"So this is the next stop on my search," noted the young man. "Hugh indicated that you are noted for the application of scientific principles to the workplace and for developing incentives in an effort to increase productivity."

"Yes," answered Taylor. "However, that was several years ago. Today, I am still interested in motivating employees to increase productivity. However, I am doing this through directed play. Tell me what you have learned so far."

"Hugh presented play in terms of its characteristics. He noted the riddle about the volunteer; he noted the importance of intrinsic motivation; he described how to create designer playgrounds and its new internal reality. I am here to learn about creating a perfect order and to find out how the workgame creates this perfect order," summarized the young man.

Taylor began. "Yes, we call it the workgame. Since everyone knows how to play a game, the game format becomes a useful tool for understanding the workplace and how we can develop strategies to increase productivity.

"So we can apply the principles of a game to the workplace," commented the young man. "I have heard people commenting on the game of life. Does that have anything to do with the principles?"

"Yes," continued Taylor as he pointed to one of his plaques hanging on the wall and paraphrased its contents. 'It is often said that life is a game. Then why don't we play it as if it were.'

"That makes sense," concluded the young man. "So we can apply the principles of a game to the workplace."

"Correct," noted Taylor. Then he continued. "On the one hand, we have the play or game component. On the other hand, we have their application to the workplace. When we combine the two, we derive the term workgame: the application of simple game principles to develop strategies which increase productivity.

"Workgame," noted the young man in a questioning tone of voice. "In a sense,
workgame, sounds like an oxymoron or contradiction in terms."

“On the surface, it may seem like an oxymoron, or at least, two contradictory terms linked together,” answered Taylor. “However, in play terms, it makes perfect sense. First, we focus on you and your attitude toward work. Then we focus on the place where you play and its affect on what you do. In the workgame, we will describe what you are doing and how to do it. In focusing on this component of directed play, we are focusing on the activity or play which occurs on the playground. Once you know what you want to do and how to do it, you have created order. In play terms, you have created a perfect order.”

“I see,” added the young man. “With the workgame, we create order in the workplace so that we know what to do and how to do it.”

Taylor pointed to the plaque on the wall which was very similar to the young man’s summary. The young man went over and read the plaque. It stated that ‘the workgame focuses us on what we are doing in the workplace and how we are going to do it.’ They both laughed. Then Taylor continued. "Let's jump directly into the concept. Name a game that you used to play?"

"When I first met with Hugh, I used capture the flag in an example,” responded the young man. "I guess capture the flag is as good as any other game."

"Then we will use capture the flag to demonstrate the concept," noted Taylor. "So tell me, do you know how to play capture the flag?"

"Sure," responded the young man without hesitation. "There are two teams. Each team guards its own flag which is located at its end of the playfield. There are rules as to
how the flag must be displayed. The objective is to capture the other team's flag and return it to your own territory without getting captured yourself. If you are tagged by the other team in their territory, you go to prison. You stay there until you are freed by a member of your team."

After a brief pause, the young man continued. "Did I miss anything?"

"No," replied Taylor. "I think that you have provided a reasonably accurate summary of the game."

"That was easy," noted the young man complementing himself.

"That's the point," added Taylor. "You and everyone else playing the game had little or no problem playing capture the flag. Intuitively, you knew the components which comprise a game. First, it is organized play. The players play freely. There is a defined field of play.

The workgame focuses us on what we are doing in the workplace and how we are going to do it.

The game begins and it ends. Second, there was a way to determine the winner. When the other team captured your flag, your team lost the game. Third, there were agreed upon rules. For example, you noted how you tagged or captured another player. Next, in this case, there were two or more players. And fifth, there was competition. In addition, once you knew these factors you developed strategies to win.

"I see the simplicity of what you are saying," commented the young man.

"Before we apply the principles of playing a game to the workplace, let's analyze your game of capture the flag in terms of its component parts," added Taylor. "First, what is the objective of the game."

"That's simple," noted the young man. He wrote the point down as part of his notes. Then he continued. "The objective is to win the game by capturing the other team's
flag."

"Now think in one sentence how easily you were able to state the objective of the game, in this case Capture the Flag," stated Taylor. "Compare this with your organization’s mission statement."

"Good point, I wonder how many employees could state in one sentence the objective of their work," asked the young man rhetorically? "It might take a four page memo and then you still might not be sure what your objective really was."

Together, they both laughed at the thought since they knew all to well how many times the objectives of the employee in the workplace were ill defined.

After regaining their composure, Taylor continued. "And once you know the objective of the game, everything else follows. Along with the rules, the objective determines, in part, the strategy and the nature of the competition. Next, tell me who are the players?"
"The players are those who are on my team and those who are on the other team," responded the young man.

"What about the referee. Isn't he a player too, since he is part of the game," suggested Taylor.

"Now that you mention it, I guess that you can include the referees as a group of players too," agreed the young man.

"Next, we have competition between the teams," stated Taylor. "However, is everyone competing or are some players cooperating with each other to win the game."

"Good point," responded the young man. He paused for a moment as he pondered the thought. "This is an interesting concept. Can you tell me more about who is cooperating and who is competing."

"Absolutely," added Taylor. "For example, take the depth chart on a football team. On the one hand players are expected to cooperate together in an effort to achieve the team's goal of winning football games. On the other hand, players are competing against
each other to increase their position on the depth chart. This can result in a situation where
the competition between players is detrimental to the team effort."

"I see your point," added the young man. "Competition among employees is a real
problem in the office. If one employee is seeking to get ahead by withholding valuable
information or if another person is backstabbing to gain advantage, overall productivity in
the workplace declines."

"And remember that the objective of directed play is to increase productivity, not
decrease it," added Taylor.

He paused then continued. "Once you know the objective of the game, it is only a
question of determining a strategy which will obtain the objective. When you play capture
the flag, what is your strategy to win?"

"Let's see," responded the young man. "We developed a series of plays designed to
catch the other team off guard so that we could get their flag. We even had a strategy to
free the prisoners. It worked almost every time. What is next on your list?"

"You've identified the objective of the game, its strategy, the players, including
whether they are cooperators or competitors," commented Taylor. "Next, what are the
rules?"

"Our rules were relatively simple," noted the young man. "To capture someone
you had to tag them with both hands, one hand didn't count. Other than that, we didn't
have that many rules."

"Actually, you probably had more rules. You may not be aware of them all. Often,
these are "customary rules" which are understood by everyone. Sometimes, these rules are
simply part of the "culture" which is understood by everyone. For example, I am sure that
you had rules as to the size of the jail where you placed the captured opponents, and as
you noted there were rules for freeing people from your opponent's jail," added Taylor.

"What is next on your list," asked the young man.

"The game of capture the flag is played on a game board or in this case on a
playfield and it has a beginning and an end," responded Taylor.

"This last point sounds like designer playgrounds to me," commented the young
man.

"Exactly," noted Taylor.

The young man was on a roll and continued. "So, what you are suggesting is that
the workplace is like a game, in this case capture the flag. All I need to do is to use the
basic components of a game to analyze the workplace." He paused for a moment. "It
sounds too simple?"
"In a sense it is this simple," responded Taylor. "The game makes perfect sense to the players and to the spectators. Everyone understands the objective of the game; everyone understands the basic strategy of the game; everyone understands the rules, and everyone understands how the game is played. It creates a perfect order."

Taylor paused for a moment, then continued. “Because it makes perfect sense, we can easily determine the objective or what it takes to win the game; we can develop a strategy to win the game, and then we can obtain the players and other resources necessary to win the game. These are the criteria of a game. The same approach to winning capture the flag or for that matter any game may be applied to the workplace too. Hence, the workgame.

There was a knock on Taylor’s door. In popped Jill. She had a question for Taylor.

After answering the question, Taylor explained to the young man that they had just completed Jill’s work plan for next year. “Let’s ask her some questions and see how well we both did?”

“Fire away,” responded Jill.

“Can you tell me what your objectives are for next year?” asked Taylor.

Jill responded without missing a beat. “We developed five objectives. Four of them were fairly straightforward in that we both agreed on them and how to implement them. However, the fifth objective caused considerable disagreement. Taylor felt that I was the best person to complete the objective. I felt that the completion of the first four objectives were a full-time work load and that the fifth objective was really outside the scope of my responsibilities.”

Taylor interrupted. “Tell the young man if you really wanted to do the fifth objective. Be truthful.”

“I’ll try,” responded Jill. “I didn’t really want to do it, or should I say that it took some conjolling by Taylor to convince me that I wanted to complete the objective.”

“Tell the young man what we did,” continued Taylor.

“As you can guess, I didn’t really want to complete the fifth objective,” explained Jill. “To simplify the story somewhat, Taylor explained to me how it would advance my career by preparing me in a new program area. He showed me how I would contribute to the entire organization. In short, he convinced me that I really wanted to complete this objective for myself and for the organization.”

Taylor turned his attention to the young man for a moment. “Do you remember the riddle regarding why the volunteer is more productive than the paid employee?”

“Yes, I remember it quite well,” answered the young man. “The volunteer is at play.”
“Yes,” noted Taylor. “However, it is the flip side of the riddle which interests me at this time. We know that managing the employee using the usual carrot and sticks approach is less effective. We know that the most efficient method of managing is to motivate the employee so that they buy into and want to complete the desired objective. An employee who wants to complete an objective is an employee who is intrinsically motivated. And an intrinsically motivated employee is a more productive employee.”

Jill added. “That is exactly what Taylor did for me. It takes a lot more time and energy than simply telling me that I had to do it. Had he used the “stick” on me, my overall productivity would probably have suffered. However, in the end, his approach resulted in greater productivity because I am motivated to complete the objective. I wanted to do it.”

“And this is one of the foundations of directed play,” added the young man. “Motivated employees are productive employees.”

Taylor turned to the young man and instructed him to start a new sheet on his tablet. “The first component of the workgame is organized or directed play. The second component is the determining your objectives. Determining your objectives is another way of determining the criteria for success or in terms of a game how to win.”

The young man made the two entries on his tablet.

Taylor continued his discussion with Jill. “After we agreed on the objectives, we discussed strategies to accomplish the objectives. Then we discussed the players or who we needed to complete each objective. In turn, we discussed who would oppose or thwart the completion of the objective. These included those who are on your side and those who are not. In addition, we discussed any other resources which we needed to complete the project.”

“Quite simply,” added Jill. “I knew what to do; I knew how to do it; I knew the resources which I needed to do it, and most importantly, I wanted to do it.”

Taylor opened the draw and pulled out a file folder. From it he removed Jill’s worksheet. Listed under the major headings which Taylor had described, it contained the same information Jill had just covered.

Taylor turned again to the young man and instructed him to place some more entries on his tablet. “Add a third item. We need to develop a strategy to accomplish the objective. We just discussed this item. Now add a fourth item: we agreed upon the rules.”

“Jill, what are the rules by which we play,” asked Taylor.

Again, Jill responded without hesitation. “First, we have formal rules. Most notable is the employee’s handbook. This handbook outlines the rules and regulations by which everyone must abide. In addition, there are other written policies and procedures. The handbook and written policies are examples of formal rules. In addition, we have
informal rules. For example, I knew that Taylor would discuss with me in a give and take session his desire for me to complete the fifth objective. Since this rule is not written down anywhere, it is not formal. However, it is understood by everyone and practiced by all. This is what makes it an informal or unwritten rule.”

“A lot of people talk about ‘managing the culture,’” continued Taylor. “Actually, the process which Jill has described so far really describes our ability to manage the culture of this organization. We all know and agree upon the objectives. The same is true for the all the rules and in particular, our informal rules. In a sense, my job is made easy since we are all in synch regarding what we are doing and how we are doing it.”

“Sounds like Jill is in synch with what you are doing,” noted the young man.

“Of course it does,” responded Taylor. “I told you we were all in synch regarding what we are doing.” They all had a good laugh.

Jill added. “If you think about it, the workgame is another way in which the manager can approach managing the culture.”

TABLET

Components of the Workgame:

1) Directed Play
2) Objective - Criteria for determining a winner or success
3) Strategy or how you will accomplish the objective
4) Agreed upon rules
5) Competition among two or more sides
6) Cooperation is just as important as competition - competition
The young man flipped the page of his tablet back to the previous page. Then he asked the following question. “According to my notes, the next criteria of a game is competition between two or more parties.” He paused for a moment, then continued. “Aren't your employees extremely competitive, and with everyone so competitive doesn't that interfere with your creating a play environment for your employees? You mentioned the importance of cooperation in the workplace?”

“Your point is well taken,” answered Taylor. “Before we continue, I would like you to list the last two criteria of the workgame on your tablet. These are competition among two or more sides and cooperation is just as important as competition.”

The young man entered the last two components on his tablet.

Taylor continued with his discussion on the importance of cooperation and competition. “Competition and cooperation are both important. They both go hand-in-hand. Our organization is not a checkers game between two people, it is a group of people who are organized to accomplish an objective. For this reason, we seek competition outside our group. However, among our employees we emphasize cooperation rather than competition.”

"But doesn't competition among everyone benefit the organization?” continued the young man.

"Competition has its place, but cooperation among the players ultimately produces better results than competition,” answered Taylor. He paused, then continued. “I understand that as part of your tour you are going to visit Randy at the challenge course tomorrow. There you will see first hand the importance of cooperation in team building and in helping to make an organization more productive. Until then, let me give you a brief introduction regarding the role of cooperation and competition in the organization.”

Taylor paused briefly, then continued. "When the players cooperate toward a common goal, everyone wins. My objective is to construct a work environment which fosters cooperation."

"I am not sure that I am following you,” interjected the young man.

"Do you remember playing sandlot baseball?" continued Taylor.

"Yes," replied the young man.

"Not everyone who played was equally gifted in baseball," continued Taylor.

"Usually, there was the runt of the squad," added the young man.

"Even though this person was the runt, and a less valuable baseball player than the other members on the team, he contributed to the team's output since it took everyone to win. And when your team won, everyone shared in the victory," continued Taylor.
"Even the runt shared in the victory," noted the young man.

"His pat on the back may not have been as big as other players'. None-the-less he received a pat on the back for his contribution," added Taylor.

"I see what you are saying," added the young man. "I was not the most gifted player, yet my contribution to the team was recognized, although not as much as the team's star player."

"So tell me how everyone wins through cooperation," asked the young man.

"Because everyone pats everyone else on the back for what the other person has done. The runt pats the good player on the back and the good player pats the runt on the back for his contribution, even though it is only a smaller contribution in comparison. If there are four people on the team, four people feel good about themselves," continued Taylor. "When you compete against each other, the winner is the one who gets the pats on the back, but who gives the pats on the back to those who didn't win? No one! The result is that the winner feels good about himself while everyone else feels not so good."

"This is why cooperation works to everyone's advantage," commented the young man.

"Yes," noted Taylor. "Everyone gains something through cooperation."

"So you cooperate among yourselves and compete with others in the marketplace," replied the young man. "Well, what do you do if there is no competition left in the marketplace? What do you do when you become the undisputed winner?"

"A perceptive question," responded Taylor. "This is why some athletes quit after they have reached the top of their field. For some athletes, they are no longer able to maintain their interest in the sport because they no longer have any competition."

"So competition works as a motivator only as long as there are competitors," concluded the young man.

"Many times this is true," responded Taylor. "However, remember when the team cooperated, everyone patted everyone else on the back."

"Yes," commented the young man.

Taylor pointed to a plaque on his wall and added. "If you compete against someone and win and do it more than once, then both parties lose interest. The loser loses interest because he knows he cannot win and the winner loses interest because there is no longer any competition present to spur him on. Competition takes you only so far. Then the vine withers and the fruits of winning lose their power to motivate. Competition works only as long as there are competitors embroiled in the competition."

"So if you play at work, everyone wins and cooperation can often take the
organization to new heights of achievement and productivity."

"Right," continued Taylor.

"But why does cooperation work even after you win?" asked the young man.

"When you were a kid, did you ever get tired of playing? No! Even when you lost the game you still continued playing. Why? Because it was fun. You played because it was fun. Winning or losing didn't really matter because everyone had fun playing the game."

"But if you eliminate the competition then aren't you less productive?"

Taylor roared with a good laugh. "Seems like we have come full circle. Have you ever watched children consumed in their play? Don't they play their hearts out? Haven't you seen a child totally involved in his hobby? Is this child not productive? Well, that is exactly what we do!"

He leaned back in his chair and smiled. "Is this not a match for the notion that competition is the only way to create productivity? Are you kidding! Our people are just like those kids on the sandlot totally involved in their play! Productive! Of course we are, because everyone is totally involved in his work and having fun at the same time."

"So play is the ultimate motivator," added the young man.

"You've got the idea. Directed play applies the principles of play toward meeting organization objectives in the workplace," added Taylor. He stood up and put his arm around the young man's shoulder in a sign of approval.
"Isn't there a role for competition in the workplace?" questioned the young man.

"Of course there is," responded Taylor. "Competition is ever present in the workplace. Unfortunately, some managers emphasize competition in everything they do, to the exclusion of cooperation. There needs to be a balance between the two and the good manager knows how to manage for both."

"How do you balance cooperation and cooperation?" asked the young man.

"For example, take the situation of professional football teams," continued Taylor. "On the one hand they need to field a team which is extremely competitive against other football teams. There is no question that when they bang heads on the playing field each Sunday they are being competitive. On the other hand the coach needs to field a team where the members of the team work together or cooperate with each other to accomplish a goal, in this case to win the game.

"Then this is what is meant by the term team," added the young man. "A team is people cooperating together to achieve a common objective."

"In this sense you are correct," continued Taylor. "However, the trick for the coach is to foster cooperation among his players while each of the players is vying to improve his position on the depth charts and to gain a starting position. Viewing it in win/loss terms, if player B helps player A then the team and player A benefit. In this scenario, player B loses and may be cut from the team. However, if player B does not help player A then player B gains at the expense of the team and of course, player A."

"So in this competitive situation the team loses because of the lack of cooperation between the two players," summarized the young man. "The coach is faced with an interesting dilemma, isn't he?"

"The coach is faced with developing cooperation among his players where there is inherent competition between players on the team," continued Taylor. "Watch the really good coaches. They are able balance cooperation and competition within a truly competitive situation. On the other hand you can spot teams in trouble when the players are visibly competing among themselves on and off the field. How in the world can they compete against another team when they spend all their energy competing among themselves?"

"So the workplace is not much different," added the young man.

Taylor turned to Jill for her thoughts. "What do you think Jill."

"As usual, you nailed the concept," continued Jill. Then she applied the concept to her work environment. "Remember the fifth objective. In order to accomplish it, I needed to organize and motivate the four people in my department to work together as a team. "If I pit one person against the other it is to each person's advantage not to share with the other. And if different members of the department have a different piece of the puzzle then..."
competition may prevent the completion of the puzzle. If I can get my employees to cooperate in this competitive environment, productivity will increase. If I don't, productivity will fall off. Taylor is correct. It is a balancing act between cooperation and competition."

"Well stated Jill," noted Taylor. "Unchecked competition may be counter productive to organizational goals and it may limit productivity. There is a place for cooperation in this truly competitive world. Those who succeed are able to foster cooperation among their players to achieve common goals, whether on a football field or in business."

Again, Taylor turned to the young man. "Let's add the last component to your notes, competition. However, remember in an organization that cooperation is just as important as competition."

The young man made note of the item on his table.

"These are the major points of the workgame," added Taylor.

"It was a pleasure meeting you," Jill said to the young man. "If you will excuse me, I need to get back to work and the completion of my 5th objective." Jill wished the young man success in his search. She shook his hand and left the room.

The young man had a question. "You have used play and games somewhat interchangeably. Are they the same thing? What is the difference?"

"There are several differences," answered Taylor as he pointed to a plaque on the wall. "First, games are a more structured form of play. And there are some forms of play that are not considered games."

As the young man summarized the point, he quickly wrote the point down on his note pad. "In this sense, games are more formal than play. You play the game of tennis, or you play the game of football. Perhaps you might play the board game of Monopoly or checkers. And if you want to think of things in slightly different terms, you can play the game of work or life."

"So, when you participate in a game, you are really playing," added the young man. "However, not all play is a game."

Taylor continued. "Since games are more structured than play, there are many instances of play which are not a game."

Taylor thought for a moment, then continued. "Even so, some people are more familiar with games than play and may want to treat directed play in game-like terms."

"Why would some people do this?" asked the young man.

"Since any game is a form of play, these people may view directed play in game-
like terms," continued Taylor. "However, you should remember that this use limits the concept."

"How," asked the young man.

There are several reasons why we focus on play rather than games," continued Taylor.

"When I say the word play you immediately think of fun or enjoyment. In contrast, when I say the word "game" you think of winning and competition. "Taylor paused for a moment to emphasize his point. "The benefit which we derive from the experience is extremely important and this is one of the reasons why we focus on play rather than on games."

"Then having fun is good and competition is bad," summarized the young man.

"Well, not totally," replied a hesitant Taylor. "I think that having fun is always good. However, competition is not always bad either. The problem is that in our society we tend to focus too much on competition which tends to overshadow the benefits of cooperation. Coupled with this reason is the negative connotation that many people associate with games. For many, the phrase "the games people play" suggests a coerciveness associated with playing games."

"So this is why you focus on play," concluded the young man.

"Yes," responded Taylor.

"And the same is true for directed play," added the young man.

"Yes," responded Taylor. "Although directed play can be viewed as a game, it is
The young man scribbled down four points in his notebook. After writing them he turned his notebook for Taylor's review and went over the points. First, games are a more structured form of play. Second, generally, play results in fun while a game results in a winner. Third, there are a lot of similarities including the locus of control and the motivation comes from within. Last, use either games or play, but play results in fun.

"You summarized the points very well," noted Taylor. He reached into his desk drawer and shuffled through a folder. From the folder emerged a handout. Taylor took a quick look at it and passed it to the young man. "This handout serves as a worksheet on the workgame."

"Looks simple enough," commented the young man. Then he summarized the handout. "We determine my objective, a strategy, the players and the rules. It seems to accurately reflect what we have discussed."
The young man paused a moment as a new thought occurred to him. A subtle smile emerged across his face as he contemplated it. Then he asked his question. “There are theories out there which purport to tell the employee how to carry out the workplan of the supervisor. How does the workgame differ from these theories?”

“A good question,” answered Taylor. “There are three reasons. First, you are correct. There are other theories and many of them are much more intricate than the simplified model presented here. However, the objective here is to keep it simple in order to make the point and show the relationship. By applying play criteria to the workplace we create order. The workgame accomplishes this objective”

“Keeping it simple creates a perfect order,” suggested the young man. “In addition, making it simple, makes it understandable.”

“Second, the workgame is one component in the concept of directed play. Together, all of the components are necessary to create a play experience in the workplace. If you look at the workgame as separate from the other components, your analysis is correct. However, the workgame is one component in directed play. It is necessary along with your motivation, the creation of designer playgrounds, a beginning and end to the play experience, creating an internal reality, and social groups. The other components help to establish the environment in which the workgame can occur. And together, they all comprise directed play.”

“So, I am designing my designer playground to enable the workgame to occur.”
Workgame Worksheet

1. Name of the Workgame:

2. Describe the objective of the game/work/activity?

3. Describe your strategy or how you plan to complete the objective?

4. List the players on your team? List those who are not? Are they cooperating with you to complete your objective or are they competing with you or not cooperating?

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5. List the rules of the workgame.

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Or, if my strategy is not working, I can end the game and start over,” summarized the young man. “I see how it works; I see how it all fits together.”

“And last, remember that directed play is play that meets the goals of the organization. It is important to remember that the objectives developed in the workgame need to be consistent with those of the organization. There is a symbiotic relationship between the needs of the organization and those of the employee.”

“So in summary,” continued the young man as he looked at a plaque hanging on the wall. “The workgame tells us what we are going to do on our designer playgrounds and how we are going to do it. Next, as in any game we will determine what we need to do to win and then we need to develop the strategies, resources and players to obtain it. Since games are more structured, we use games rather than play. Last, play is fun.”

“You’ve got the right idea,” added Taylor as he complemented the young man. “That pretty much concludes our session for today. I understand that tomorrow you are planning to visit with Randy on the challenge course.

“Correct,” added the young man. “Hugh indicated that I would learn about the formation of social groups on the challenge course tomorrow.”

“You will have a good time,” noted Taylor. “Actually, you will find our discussion on cooperation and competition a good prelude to your visit with Randy tomorrow.”

They both shook hands. The young man departed with thoughts of anticipation about the challenge course which he was going to visit.