



THE VIRTUAL CAMP FIRE

An Explanation

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Introduction

Since 2000 Momentum Creative Director Paul Oxborough has used film, media and technology as a tool for social development with groups in the field of youth and community work as well as those in the corporate and public sector. To see examples of his work with young people visit:

<http://vimeo.com/momentumfilms>

In this time he has supported hundreds of schools and youth organisations in the use of technology to enhance learning. His work has taken him across the UK and Europe working with clients such as ECORYS, the British Council and various NGO's (Non Government Organisations), as well as the corporate sector with Thales and DLA Piper amongst others.



What is the Virtual Camp Fire?

By using a modern take on the traditional campfire a group works together to gather all the resources needed for this hi- tech activity by solving a number of team challenges. Once the resources have been obtained by the group, a virtual camp fire is set up and lit and a 70 minute film is then played through screens which instruct the group on what will happen next.

The film is split into 5 zones

- Live music
- Dancing
- Scary Story telling
- Poetry
- Singing

Each of the zones are facilitated by one of the group members. This is negotiated before the activity starts and facilitators are given a briefing about time cues, and rounding up their session when their allotted time ends. The whole purpose of the activity is to explore and observe how individuals react in a situation which is outside of their normal comfort zone. Observers will share feedback to the group afterwards and draw out lessons learned. This is an experiential learning opportunity where there is space for many personal observations and reflection on roles played by individuals.



Who is it suitable for?

The activity is suitable for all age groups and can be particularly challenging for teenage students. Because a level of trust is needed amongst the team this activity works particularly well in a residential environment. If it is to be done as a standalone activity it is recommended that a build up teamwork session takes place beforehand, to establish ground rules. Ideal numbers for this group are 16-24 people

Possible Learning Outcomes for Students

- Teamwork
- Confidence building
- Increased self esteem
- Effective communication
- Innovation - using quality equipment to encourage learning
- Creativity
- Positive attitude - motivation, energy
- Using initiative - reacting to working in a live environment
- Organisation and Planning - prioritising task, managing time/workloads
- Decision making and problem solving
- Leadership
- Displaying individual talent



Facilitation & Review

This type of experiential learning provides a rich mix of opportunity to conduct in depth review on processes in the areas of soft skills. Even in the event of students not fully engaging in the activity, many lessons can be drawn through consideration of behaviours shown. The evaluation and review is an important element of this exercise and it is hoped students will take away many ideas for self improvement.



Conclusion

The virtual camp fire is a powerful exercise where students take active responsibility for what they give and share with others. It provides real evidence of improvements in self confidence and ability to step out of comfort zones and increase levels of trust within their teams. This is an exciting and different way to approach the overall learning process and we hope it will be of interest.