

*Leading Self & Others
Motivation & Leadership*

LEGO Serious Play

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**CAMBRIDGE
INNER GAME
LEADERSHIP**
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What is LEGO Serious Play?

Lego Serious Play is an innovative methodology that helps people to explore their experience of the world – and specifically their workplace and working life – by asking them to take part in a series of LEGO model building tasks. These tasks help to illuminate their perspectives on the world in such a different and creative way that new ideas and possibilities are unlocked and they are more prepared to think innovatively.

Where does LEGO Serious Play come from?

In 1996 the LEGO company had run into problems in its senior management tier and reached out for help. Academics from IMD Business School in Switzerland - Johan Roos and Bart Victor, (who had worked with LEGO on development programmes before), were invited by LEGO to devise a new innovation programme for their leadership team. Roos and Victor were interested in exploring new cognitive processes – specifically injecting emotional and social elements into their new management programme. They realised that the LEGO company's own product was the best medium for this approach. After a highly successful programme Roos and Victor sold the methodology to LEGO, and in 2002 LEGO named it 'LEGO Serious Play' and started to sell the method worldwide.

Why does LEGO Serious Play work?

1. **It activates our right side of our brains:** creativity, intuition, risk-taking, colour, fantasy, big picture, spontaneity
2. It adopts a **divergent thinking approach** – there are many different solutions to a problem, not just one (convergent thinking)
3. **It reconnects us with the lost art of play** - when we play we open ourselves up to new opportunities and possibilities. There is value in returning to a childlike state in order to access our fullest imagination. Lego Serious Play gives us structured permission and rules to play – albeit seriously and with purpose
4. **We can think with our hands** - 70 to 80% of the brain's nerve endings are connected to our hands. When answering a question, we only use around 13% of our brain, however, while engaged in physical acts, such as making something with our hands we engage much more of it. This links directly to constructionism - the theory that we learn when we physically make an object.

Convergent thinking.

Convergent thinking is the process of finding a single solution in order to solve a problem. All paths lead to a single destination – there is only one truth. We have trained to be convergent thinkers since we started school, through spelling and maths tests, multiple choice etc. Convergent thinking is systematic and logical.

Divergent thinking

Divergent thinking is the process of creating many unique solutions in order to solve a problem. Searching for many options instead of just choosing among predetermined options. Divergent thinking is creative, spontaneous and free-flowing.

What does a workshop involve?

Participants start by building physical things such as a bridge or a tower, before being tasked to build metaphorically. Once this approach is satisfactorily achieved they are then asked to build the problems they face and the ambitions they possess – all in LEGO. The final stage is to come together to build as a team, negotiating and discussing the challenges and solutions faced by the organisation. This process takes around 3 hours.

Why does the method work?

The method is used extensively throughout the world and is grounded in the theories of constructivism (we learn when our experience and ideas interact) and constructionism (we learn when physically making an object). The method also taps into divergent thinking approaches and the value of individual problem-solving and idea generation. With Lego Serious Play the belief is that the solutions to problems already exist in the minds of those present. The bricks are simply a tool to help access the ideas more easily. The workshop also helps attendees to get back into a child-like playful state from which they can take a more spontaneous and creative approach to solving problems.