

WONDER PRACTICE #1

“No, but” versus “Yes, and”

If you were to interview comedians at *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*, *Second City*, or *Saturday Night Live*, you would find they all revere the importance of “Yes, and.” Try the following experiment, and you’ll see why.

Gather a small group of people (three to eight) who have any circumstance in common. Tell them you are asking them to have two rounds of discussions about the same topic. In both cases, the discussion starts by someone saying a single sentence about their common circumstance. For example, “We are behind schedule on the cost-reduction program.”

- *First round:* After the first sentence, each person says, “No, but” and then adds a sentence. Moving quickly, go around the group twice.
- *Second round:* After the first sentence, each person says, “Yes, and” and then adds a sentence.

Once the discussions are complete, ask the group what was different between “No, but” and “Yes, and.”

In the many times we’ve done this, people report that the first pass slowed thinking, increased tension, and blocked creative ideas. The second pass was faster, more creative, and built on one another’s comments.

Practicing “but” versus “and” tends to refresh wonder and, in turn, our natural desire to build rather than destroy.