

The exercise “WASON selection” is used to enhance student’s understanding of how puzzling the interpretation of an SOP can be. It also illustrates that although procedures should be examined for their efficiency on a regular basis, changing existing procedures too often can create problems and lead to numerous interpretations.

Allow sufficient time for everyone to finish all three answers. Then go through the three SOPs - and you will discover that they are likely to have generated different conclusions which can lead to a lively debate.

? **Ask students:** What can we conclude from this little exercise?

Just reading an SOP is no guarantee that everyone understands it the same way.

It shows how puzzling instructions can be, and that we all have different interpretations although the instructions seem quite clear at a first glance. Different perceptions result in different conclusions. Different conclusions in turn can lead to stress, conflict, inefficient teamwork and accidents. It also demonstrates that although procedures aim to standardise our work, they must always be assisted by proper, effective communication. A new procedure can be established very quickly - however gaining a common understanding of an SOP happens gradually over time.

When issuing SOP’s, how do we make sure we all have the same understanding? (This point is relevant for the “Common words exercise next in this lesson.

Thank them for their input and introduce the next exercise “Common Word Exercise”

Common Word Exercise

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Common Word Exercise - trainer information

Objective of the exercise:

The group must find the common word included in a series of cards given to all members of a team. (the exercise is done in two rounds - as explained in detail beneath)

What You Need:

- “Word Cards” with a number (6 words on each card usually works well) of words written on each of them. You need one card per student per round. This means that you need a total of two cards per student as you will have to do the exercise twice in order to prove your point. You can expand the cards using your own design though making sure the exercise remains challenging. Print these on colored papers or cards so they don’t get mixed up with other white cards used for notes. Make

sure that all the words are present on at least three (3) or more word cards, but only one word is present on all word cards. If you have more than 10 students you may want to split them into two groups.

- 50 blank pieces of paper or more depending on the number of students. You can preferably use recycled paper cut into smaller pieces.
- Each student needs a pen to write with.

Setup

- Ask students to form a circle (with their chairs) while looking away from each other (looking to the outside of the circle).
- Distribute one “word card” to each student.
- Distribute several blank pieces of paper (to write on) to each student. There is no limit to this - they can use as many as they need during the exercise.
- Explain that all the cards contain an equal number of different words. However only one word is common for all the cards and the group’s objective is to find that word. However, there are a number of rules they need to adhere to:

Rules:

1. Students cannot show their word cards to anyone else.
2. Students cannot pass their word cards to anyone else.
3. Students cannot talk to each other.
4. The only way to communicate is to send notes written on blank pieces of paper to another person adjacent to them - either to the right or left. Students may not send notes to anyone who is not seated next to them.
5. Each piece of paper can have a maximum of three words (or signs) written on them
6. One student may for instance write to words on a paper - then pass it onto another person who may add another word (or sign) A sign could be: crossing out a word, ticking a word or other... But each card may never have more than three words or signs written on it. A new blank piece of paper must be used
7. Students are not allowed to confer or discuss a plan for the exercise. As soon as you have explained the rules and distributed the word cards, students cannot talk anymore.
8. When someone in the group thinks he/she has figured out the common word he/she must stand up and say the word out loud. However tell them that if this is not correct you will add one minute to the group’s total time (this prevents the eager students from standing up saying all the words in his/her card, until he/she hits the right word.

(It may be necessary to emphasize the rules a couple of times, because the rules may seem a little complicated)

LESSON PLAN - STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

- Allocate up to 10 minutes for this first round or until they find the common word (it usually takes anywhere between 4-8 minutes).
- Time their performance so you can compare different groups' performances (across multiple courses as well if you prefer)

When the group or groups have found their common words the first round of the exercise is over. There is no debriefing or questions before the next round of the exercise.

Give your students 2 minutes approximately to come up with a plan for how they want to do the exercise now that they are given a second chance to find a common word. If you have more than one group, then each group must come up with a plan of their own. Start the exercise all over again – with a new set of word cards for the group(s) and remember to time their performance again. Bring back everyone and follow with a discussion.

The exercise clearly shows how important it is to follow the laid down strategies, SOP, and task delegation, if you do the exercise twice. They will most likely spend much less time in the second round, which proves how well things can be done if we establish rules for dealing with the tasks – and stick to them and when we have gained a common understanding through sharing the experience.

Debriefing:



● **Ask students** how they felt the first time they approached the task. How was it different the second time?



● How did each individual approach the problem? Did you consider nominating a leader to coordinate your activities? Did you organize the information methodically? Did you try to solve it on your own or did you rely on others? Were you happy with your performance? What would have happened if just one person did not follow the method you agreed upon for the second round?

The confusion that is felt during the first attempt compared to the fighting spirit and eagerness during the second attempt clearly shows the difference between having a laid down strategy for tasks (SOP) and not having a clue of how to deal with a task. Even though some individuals in each group had a perfect plan it makes no sense and cannot be used if not everybody in the group agrees to the plan and sticks to it. Similarly it can create a lot of confusion if the standard procedures are not followed or if individuals deviate from the SOP just because they think their own plan is better than the known strategies (their ideas might be better, but it serves no purpose if they don't have all their colleagues on board with the

same idea)

Sum up your lesson by stressing the importance of SOPs and common goals, which will lead to a higher company safety culture. Then finish the lesson by showing the last slide:

Consistent use of SOPs ensures....

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*Consistent use of an approved
Standard Operating Procedure*

ensures:

- *Conformance with organizational practices,*
- *Reduced work effort,*
- *Reduction in error occurrences,*
- *And improved data comparability, credibility, and defensibility.*
- *Standard Operating Procedures also serve as resources for training and for ready reference and documentation of proper procedures.*