



# IMPROVISED<sup>TM</sup>

— INTELLIGENCE —

## BOOK OF PLAY

BY GINA TRIMARCO

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# IMPROVISED INTELLIGENCE

*THE ABILITY TO BE A GOOD HUMAN WHO  
MAKES OTHERS LOOK AND FEEL GREAT FOR  
THE GOOD OF ALL BY EXERCISING THE BRAIN  
TO IMPROVISE.*

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PLAYS A PART.  
IMPROVISED INTELLIGENCE™ PROVIDES THE  
TOOLS NEEDED TO IMPROVE EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE.

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Exercises for you to take back to your teams to  
improve productivity, morale and sales!

# GINA TRIMARCO,

SPEAKER | TRAINER | PODCASTER | IMPROVISER



Gina Trimarco is a Master Sales Trainer at Sales Gravy and a leadership strategist who helps organizations re-humanize relationships through Improvised Intelligence™ (improv-based emotional intelligence).

She has dedicated her career to helping people learn to become more agile communicators through the power of improv. She brings 25-plus years of experience in marketing, sales, business operations and people management to progressive organizations that are ready to go from status quo to status “Let’s Go.”

Experienced as a serial start-up entrepreneur, she is the founder of Carolina Improv Company, Pivot10 Results and the **Women Your Mother Warned You About** podcast.

Gina is a native Chicagoan and graduated from DePaul University, in addition to training at Second City and Players Workshop of Second City.

Founder | Speaker | Improviser

Master Sales Trainer

Podcast Host & Producer



# FORWARD

Gina is crazy about the importance of story in messaging and human engagement. While data and facts are important to persuade people and close deals, the human brain is wired for storytelling and giving meaning to the things it hears. Story helps people connect and is the missing link in business – it's a two-way process that engages and benefits the teller AND the listener.

When Gina facilitates sales and leadership training, she applies improv exercises as a tool for reinforcing "learning by doing." These exercises help strengthen the brain in the areas of active listening, active observing, emotional control, engaging others and storytelling.

Specifically with sales training, you will hear Gina say "If you have a playbook, you need to know how to play." She coined the term "Book Of Play" to give training participants a tool to practice the exercises from her training sessions.

The following pages include some of those exercises. If you are receiving this "Book Of Play" and have not been in a training session with Gina, you can reach out to her directly to hire her for in-person or virtual training. She also has video courses you can purchase to see these exercises in practice.

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# IMPROVISED INTELLIGENCE

You've heard of IQ. You may have also heard of EQ. Well, let me introduce IIQ – Improvised Intelligence™.

My work in the area of and fascination with emotional intelligence inspired me to coin the phrase Improvised Intelligence™. From Daniel Goleman's EQ, to Dr. Travis Bradberry's Emotional Intelligence 2.0, to Jeb Blount's Sales EQ—the parallels between improv skills and emotional intelligence theory became really clear to me.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is defined as “the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. It generally includes the skills of emotional awareness (the ability to identify and name one's own emotions), the ability to harness those emotions and apply them to tasks like thinking and problem solving and the ability to manage emotions, which includes both regulating one's own emotions when necessary and helping others to do the same.”

## Let's unpack how this relates to improv.

On stage, as performers, we must be able to read our fellow performers, as well as the audience. The foundation of everything we do is our ability and intention to “make others look good.” In order to do that we need to be in tune, or in “group mind”, with others' feelings and needs, while honoring the ideas of others, especially if they initiate ideas first.

Instead of becoming emotionally charged about forfeiting our uninitiated ideas, we focus on heightening our stage partners' ideas. When we are “hyper-aware” and in the moment as performers. And we are more creative, agile and collaborative.

Everything boils down to self and social awareness in improv. This epiphany made it so easy for me to infuse improv exercises into EQ training content.

## Improv and Common Sense, Emotional Intelligence

For years I have felt that improv is a combination of innate ability, common sense and emotional intelligence. And for years, I took this skill set for granted because it seemingly came so easy to me, when really I've been practicing improv since I was 19 and this has improved both my common sense and EQ skills.

We were born to possess all of these, in my opinion. These abilities are steered by the brain which, as you know, is a muscle. If you don't exercise a muscle, it loses its strength and ability.

When someone says to me "I could never get on stage like you do and just make up a show," my response always is "Yes, you could. Everyone can. It just takes consistent practice."

Everyone takes their abilities to improvise for granted. We assume our brain has it covered the way it does with breathing, motor skills, etc. and that it automatically helps us fight, fly, freeze and improvise ("freestyle") because we're wired for it.

Improvising is one of those activities that can definitely run on autopilot ... AND if you put some effort into practicing improv, you will elevate your improv skills from status quo to superstar.

# What is Improvised Intelligence?

My definition of Improvised Intelligence is “The ability to be a good human who makes others look and feel great for the good of all by exercising the brain to improvise.”

Emotional intelligence plays a part. Improvised Intelligence™ provides the tools needed to improve emotional intelligence.

## **The #1 Rule (or Tenet) of Improv is: Make Others Look Good.**

When we intentionally, unintentionally, or subconsciously, make others look good, we automatically look good. When we make others look bad, we look like jerks, which makes the whole group look or feel bad ... or both.

Think about a work environment where a leader just sucks as a leader.

Let's say he or she criticizes an employee in front of the group for an idea or suggestion.

The scenario could be as innocent as the leader saying, “Great idea Adam BUT we've tried that before and it just won't work.”

First, that shuts down the employee by making them feel rejected by the big “but.” And I'm not talking about the butt who is saying “but,” even though that “butt” is responsible for the “but.”

Without discussion, the whole room can feel the disappointment or frustration of that team member. Many will absorb and inherit that frustration (emotion). Emotions are contagious.

- They may all start to feel different levels of emotion from “What an ass,” to “I’m happy I didn’t open my mouth.”
- They may become sympathetic to the person who put him or herself out there and make a note to not ever do that themselves. Positive energy turns into negative emotions.
- They might begin to dislike the leader while feeling sorry for the employee.

So much emotion can arise from the three-letter word “but.”

Overall, the potential of progress and innovation halts to a dead stop and the whole group loses and ultimately looks bad.

## **We are wired for the fear of rejection.**

Jeb Blount talks about this in his book, *Objections*. Being and feeling included matters. And in caveman days, it was essential to not be rejected by one’s tribe for the purpose of survival. The potential or fear of rejection will shut a person down and have repercussions on others.

Reverse that scenario. If the leader instead said, “That’s an interesting (or great idea) Adam. We’ve tried that in the past without success. AND maybe we could explore it again with your fresh eyes.”

**Replacing one negative three-letter word (“but”) with a positive three-letter word (“and”) can change a conversation AND a culture.**

## Be a Good Human.

You don't need a degree or special training to be a good human. If you want to be (and appear to be) intelligent, improvise by making others look and feel good. I'd say it's a "no-brainer" to be a good human AND it clearly requires a strong brain!

The framework for Improvised Intelligence™ revolves around this core foundation of making others look and feel great. There's a simple layering system of core competencies that build upon each other.

Each of these competencies (or improv tenets) can stand on its own or be clustered as skillsets for training opportunities.

The natural progression for these tenets flows in the following order:

1. Acceptance vs Agreement Without Judgement – The Power of “Yes, And”
2. Active Communication: Listening and Observing
3. Validate Others (and “Call Back”)Emote and Empathize
4. Collaborate (Solve Problems & Innovate)
5. Celebrate The Wins ... Together
6. Embrace and Solicit Failure (Be Vulnerable)
7. Find The Funny (Relatability and In The Moment Personas)
8. Find The “Game Of The Scene” (Behavioral Observations)

# CHAPTER ONE

## **Literal Yes, And**



# LITERAL YES, AND

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## Instructions:

- Divide participants into pairs and have them determine who is Person A and who is Person B
- Instruct Person B to start with the first SHORT statement (without saying “Yes”)
- Person A then literally says the word “yes” and then repeats the statement back to Person B as a way to validate and confirm what he or she heard. AND THEN literally says the word “AND” and adds another short statement.

## Tips For Success:

- Keep statements short so that your partner can remember everything
- Avoid questions and saying “but”
- “However,” “Although” and “Because” fall into the “But” category
- Remember to repeat verbatim and change pronouns
- Being boring and making no sense is okay
- Slow down and take your time

# LITERAL YES, AND

## Debrief/Discuss:

- The challenges of listening, repeating verbatim and not being in their heads with “advance planning” of what to say.
- For analytical participants, be ready to discuss the challenges behind the literal structure.
- Explain that the structure is a way to re-train the brain to engage in active listening.
- The power of validation for others to feel cared about.
- Explain that the literal exercise is a way to apply the philosophy, concept and mindset of “Yes, And.”
- Discuss how to overcome questions and rebuttals.
- Discuss ways to apply the Yes, And mindset to specific business situations, including overturning objections, diffusing difficult situations and brainstorming.



## Skill Enhancement:

- Active Listening
- Validation
- Acceptance
- Rapport and Trust Building
- Collaboration

## Example:

Person B: I like chocolate.

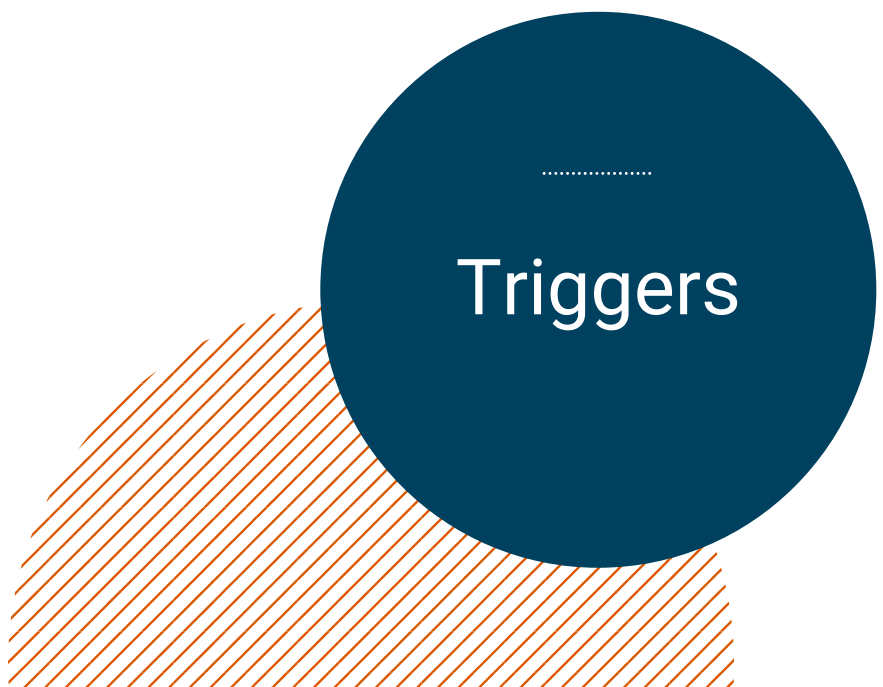
Person A: Yes, you like chocolate and you will share yours with me.

Person B: Yes, I will share mine with you and we should exercise.

Person A: Yes, we should exercise, and eating exercises the mouth.

# TRIGGER EXERCISE

SITUATION	MY FEELINGS	MY THOUGHTS	MY NEEDS	NOTES
Example: Bob was late for the meeting.	Irritated, disrespected, worried	I can't believe he's doing this when I'm so busy. He's rude. Hope he's okay.	Get my work done, respect, safety	





Notes

# CHAPTER TWO

## Share-apy



# SHARE-APY

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## Instructions:

- Divide participants into pairs
- Explain that each one will tell the other something significant about themselves; this can be adapted to something related to your organization as well, such as “why did you become a doctor?”
- Explain that you, as the facilitator, will time each conversation and that the “talker” will talk until the facilitator instructs them to switch.
- The “listener” can only listen and shake his/her head to acknowledge listening and may not interject UNLESS the “talker” appears to be struggling or says something like *“I don’t know what else to say about this.”* The “listener” may then say *“Tell me more about (something the talker has already shared)”* and the “talker” will provide more details. **After two minutes** in the first pass, tell them to switch their talker/listener roles and time them for another two minutes.
- Explain that the listeners must listen in such detail in order to repeat what they heard/learn.
- If they ask if they can take notes, say “yes” and then pay attention to their eye contact during their listening participation; discuss in debrief.

# SHARE-APY

## Debrief/Discuss:

- The discomforts of only being able to listen or talk
- What they learned about each other and how they could become more connected to others by spending only two minutes getting to know each other
- The power of vulnerability in sharing personal information
- The power of feeling heard and having the opportunity to share without being interrupted
- The power of saying "Tell me more" instead of asking a series of questions to improve active listening and showing interest
- If anyone asked if they could "take notes" while listening, allow them to do so and then discuss in the debrief; a common issue that arises is the lack of eye contact because of this strategy
- How this can be applied in business situations, especially in relationship and rapport building



## Skill Enhancement:

- Active Listening
- Vulnerability
- Engagement
- Rapport Building

## Optional Part 2 Exercise:

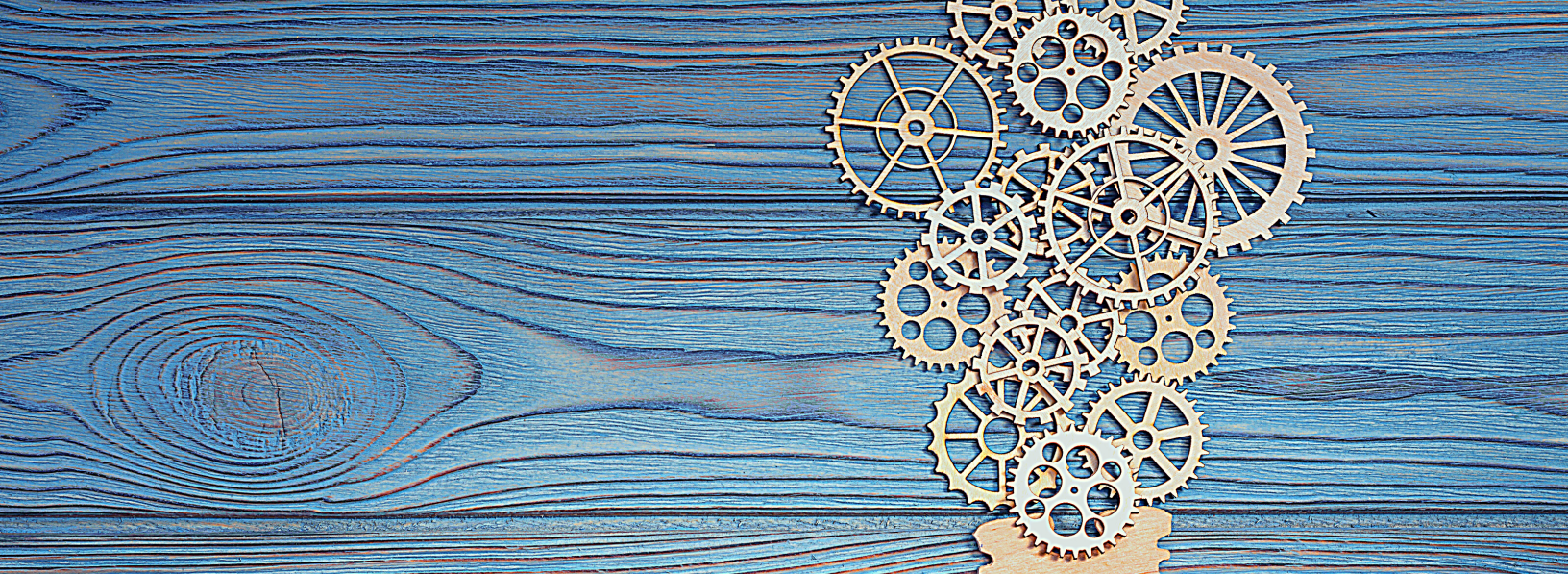
Ask a few pairs to present what they learned and then ask the pairs if their partners "got it right."



Notes

# CHAPTER THREE

**Problem Solved!**



# SOLVE THIS

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## Instructions:

- Distribute "What's Your Problem?" game cards, or blank cards if you don't have the game. Ask each person to write down a problem, challenge or objection that they are trying to solve or overcome; encourage them to think big and think of any problem being solvable.
- Collect everyone's problems and shuffle them up.
- Divide the group into 3 - 5 smaller groups and redistribute the problems.
- Have each group choose a leader to read the problems to their smaller groups and then choose one problem to solve; give them 3 to 5 minutes to do this.
- When they have decided on a problem to solve, distribute object cards and instruct them to solve their chosen problem with "at least one of the objects."
- Also instruct them to prepare to present their problems and the solutions to the entire group. Give them 3 to 5 minutes to determine a solution.

**DOWNLOAD GAME CARDS AT**  
[bit.ly/solvethisgamecards](https://bit.ly/solvethisgamecards)

# SOLVE THIS

## Debrief/Discuss:

- Have each group present their problems and solutions.
- Keep all of the problems for further discussion with management team.

## Virtual Version:

- Ask all participants to think of a problem to solve and to write it down; give them 5 minutes
- Ask everyone to "raise their hand" or other way to indicate they have written down their problems
- Share 10 objects with the entire group, either in a chat option, on a PowerPoint presentation or verbally
- Divide the group and put them into virtual breakout rooms



## Skill Enhancement:

- Creative and Critical Thinking
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Innovation and Ideation
- Overcoming Objections



Notes

# CHAPTER FOUR

## **Story Gift/Wrench**



# STORY GIFT/WRENCH

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## Instructions:

- In pairs, have people take turns telling a fairytale or other story.
- Instruct them that they will be taking turns telling a story together.
- Determine who will start the story and instruct the others that they will be interjecting with random words (preferably objects/items) for the storyteller to incorporate into the story.
- Switch roles after 90 seconds – the storyteller becomes the “word thrower” and the original word thrower must continue the story exactly where it left off.

## Tips For Success:

- The word thrower should give the storyteller time to incorporate words; instruct the word throwers to pace their words
- Both need to be loud enough to be heard by the other

# STORY GIFT/WRENCH

## Virtual Version:

- Assign pairs in advance.
- Instruct word throwers to type their words in the chat box for the storyteller to incorporate. (This actually works better virtually for the storyteller to see the word and then apply).
- **Optional:** Allow others in the group to type in words, or privately ask others to type in words, to see how the storyteller handles the disruption.

## Debrief/Discuss:

- The challenges in noticing the details
- The challenges and differences in making bold/subtle choices
- How this can be applied in business situations



## Skill Enhancement:

- Active Listening
- Being in the moment
- Creativity
- Storytelling
- Overcoming obstacles, objections and the unexpected
- How this can be applied in business situations



Notes

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Here's Lookin' At You Kid



# HERE'S LOOKIN' AT YOU KID

## Instructions:

- Divide participants into pairs and ask them to visually study each other in silence, as if they were taking mental photos of each other to remember every detail about what they see.
- Then, ask them to turn around with their backs facing each other (so that they can no longer see each other) and to **make three BOLD changes** to their appearances.
- When it appears that everyone has made their bold changes, instruct the pairs to face each other again and point out the three bold changes.

## Part 2 Option:

- Repeat the exercise and ask participants to **make three SUBTLE changes** this time.
- Discuss the differences between bold and subtle. Making bold changes make it easy for others to quickly “get it right,” thus “making your partner look good.” Bold choices are also a way to show creativity, innovation and confidence. Making and observing subtle changes improves our abilities to pay attention to details.

# HERE'S LOOKIN' AT YOU KID

## Virtual Version:

- Assign partners in advance or randomly in break out rooms.
- For large groups, put pairs in breakout rooms.
- Ask everyone to turn off their webcams while they make changes.
- Debrief and discuss.

## In-Person Facilitation:

- To overcome the discomfort of “checking each other out” and to give consent, facilitate the following warm up once everyone is paired off.
- Instruct pairs to face each other and each take turns saying: ***“I don’t want to kiss you and I don’t want to punch you.”***
- Then, instruct each take turns saying: ***“You have permission to look at me.”***

## Debrief/Discuss:

- The challenges in noticing the details
- The challenges and differences in making bold/subtle choices
- How this can be applied in business situations



## Skill Enhancement:

- Body language observation
- Details
- Collaboration
- Creativity
- Engagement



Notes

# CHAPTER SIX

## **Business Story Spine (Your Marketing Message)**



# BUSINESS STORY SPINE (YOUR MARKETING MESSAGE)

## Introduction:

Gina Trimarco is crazy about the importance of story in messaging. While data and facts are important to persuade people and close deals, the human brain is wired for storytelling and giving meaning to the things it hears. Story helps people connect and is the missing link in business – it’s a two-way process that engages and benefits the teller AND the listener.

Great stories follow a pattern. There’s always a hero (or protagonist) who starts a journey, faces obstacles, battles a villain (antagonist) and eventually triumphs over adversity. This pattern is often referred to as the “Hero’s Journey”, a classic story structure, coined by academic Joseph Campbell in 1949. There are three stages of the hero’s journey:

- **The Departure Act:** the Hero leaves the Ordinary World.
- **The Initiation Act:** the Hero ventures into unknown territory (the "Special World") and is birthed into a true champion through various trials and challenges.
- **The Return Act:** the Hero returns in triumph.



## BUSINESS STORY SPINE (YOUR MARKETING MESSAGE)

Improvisers use the Hero's Journey in the form of a story spine or arc exercise to become better storytellers. While training her performers to use the spine as a storyteller tool, Gina realized that this exercise could be applied to messaging to give backstory to a business or personal brand. Of course, there are many stories to tell and an organization can craft story messages that relate to their clients' and employees' stories.

### Story Spine Outline:

**Once Upon A Time** (situation as the "hero" of your story or a client's story) ...

**Then, One Day** (Strategy/Plan/Occurrence) ...

**And Because of That** (Consequence or Result of the plan) ...

**And Because of That** (Consequence or Result of the previous consequence) ...

**And Because of That** (Consequence or Result of the previous consequence) ...

**And Then** (Climax or Turning Point) ...

**And Ever Since Then** (New Result or Outcome) ...

**The Moral of the Story Is** (Learning for Future Vision & Planning) ...

# BUSINESS STORY SPINE (YOUR MARKETING MESSAGE)

## Instructions:

This exercise can be facilitated both in person or virtually in the same way.

**Part 1:** Instruct participants to use (fill out) the story spine form to tell a story first about themselves by thinking of an obstacle they overcame successfully. Give them 10-15 minutes to complete.

**Part 2:** Instruct participants to repeat the exercise with a story about a problem their organization (or selves) solved. Give them 10-15 minutes to complete.

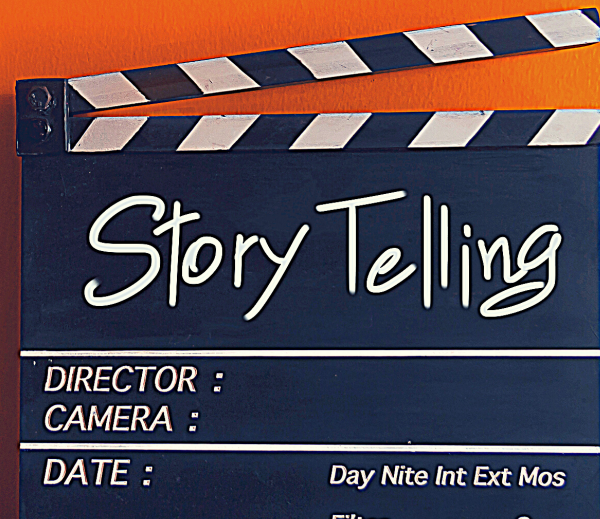
## Debrief/Discuss:

- What was challenging?
- Can others relate to your personal story?
- How can you use your personal story to create connection with others?
- How can you turn your business story into a marketing message that clients relate to?



## Skill Enhancement:

- Storytelling
- Messaging
- Creative Thinking



## BUSINESS STORY SPINE (MARKETING MESSAGE EXAMPLE)

### Example:

- **Once Upon A Time** Gina Trimarco experienced a downturn in her business because of a pandemic, with all of her clients cancelling or postponing their service contracts.
- **Then, One Day** Gina created virtual training programs to offer her clients.
- **And Because of That** she was able to generate some revenue in a new way.
- **And Because of That** she asked a competitor who was doing way more business than she was because they had more money and infrastructure to do so if they would be interested in partnering with her.
- **And Because of That** they formed a partnership for her to design improv-based sales training curriculum.
- **And Then** the competitor announced they were hiring full time trainers, which gave Gina the idea to ask the competitor to hire her to deliver their content as well as hers. Surprised by this “ask”, the competitor said “yes.”
- **And Ever Since Then** Gina phased out of her business to be part of a bigger team and vision, leveraging her talents in a bigger and more profitable way.
- **The Moral of the Story Is** pivot, don’t panic, during a pandemic.



Notes



# SPONTANEOUS SELLING | THE ART OF SALES IMPROV

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Learn to leverage the same techniques that actors and comedians use to improvise in the moment while on stage and still appear brilliant (and on script) to the audience.

## In this course you'll learn:

- How to be funny, engaging and human without "trying too hard."
- How to use humor in the right way to be more relatable.
- How to build relationships faster, with less effort.
- How to leverage the YES - AND methodology to effortlessly handle anything that get's thrown at you.
- The secret to selling without selling.
- And more!

Master Improv Instructor, Gina Trimarco, will teach you how to become a more effective communicator and relationship builder in spontaneous sales conversations.

**ENROLL TODAY**



# WHAT TO SAY, WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY | WORKSHOP

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In this workshop, you'll learn the techniques improv performers use to stay in control, and know exactly what to say, no matter what is thrown at them.

## **THIS 120-MINUTE VIRTUAL WORKSHOP COVERS:**

- How to leverage the Three-step Spontaneous Communication Framework.
- The powerful Yes-And Methodology that always puts you back in control to win over a tough buyer.
- The real secret to how improv performers always know exactly what to say, at exactly the right time, in any situation.
- How to gain emotional control of the neurophysiological, fight or flight response that causes you to fumble your words when you are caught off guard.
- How to quickly read people, adapt in the moment, and confidently approach crucial conversations.

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