



Transforma

- Useful for:** understanding the pain points or aspirations of an individual or group.
- Very good for:** self-discovery, empathy, cohesion.
- Good for:** invention.
- Type of exercise:** individual or team.

General description:

This type of exercise includes all those where the participants are given the power to change something with the help of an imaginary and extraordinary power, device or being. The Transforma can be anything you like. I frequently use an illustration of a fantastic steam contraption with a steampunk aesthetic. There is a funnel on the left side of the machine and a big box on a conveyor belt exiting the machine. The participants have to write on the funnel the thing they would like to change and write on the box how they would like it to change.

Obviously you have to establish limits to the Transforma's powers, and this is one of the variables you can control. If, for example, the participants are patients, the Transforma will not be able to eliminate their illness (or will it? – your decision). Ask them to be specific about the changes, as the Transforma doesn't understand vague changes. They can make as many specific changes as they like in the time given, each on a different worksheet. These kinds of exercise are commonly used at the beginning of a session to allow a group to immediately express their frustrations and you can use successive exercises to fix the issues that emerge in the Transforma exercise. This kind of exercise is usually very productive and cathartic, so supply lots of worksheets.

Requirements:

A worksheet with a visual theme that reflects either the subject of the assignment or the means of transformation and two large spaces for describing the before and after. This type of exercise doesn't require any particular stimulus.

Example assignments:

- 'The Transforma can modify, one at a time, specific aspects of your clinical practice regarding ZXY (disease type) patients. What changes do you request?' The worksheet could be a large drawing of a Transforma machine.
- 'You have the power to create special sunglasses that can change other people's perception of your disease. What changes do you ask for?' The worksheet could be a large drawing of a pair of sunglasses and the change can be written directly onto the lenses of the glasses – maybe differentiating types of change with the two lenses.

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Example assignments:

- ‘The Transforma can modify, one at a time, specific beliefs of your customers. What beliefs would you change and how?’ The worksheet could be a large drawing of a Transforma machine with a physician wired up to it (it’s not unethical, it’s fun!) and two empty screens on which the participants can describe the before and after.
- ‘You have found Aladdin’s lamp and the genie grants you three wishes, but his powers are limited to YXZ (subject). What are the three wishes?’ The worksheet could be a large drawing of a genie holding out his three hands (he’s a genie, he can have as many hands as you want him to have!) palm upwards. The space above the hands is where the participants can describe the three wishes.

Outcome:

The outcome of this exercise is usually very straightforward. Usually the thing to be changed is much more interesting than its transformation, so it is prudent to plan subsequent exercises where participants can probe deeper into the issues. The only other thing to watch out for are any problems of which you are aware that aren’t subjected to the Transforma. As usual, just ask why not.