A Blueprint for Creating Playful Work Environments

BOND

Bringing Organisations & Network Development to higher levels in the Farming sector in Europe

Why Add Play?

Objectives of this Blueprint

Chances are that if you are reading this blueprint, you may be wondering; can play really be used for serious purposes, especially in a work environment?

The answer is yes! Research has shown that playful initiatives such as Gamification, Serious Games & Playful Design Thinking help develop beneficial effects on employee and customer engagement when applied effectively as part of a business strategy. Adding elements of play to work-based tasks, helps to develop skills in areas such as creative problem-solving, innovative thinking, communication and negotiation. Play can also be applied to provide an interactive platform to engage customers and clients with new or key products and services.

Drawing on current issues facing the agricultural industry, this guide will showcase the benefits of play and provide a step-by-step process on how to embed the method cheaply and effectively into a work-based environment
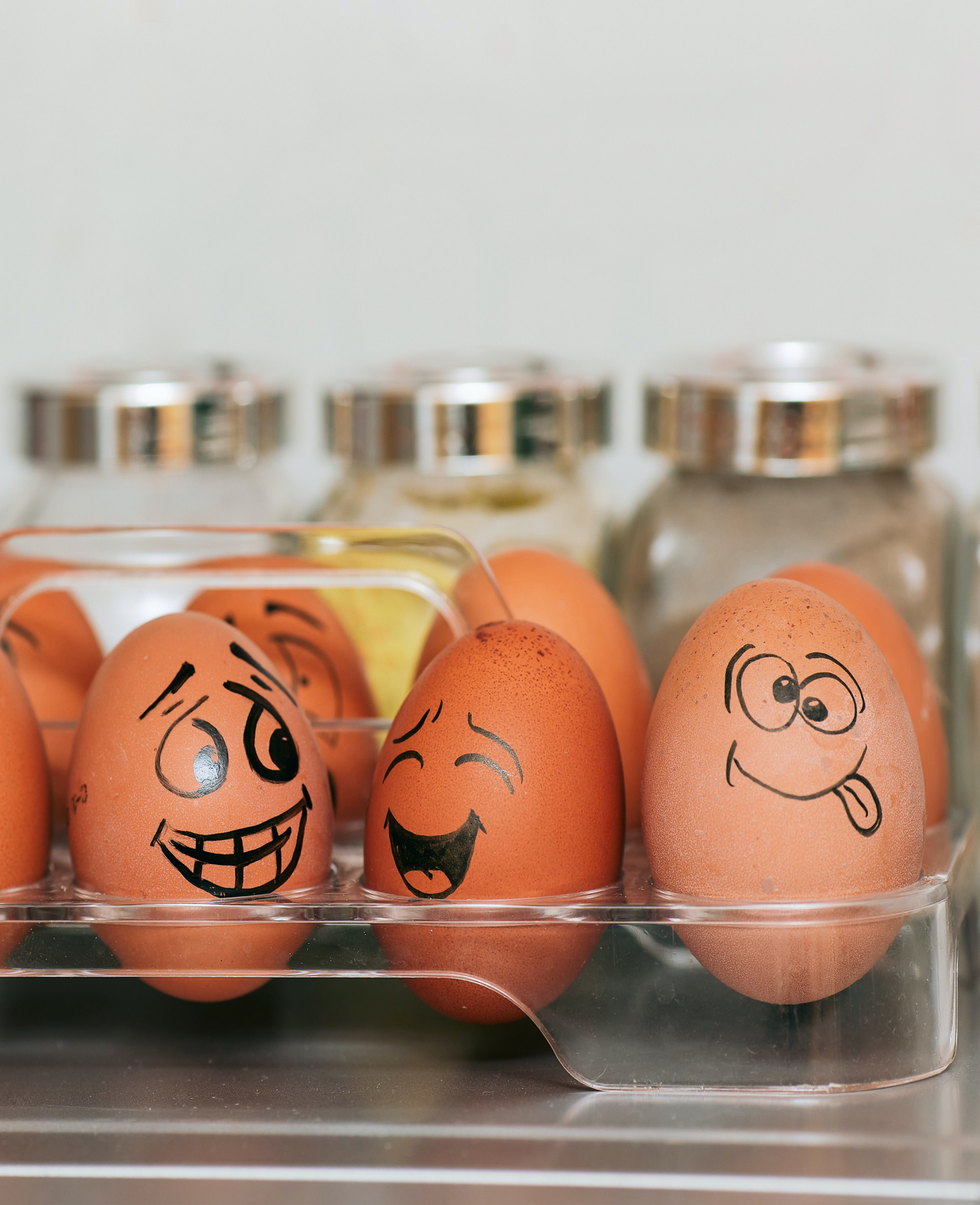
Play Connects

Empathising with Your Audience

Knowing how to connect to others is the key to any successful relationship, be it personal or business. Being able to understand and see things from anothers perspective, allows for a deeper connection to your target audience.

We can use play in a number of ways to help build empathy with others, and building our social, observational and co-operation skills as a result.

A simple way to build your empathy skills though play is through practicing Role Play. Role Play is where you act out or perform another part of a person or character. Acting out feelings or actions of another person is a good way to try and think from their perspective. Role Play is often used in connection with simualtion, which are imitations of a scenario or process.

This technique of acting out another character, can help gain insights into ther peoples perspectives of your organisation, gain employee insight, understand competitors and help build marketing strategies to target stakeholder and user groups that you wish to connect with.

Playful Strategy

Build Co-operation & Team Skills

One of the key componants of playing games is that we play with others. Games are often about working things out, building a strategy and negotiating with others. These are key skills that can be directly transferred into successful organisation practices.

Working as part of a team, co-operating and building strategies together strengthens bonds. Futhermore, a shared challenge gives opportunity to test different skill sets. Using a playful approach can allow this to happen in a low risk environment.

Another key element of social play is that when we play, we psychologically break down barriers around us. We are therefore more likely to relax and open up to people and ideas around us. Creating a feeling of security is the first step to ensuring that we get the best from the people that we want to work with.

Playful strategy doesn't have to stop with employees or colleagues either! Finding ways in which you can playfully challenge interested stakeholders will make them feel like they are contributing to your organisation.

Playful Creativity

Innovation through Play

Play is an essential componant to help establish a creative working culture with colleagues and customers.

When we are creative, we become emotionally invested in the work that we are doing. Through building emotional investment, people are generally more content with their jobs/ or a service, and are much more likely to stay loyal to that company.

Play can help form this creative process by setting up opportunities for 'out of the box thinking'. It also allows people to take risks that they normally wouldnt in a safe environment. Encouraging risk taking leads to people feeling safe to share their ideas, and establishing an innovation mind set.

Regardless of the industry that you are in, there are always ways that you can inject playful creativity into your working practices. This can be rethinking customer service, changing how you hold team meetings or improving internal processes.

Adding Play

BOND Playful Techniques

As part of the activities carried out for the EU's Horizon 2020 funded BOND project, three playful methodologies were developed to help members of the Agriculture sector create playful working practices. If you wish to start introducing play into your work activities but are unsure where to start, these activities are designed to introduce the basic concepts of play, but give space for growth of creative practice.

The three methods developed by BOND are:

BOND Lego Serious Play (Inspired by LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®)

What is Your Story? Card Game

The 'Remixing Play' Approach

Each of these playful approaches offer a simple way to gently introduce concepts of play in the work environment. Even the most sceptical person will be suprised at how much they enjoyed and learnt from participating in these activities.

Empathy & LEGO

BOND Lego Play

Isnt LEGO® just a childs toy? Well yes... but it can also be used for team meetings and with stakeholders groups to creatively problem-solve and promote discussion around issues important to you.

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® is described as an innovative & experimental process, that uses the Lego® bricks to help people tell stories about the people and relationships they have with the world around them.

Through building metaphors, scenarios can be played out and analysed to gain insight into each persons feelings and thoughts towards the subject matter. It can be a very powerful tool for building empathy and bringing people together.

Taking the key concepts from LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® and simplifying these down into an easy to follow process, BOND Lego Play has been used to gain insight into areas in the Agricultural world including gender equality, inspiring better working practices and learning to negotiate through barriers.

A quick guide to implementing BOND Lego play is presented on the next page with a link to the full approach.
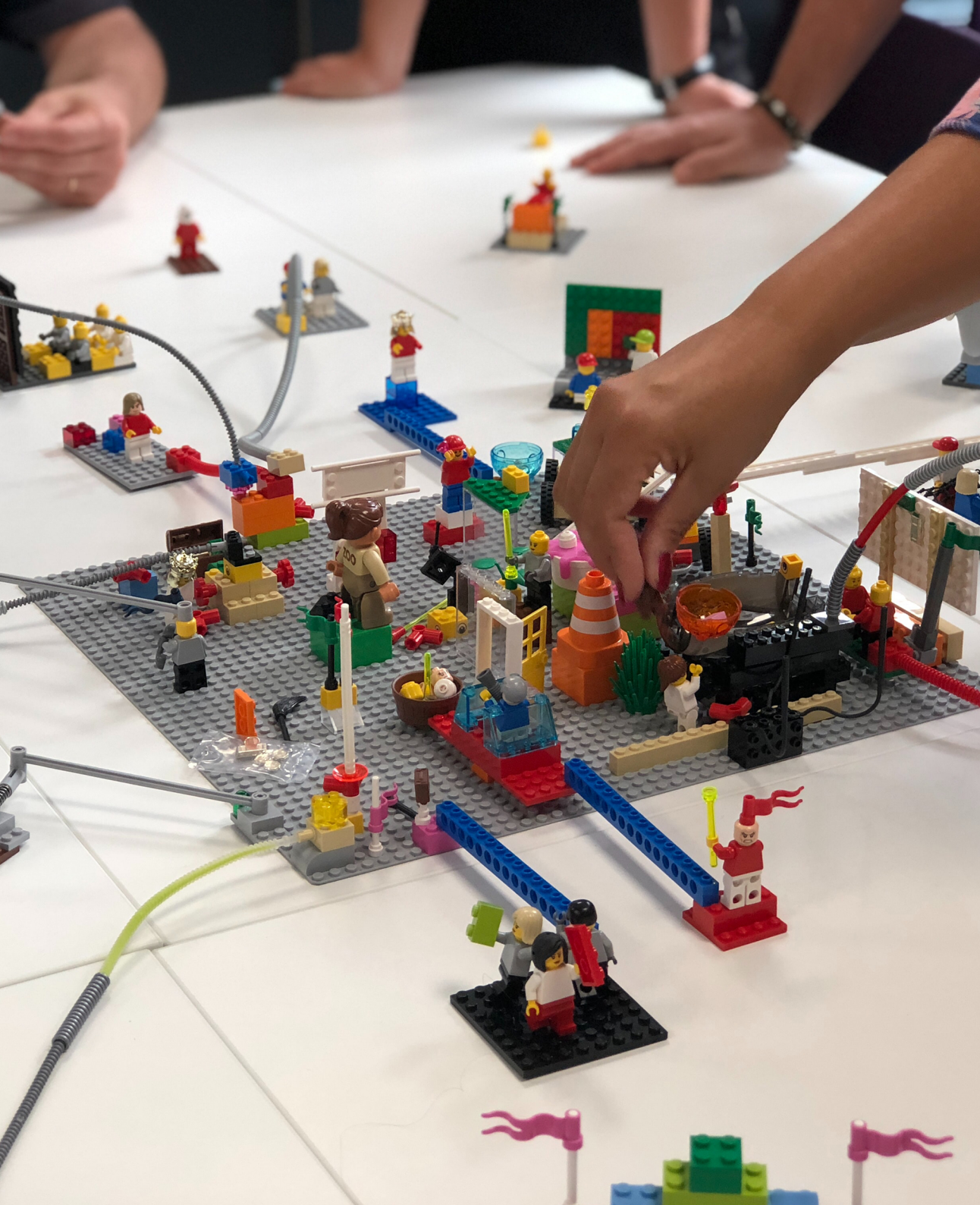
BOND LEGO PLAY
Inspired by LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®

What you will need...

A box of mixed LEGO® or similar brick pieces.

A group of people around a table (Maximum 12)

A question you wish to explore.

To familiarise people with handling Lego bricks and building models, start off with an ice-breaker challenge. Ask your participants to build a model that tells a story about how they feel about where they work. This should take no more than 5 minutes. Once everyone has built a model, go round each person, ask them to hold up their model and explain the model they've built. Ask them to explain why they used certain bricks and what they represent to them. Everyone should share their story.

This is the basic structure of BOND Lego Play. As the facilitator you wil pose questions around areas that you want to problem-solve, your partcipants build a model to visually represent their feelings and responses towards the question, and then everyone discusses and asks questions about each other's model. For the full process please visit:

https://www.bondproject.eu/lego-serious-play/

What Is Your Story?

The Story Telling Card Game

'What Is Your Story?' can be used with a range of audiences, across levels and disciplines and can be made topic specific either by structuring workshop delivery around given topics, and/or adapting the design of the cards with new images. 'What Is Your Story?' has three card elements: People, Context and Activity. The aim of the game is for players to create a narrative around a given topic using the People, Context and Activity cards, and to share their story with other players.

The activity encourages learners to employ a complex combination of skills to link disconnected images to a theme, to create an abstract concept. 'What Is Your Story?' encourages learners to share their ideas and develop confidence in doing so, and requires peer review of ideas shared.

'What Is Your Story?' is available under the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC 4.0. This toolkit provides both 'What Is Your Story?' print ready files if you would like to print the original version or an online version for easy access.

The development story can be found on the Game Changers website: www.gamify.org.uk

What Is Your Story?

How to Play

Download the 'What Is Your Story?' cards from:

https://www.bondproject.eu/what-is-your-story/

Cut out the cards and you're ready to play!

Basic rules of play (for 2-8 players per deck of cards)

Player's sit around a table. Set the three card elements into decks in the middle of the table. Three rounds per game. Set a theme for all rounds in a game, or decide different topics for each round. At the beginning of each round, players select one card from each element deck: People, Context and Activity. All players have 2 minutes to look at their cards and to think of a fictional narrative that links the three story elements to the theme of the round. When the 2 minutes are up, each player in turn tells their story, revealing their story elements to the rest of the players while telling their tale.

When all players have told their story, players choose which player they think had the best story*.

Repeat for each round. The player who had the best stories wins.

Remixing Play

Remix and Reuse Existing Games

Remixing Play is a step-by-step process that explains how to implement game-design thinking for creating playful experiences by taking inspiration from existing play and games already made.

Inspired by the engaging nature of play and gameplay as a tool for learning, the workshop emphasises on designing playful experiences suited for the target audience (clients, stakeholders, customers, students, employees, etc.), which will inform the types of services, products and/or technologies that can be used to facilitate those experiences.

The Remixing Play game plan can lead to a strategy, a service and/or a product! As the process is based on the Design Thinking approach, it is designed to be iterative, agile and incremental in order to refine a gameplan.

The process will help foster playfulness and engagement to help encourage creativity and innovation.

The theory of the approach can be found on the Game Changers website: www.gamify.org.uk

Remixing Play

The Workshop

Step One: Needs, Context and Audience

What are the key challenges you wish to address? What are the objectives/aims/goals? Who are your stakeholders? And in what context would your solution/intervention would be implemented?

Step Two: Get Inspired by Existing Games

What play and game activities do you like?
List them out and use these as inspirations for the next step.

Step Three: Map the Needs to the Games

How would you engage the stakeholders? Will certain strategies promote the aims and objectives you set out? What play and game activities that would develop certain actions, attitudes and/or behaviour?

Step Four: Design your Gameplan

Design and develop your strategy/solution that will address the challenges, and engage the stakeholders in the context that you set out in the beginning. Test your gameplan.

The BOND Project

Bringing Organisations & Network Development to higher levels in the Farming sector in Europe

BOND acknowledges the fundamental role farmers and land managers play in the environmental and economic sustainability of the farming sector in Europe, as well as the importance of the way they organise, on Europe's foods and landscapes. BOND has contributed to unleash, strengthen, and organise, the great potential for collective action and networking of individuals, groups and entities of farmers and land managers, focusing on countries with lower organisation levels, with a view to creating strong, dynamic and effective organizations that have a voice and a place in policy design.

The three core playful and gameful solutions that have been developed during this projects lifecycle have been used amongst partner groups, stakeholders, farmers and farming organisations during national meetings and out in the field. The work has produced successful results hat indicate willingness to adopt playful methods into a wide range of agricultural activities, especially for team bonding. It has shown that the agricultural sector is ready and willing to innovate its approach to challenging conventional practices.

Resources

How do I find out more?

To find out more information and guidance about the playful methodologies described in this blueprint or the BOND project in general, please vist the project website at:

https://www.bondproject.eu/

The website contains useful stories, workshops, user feedback and the reports of research findings carried out for the BOND project's activities.

For further help and advise on creating and implementing playful methodologies, please contact Coventry University by sending an email to:

dmll.team@coventry.ac.uk

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