

How healthcare leaders can deal with fear, uncertainty and greed

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by [Andrea J. Simon](#)

In my last blog post, I urged readers to avoid letting the FUGs--fear, uncertainty and greed--get them down. That's easier said than done, as the FUGs seem to come part and parcel with healthcare reform changes.

Get past the fear of change. A recent *Harvard Business Review* [article](#) explains the fears that get in the way of successful creativity. For example, how people know how to play and create when they are children, but as they get older, they become afraid of four key emotions: the messy unknown, being judged, the first steps and losing controls.



To get past these stalemates and instead, create new ways to adjust to changing times, I suggest healthcare leaders "play" as a solution--not random diversion but "serious play" and innovation-stimulating games.

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Serious play unlocks serious new ideas. As a trained facilitator in Innovation Games, I have conducted more than 50 "play" sessions with clients in healthcare. Now more than ever before, healthcare organizations realize they must find innovative solutions to solve problems better and faster, involve employees in improvement efforts, incentivize their teams to create solutions that reduce costs and add benefits and sustain internal morale and employee satisfaction.

Healthcare leaders know they need to build a culture that embraces change and also understand the risks and opportunities associated with innovation. But most have limited training in how to actually change an organization--even less in how to determine which ideas are the best ones. Add to this the fact that the FUGs get in the way of their own creative problem solving, and bringing about real change becomes a real challenge.

Play games to get some real work done. When it comes to getting people to think differently traditional thinking is plain wrong. Research shows human beings have been hard-wired to express themselves and interact with each other through play. Therefore, to change and innovate, we must fool the mind so it can more easily search for new patterns in a familiar domain.

How does this work? Play and games transport our brains to a high level of emotions where ideas are stored, just waiting to come out. Games help us focus, decide, perform, remember, learn and innovate.

Very often, the big ideas come from employees, customers and partners ... people who, once their minds are freed by play, are amazed at the ideas that bubble up. These ideas then intersect with others' ideas and form new ways to "see, feel and think" about their organization.

Recently, a healthcare organization's staff was struggling with the FUGs, even if they were loath to admit it. A previous workshop showed the innovations they came up with and the transformations necessary to execute them were languishing. However, on a recent innovation gym retreat, playing games completely freed their mind and enabled them to create an entirely new business model and highly innovative approaches to adapt to a changing market space. Yes, playing games works!

Some games promote discovery and others let ideas morph into new shapes and forms. Particularly when you are tackling the FUGs, games and serious play serve as crucial solution strategies simply because people love to play. They relax, their brains stop fighting new ideas, and they realize there are no right or wrong answers.

So don't waste another minute--start playing!

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