is to let participants experience the pressure, rather than allow them to sell and buy what they want.
- Announce timing left so that pressure builds even further.

STEP 6: Debriefing

Here are a number of questions you can ask as part of the debriefing. These are just to initiate the discussion and steer it to the direction you need. e.g.

- *How do you feel now (ask everyone around the circle to name their feeling in one word)*
- *What skills did you trade? Why did you think anybody would buy them?*
- *What skills did you get? Why do you need them?*

- *What was the value you placed on your skills?*
- *Was it easy to set value on the skills?*
- *Did you have any particular strategy in the market?*
 - >> *If yes, what was it and did it work?*
 - >> *If no, would having a strategy be useful?*
- *What lessons can we draw from the exercise?*

WHEN TO USE THE TOOL

The tool was particularly designed to kick-off any discussion around the topics of: assessing employability skills, developing entrepreneurial spirit, personal development (here: assessing ones own skills and valuing these), etc. Debriefing is the key element here and will allow the discussion to be linked to any follow-up workshop or theme to be discussed. I have tested the tool in several major contexts:

- during a contact making event when initiating country sharing - > to realise that young people have huge potential but often the market (just like the one we created) offers little potential, less demand than expected or, on the contrary, huge competition.
- during a training course, before splitting participants into groups and doing a local activity - in this context the 'market' were the potential target groups that participants would meet in the city the following day. Hence they had to prepare for the experience by designing strategies, developing easy communication channels, preparing clear pitches, etc.
- during a training course on personal development - the tool allows to make a link between the world of work and constant need for development and learning more about ourselves.

In all contexts, I tend to bring in this quote when making the link to the follow-up workshops:

***Most job-hunters who fail to find their dream job,
fail not because they lack information about the job-market,
but because they lack information about themselves.***

/Richard Bolles in his book *What Colour is Your Parachute*/

Enjoy the tool!

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