

Effectual Drinks

Instructions: 30 minutes



This hands-on exercise is used to distinguish the differences between causal and effectual logic. Causal logic implies selecting recipes from an expert source (such as a cocktail guide), checking the cabinet to see what is on hand and what needs to be purchased, ensuring that all the accessories needed are available (glasses, ice, blenders, shakers, etc) and following pre-arranged instructions. Effectual logic, by contrast, involves looking through the cabinets and cupboards to explore “what do we have to work with” and creatively exploring “what we can do with it”.

1. The exercise works particularly well as a kick off to a catered event where bar service is provided including the services of a professional bartender (co-creation partner).
2. The team challenge is to create a signature drink from a prescribed and limited based of materials (spirits, mixers, ice, shakers, glasses, fruit slices). Teams decide what goes into the mix and dependent on local regulations, can mix the concoction themselves or instruct a bartender to do so. To

push the creative envelope, I introduce one twist – one of their available means that must be used in the drink is an unusual ingredient. I have opted for sea buckthorn berry, a Nordic nutritional dynamo that packs the Vitamin C content of 10 oranges in a berry the size of a small fingernail.

3. To prepare participants for the challenge, we have the bartender provide a hands on practicum on how to prepare a signature drink (house specialty); this is an opportunity for participants to sense the skills, attention to detail and passion of individuals who make a living creating signature drinks.
4. In practice, teams experiment with different combinations and creatively explore how to expand their means available (can I use the blender?). By keeping instructions very simple, I provide them the latitude to really get creative. Once they have decided on their signature drink they need to name it, and tell the story behind their creation.
5. Videotaping the experience is useful both to illustrate the principles of effectual logic and provide a debriefing to participants.
6. We found this to be a particularly effectual and educational icebreaker in place of cocktails.

Aside from being a lot of fun, the exercise encourages team building, creating novelty, and handling surprise by exploring how to make something memorable from a fixed set of inputs. And yes it is possible to tame the bitterness!

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