

Break the Box

Learning to Deal with Entrepreneurship Chaos in a Master Course

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Pedagogical experience

This communication focuses on a 4-week period when 30 students (working adults) planned, implemented and assessed an event, called Break the Box, with zero budget and practically no support, simulating the conditions that are met during some phases of the entrepreneurial process. The students were enrolled in a Master course - Competitiveness and Business Development, that takes place in the second semester of 2025-2026, the only compulsory one in that semester. The event report and the peer evaluation represented 25% of the grade of the discrete evaluation. In the second class of the semester, students were asked to make groups of three. Each group defined one student responsible for Speakers, one for Communication and one for Logistics and they received the date of the event and the topics (associated with the course - this year was International Business and Global Challenges). In the next class they were required to start planning and they split in bigger groups where they had to identify the Speakers for the whole event, the logic of the event, the Space where it will take place (that they had to reserve), the coffee breaks (with no money to start with - they could cook or get sponsors), the Communication plan and all the other necessary aspects to organize the event. This class was the most important one as it gave them a hands-on perspective of the entrepreneurial chaos - they all had different opinions and yet they needed to work together. More often than not, they would ask the teachers how to do and what is the path and the answer was: it is yours to find out and decide. The second and third class were also hands on, dedicated to the event and they discovered ways to understand each other, solve differences and conflicts

that sparked and were managed, and they bonded as a group. They managed to organize a very good event, get sponsorships of over 2500 euros, and they assessed it altogether after it ended. In terms of evaluation, the report and peer assessment were revelatory of the learning and corresponded to the observation done in class during the 4 weeks. Part of a pressure cooker, students learned that they have the capacity to solve foreseen and unforeseen problems, work in teams and get involved and work for the common good of their own Break the Box organization.

Critical assessment

The students had the chance of feeling what it means to put together something where there is very few support. There is no stronger teacher than our own experience and dealing with difficulty and understanding chaos management is key in entrepreneurship. They had to rely on the colleagues, they had to find resources, choose between alternative paths, deal with stress and some desperation which showed them how themselves and other people can behave in situations of high uncertainty. As unorthodox as the approach may have been, they all learned and most of them enjoyed it (at the end, at least). However, it was a stressful experience, and some would have preferred the calm and peace of traditional evaluation.

Students' perspective

"The assessment was pretty challenging and allowed us to really impersonate and feel what an entrepreneur is..."

"As taught in class, in entrepreneurship we start with the idea, then chaos comes and then we start putting things together to make it happen. Break the Box was all this and so much more ☺"



Fig.2 The entrepreneurial chaos (class 3, where everything was born) - Working on the Opportunity

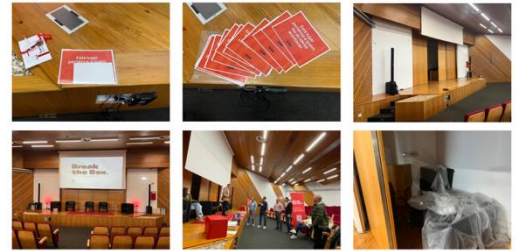


Fig.3 Space preparation - Making the Opportunity Happen



Fig.4 Solving problems - Managing the Unpredicted as a Team



Fig.1 Break the Box: The event born from chaos

References

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