

# Effectual Coffee

Instructions: 2,5 hours

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 cookbook), shopping for the necessary ingredients and following pre-arranged instructions. Effectual logic, by contrast, involves opening the refrigerator and cupboards to explore “what do we have to work with” and creatively exploring “what we do with it”.

1. The exercise needs to be run in a space where food can be prepared and served. Company coffee rooms work well if there is an oven, sufficient preparation space, and tables for serving the creations. Working in this type of space avoids the need to involve professional cooking staff in instances where an institutional kitchen is used.
2. Working in teams of 6, participants are given the challenge to create one sweet and one savory creation to serve with coffee and tea for invited guests. Each team is provided with an identical and limited set of ingredients as well as some shared resources (oven, baking paper, seasoning, utensils, plates, cups, rolling pin, bowls, whisks, flour). To save time, the oven should already be pre-heated to 200C. After becoming acquainted with the equipment and ingredients available to them, they have 90 minutes to create and present at least two dishes to be served at a predetermined time.
3. To really push the creative envelope, I keep some ingredients out of sight and introduce them as surprise elements during brainstorming and require that they use one specific ingredient in both dishes. As strawberries were in

season, participants were required to use strawberries to create both a sweet and savory dish. Each team was provided with sweet basil, an identical number of cherry tomatoes, red onions, red pepper, red chili pepper, cream, milk, vanilla sauce, and 3 packages of strawberries. The common ingredients included seasoning, balsamic vinegar, and pre-prepared pastry bases (filo, puff pastry and tart base). The benefit of bringing ready made pastry is that the creative energy of the participants is focused on creating a wonderful combination and thinking through how to present it in the best light, not on preparing pastry. Two ingredients were kept from them initially (eggs and feta cheese).

4. Instructions were kept deliberately vague to encourage participants to think out of the box. Some groups used internet searches to stimulate brainstorming. Others used the phone a friend option to see what combination possibilities might work. In fact, one of the participants had a tub of sour cream in his knapsack that he contributed into his team's resource pot; why one would have a tub of sour cream with them is another matter. Another team noticed that there were chocolates in the room and used them. Successful entrepreneurship is all about doing things as opposed to asking for permission to do things. Teams could negotiate resource trades with the other team who were under no obligation to agree to do so.
5. THE COORDINATORS TASK WAS TO MAKE THE COFFEE AND TEA AND SET OUT CUPS AND SAUCERS BUT THE TEAMS COULD ARRANGE THE PRESENTATION ANY WAY THEY WANTED.
6. At the prescribed time, the teams had to present their creations to the invited guests who sampled and rated all of them. I asked each team to also briefly describe what they learned through the experience with the added benefit that the visitors also learn something about effectual entrepreneurship in practice. I was amazed to see how quickly teams gel, divide work tasks, work out priorities and manage time. Videotaping the experience is useful both to illustrate the principles of effectual logic and provide a debriefing to participants illustrating the principles of effectual entrepreneurship.

7. Incidentally, the exercise produced some absolutely stunning creations; the winning one was a strawberry salsa with breadsticks. Interestingly, there was one obvious choice of savory dish that was not pursued, strawberry, feta and basil quiche (recipe on the internet!). In the subsequent debriefing, the participants actually thought that setting time limits actually enhanced creativity. They very quickly divided their teams into two each tasked with either sweet or savory. We noticed a lot of small sampling of various combinations (affordable loss), one team created three dishes in case one did not turn out and great attention was made to sample with the least presentable raw materials so that the best was kept for the guests. Incidentally I have never seen strawberries conserved so carefully or sliced so thinly --- the challenge ingredient proved to be the most valuable other than the creative talents of the teams of course!

Variations on the theme ...

- Effectual dinner or lunch – three teams randomly assigned to prepare an appetizer, main course and dessert
- Effectual drinks – teams are to develop a “signature drink” from available raw inputs and that is not a knock off from an established cocktail guide

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.

Dr Peter Kelly

Executive Director

Helsinki School of Creative Entrepreneurship

