



“Moose on the Table”

a LEGO Serious Play Retrospective

The “moose on the table” is an idiomatic expression describing the thing that nobody wants to talk about. Sometimes this is described as “the elephant in the room”. In this retrospective as we’re trying to get people to discuss topics that they might otherwise not bring up.

Plan to bring with you:

- Sticky notes and sharpies.
- LEGO kits (see below)
- A timer

General notes

- After the very first exercise, builds will always be either 3 or 4 minutes. Pick a time and stick with it. We don’t time the story telling but do encourage people to move quickly.

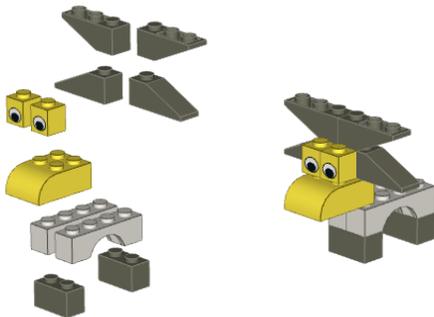
PART 1 : SKILL BUILDING

1a) Build a bridge (2 min build):

- Build a bridge from LEGO bricks. *The point here is just to get people comfortable with the LEGO bricks. Many have not used LEGO since they were kids, if ever, and need a chance to familiarize themselves.*
- Show your bridge to your neighbours and tell them what’s interesting about it.

1b) Build from instructions (3 min build):

- Build a moose from the instructions at www.gargoylesoftware.com/lsp/moose
- Show your neighbours. All the moose should be identical. *If they aren’t, discuss.*



1c) Build to share a story (3 min build):

- Building on your moose from the previous step, build something abstract. We often use a “nightmare project”. Try to avoid a question connected to the topic in Part 2. Choose a subject that the participants feel strongly about.
- Each person now shares the story of their model with the others at their table. *Encourage them to keep it brief.*

PART 2 : RETROSPECTIVE BUILDS

We will repeat this cycle three or four times with different questions to elicit a complete picture of the retro subject.

2a) Facilitator asks an open-ended question, such as:

- What slowed you down the most?
- What went really well?
- What surprised you?
- What will you do differently based on what you’ve learned from this?
- What’s your biggest takeaway?

2b) Participants build (3 minutes)

- In silence, participants build a model that represents their answer to the question.
- *Ask them to not check their phones or talk to their neighbours. This will interrupt the flow we’re trying to achieve.*

2c) Participants share their stories

- Everyone gets a chance to tell their story
- Talk specifically about what’s in the model.
- Only talk about things that are in the model.
- Others may ask clarifying questions, but only about things that are in the model. *It’s ok to say “Does the red brick on top mean something?” but not ok to say “I had a similar experience...”*

2d) Capture the stories on a sticky note

- Each person writes a few words on a sticky note to capture the essence of their story when they finish sharing it with the group. In the interest of time, you may want to have this done as we’re telling stories.

2e) Repeat

- Repeat part 2 as often as needed to capture answers for a variety of questions. We’ll typically do three or four questions before moving on to part 3.

PART 3 : Decide what action to take

- At this point, we should have one sticky note per question per person on the table.
- Give everyone a moment to review the stickies currently on the table. Cluster if it makes sense.
- Dot-vote to determine where the team will focus their attention in the next sprint / block of time
- Pick the top 1-3 items and determine what specific actions the team will take to improve on those

PART 4 : Done

- Ask everyone to separate all the LEGO bricks and put them back in the bags. This will make your life easier when you reorganize the bags.

Getting the kits from LEGO

Official LEGO SERIOUS PLAY kits can be purchased from www.lego.com.

Part 2000409: Window Exploration Bag

Part 2000414: Starter Kit

Build your own:

You'll want 50-60 pieces per person with certain specific pieces.

- A mini-fig
- Something that moves (wheels, propeller etc)
- Something transparent
- Some plates and bricks

Each kit should be as identical as possible so everyone is working with the same pieces

Packing it all up again

When you're done, you'll want to ensure that all the kits are properly stowed and that each bag contains exactly the right pieces. We use the Lean concept of poka-yoke for this.

We print up a sheet containing an image of all the pieces and we place each piece on the paper until all the images are covered. When the sheet is full, you have one complete kit.

If you're using the Windows Explorer Kits from LEGO then you can use our poka-yoke sheet, which can be downloaded from www.gargoylesoftware.com/lsp/explorer_bag_contents



Your facilitators



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Mike Bowler is an Agile and technical coach and trainer who has been writing code for over thirty years and has been an active member of the Agile community for the last fifteen. He blends his strong technical background with a deep understanding of Agile methods to help teams consistently improve how they deliver value to their customers.

Mike is a trained LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® facilitator and is one of the lead organizers of Play4Agile North America (Sept 2015)

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