

## *Instant Challenge Practice Ideas*

By: Annie Rabach, Team Manager, DI Wisconsin – November 16, 2016

Instant Challenge. Hmmm. Where to begin? I struggled with how to begin this article, but then it came to me. Much like Instant Challenge – just jump in!

There are so many things I have tried to make Instant Challenge (IC) work for my teams, I could type for hours. Some things I've tried were an instant success. Other things I've had to try over and over until they finally worked. Some things were such a horrible failure right from the start that I ditched them forever. Every year is different, even if you have the same kids. Age, experience and what goes on outside of Destination Imagination can influence the mojo of a team. Just like life, you have to deal with it.

Bottom line, you have to practice IC... a lot. As a Team Manager (TM), it is really hard to give up valuable practice time when you don't see a finished product. It is even harder when you see a lower than expected score at a competition. You may think, "Why did we waste so much time?" No time is ever wasted when you challenge kids to think on their feet and force them to work together in a short amount of time. If you have genuinely practiced, and the competition challenge was difficult, imagine how brutal it was for teams that didn't practice.

**What to practice? Well, obviously DI ICs.** In addition to the Roadmap resource, you can access different ICs in the [Free Resources Library](#) on DI's site or download the Instant Challenge Practice Set in the [Resource Area](#). You can also ask your coordinator, Regional Director or your Affiliate Director for help. I have even asked my team members to do some research and bring them to practice.

ALL types of ICs need to be practiced; not just the ones your kids are good at. My kids have always been on Engineering teams, and don't do as well with the Performance-Based Challenges; yet Performance-Based Challenges have been presented at competition. Practicing these types of Instant Challenges makes it significantly less scary. Right before a competition, make sure you throw them a few Challenges where they will surely succeed. It will boost their confidence, and that is huge when walking into the real thing.

**Practice ICs, as if it were the real thing, all of the time.** Have the team practice entering the room and behaving like they should during a competition. It becomes a habit. My kids also practice 'liking each other' for the 10 minutes they are in that room. (Everyone has grumpy day.) Appraisers can tell when someone is not connecting with the rest of the group. They probably can tell when it is forced, but at least the team is making an effort.

**How do you get them to 'like each other?'** First off, we rarely practice IC without the entire team. Everyone has a role and understands its importance. Get the team to realize that without a specific team member, and their contribution, the solution won't be as amazing. Teambuilding challenges will also help your kids to 'like each other.' A plus is that these challenges don't require a ton of prep time, and I consider them as IC practice. (Google "teambuilding challenges" and you will have plenty to choose from.)

**Just practicing the IC is not enough.** We have one TM as the Appraiser, and I typically observe. Both TMs take notes. After the Challenge is over, the Appraiser TM scores and asks, "How'd we do?" The kids will then analyze their solution and teamwork. The Appraiser TM then points out their low and high points. If I have anything to add, I do. Every Challenge is honest, but includes a positive and a negative point. The notes are saved for later follow-up.

This follow-up occurs a week or more later. The team will redo the same Challenge. Have they retained what they learned? Have they fallen back into their old ways? Usually, they have improved since the first attempt.

Sadly, sometimes it doesn't work that way. When that happens, it is more than likely that something is not clicking with the kids' personalities, and a chat has to take place. It isn't comfortable, but it's effective in making the team work together.

**I like to toss in a few mindbender challenges** that I know will showcase different team members' strengths—frame games, eyeball benders and following directions quizzes. We have also played listening games where I will read directions and the team members have to draw what they hear... or what they think they hear. This has been an excellent lesson in listening to what the IC is asking for and enforcing how everyone hears and thinks differently.

Between seasons, I am a researching fool. I look for fun games and exercises to help my kids. Once the season begins, I have a good pile of activities to do, while secretly teaching the kids something about IC, teamwork and themselves. I keep these quick challenges handy for times when I want to torture them... I mean when we have extra time.

My last tidbit of advice is that no matter how much you practice, some teams just can't solve the challenge on competition day. Practice what to do when that happens. How will they score the teamwork points? How will they mask their disappointment and continue on? It's hard. Help them by practicing some aspect of IC at every practice.

Good luck this season!