

Seeing the Big Picture

by Rachel Globus

RENTON, WASH.—One of Boeing's projects was not taking flight. The team had been brought together to accomplish sweeping shifts in Boeing's programming and software under a tight deadline. Three months in, it became clear that they were not working together. It didn't help that they literally weren't working together—team members were scattered across the country and interacted virtually. When the team leader did some research into team-building activities, she discovered a unique way to open up the lines of communication, jumpstart creative thinking, and for everyone to have a good time: Making movies.

"Filmmaking offers a way for people to work together on a creative project and really be free of the kind of constraints that they [have] when they work together on business projects," says Joel Leskowitz, who heads up U.S. operations for ScreenDreams Entertainment, a new company out of Australia that allows corporate groups the opportunity to have their own "15 Minutes of Fame," as the experience is called.

"It was really completely about team building, and getting her group to work together and to be creative outside of the workplace issues," Leskowitz explains. During a two-day experience, the employees were encouraged to take creative risks and learn about each other as they made a silent movie based on a one-line plot they were given (e.g., "an unfortunate waiter"). They also came up with a story based on two objects and a type of person suggested by another group, pitched it to a panel of producers, shot the film, attended an evening screening and, for some of them, won Oscar-style awards.

"When they go back to the office, it's like someone scraped all the rust off of their communications and they have a fresher and newer way of approaching each other," says ScreenDreams founder Guntis Sics. "And that's a really great productivity outcome."

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Boeing team members learn each other's stories while creating new ones on film.