

Corporate Skeet Shooting Association

When Ideas Become Bogies

By Kendall C. Wright, President of Entelechy Training and Development, Inc.

I had no idea that skeet shooting had become such a trendy activity. The number of clandestine members of the Corporate Skeet Shooting Association (CSSA) is staggering. Of course you're wondering what on earth I'm talking about. Let me give you some background.

The term skeet comes from the Scandinavian word for "shoot". Wikipedia describes skeet as a recreational and competitive sport in which participants attempt to shoot and break clay disks. The disks (sometimes called pigeons) are propelled into the air at high speed from a variety of angles and heights. Charles E. Davies invented the sport, but in 1926, Gertrude Hurlbutt won the privilege of naming the new sport. Some say the sport's motto is, "If it flies, it dies."

The National Skeet Shooting Association (NSSA) was founded in the early 1930s and is headquartered in San Antonio, Texas. With nearly 20,000 members, NSSA is the largest organization in the world dedicated solely to the sport of skeet shooting.

The Corporate Skeet Shooting Association (CSSA) is a virtual organization. The CSSA is made up of an unknown number of members and is headquartered in an untold number of meeting rooms around the globe. Odds are if you host a brainstorming session, a member of the corporate skeet shooting association will be in attendance. And there is good reason to be concerned; it appears their ranks are swelling.

Recently, while attending a planning meeting with 19 other highly educated and experienced professionals (and unbeknownst to me, heavily armed marksmen), I observed an unnerving but not uncommon event. As we moved into the process of brainstorming, the group became agitated and its gaming nature came to the surface.

Though I never heard the safety briefing, nor did I don the appropriate head gear and glasses; I was thoroughly convinced that I had been teleported to a skeet firing range. In fact, this had to be the grand-daddy of all skeet competitions.

As members of the team presented possible solutions and ideas percolated, the skeet shooters leveled their shotguns and blew the ideas to smithereens. Once this frenzy began, shots were fired from every angle and every level. I was literally caught in a cross-fire.

The unfortunate team member having just offered an interesting idea and watched as it was blasted from the sky, would in turn, be the first to take aim and splinter the next idea, independent of its merit. The vengeance in the air stifled any hope of consensus, collaboration or creativity.

Much like what happens on a firing range without a range officer, anything that moved became a target and the primary casualties were trust, respect and innovation.

Have your brainstorming session become skeet shooting events? It is essential to the effectiveness of the creative process that guidelines and boundaries are put in place to minimize any destructive group dynamics. In absence of a defined process and ground rules - any idea that flies, dies.

How to Actualize Brainstorming:

- Use an experienced facilitator
- Establish ground rules up front
- Stress presenting ideas over critiquing ideas
- Have multiple scribes working simultaneously
- Set a time frame and monitor the time
- Encourage all to participate

These safety precautions will ensure no one gets wounded or maimed during your next brainstorming session.

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