

Roleplaying and Real-World Skills

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While *Dungeons and Dragons*, and role-playing games in general, have been the source of [moral panic and various controversies](#), their mainstream acceptance has increased over recent years. This is helped by some of Hollywood's tough guys, like Vin Diesel and Henry Cavill, proudly supporting the nerdiness of [Dungeons and Dragons](#) and [World of Warcraft](#), respectively.

Not only do these kinds of social, free-form games provide a much-needed escape from the barely controlled trash fire of 2020, they can also provide surprising cognitive benefits that players will take back into the Real World™.

Most people might think of role-playing and gaming as hobbies with which to spend a weekend or regular Friday night, though they can also teach you some important skills that will translate into your daily life. Many corporate training sessions incorporate simple role-play, particularly for developing negotiation and conflict resolution skills. I've also seen investigative courses use role-play to assess how investigators manage scenes and interact with potential witnesses.

Anyone who has ever worked in any office environment anywhere might recognise these three core tenets of any good role-playing game: Creativity, Co-operation, and... Chaos?

Creativity

Tabletop role-playing games are played with a pencil and paper, your favourite dice, and the rulebook of your choice. Beyond that, the world exists in the imaginations of you, your Game Master, and your gaming group. You describe what happens as vividly as possible, and roll the dice to see how well you do.

Your creativity begins with character creation, developing complicated yet plausible backstories to justify the skills or equipment of your character. Role-playing is, essentially, impromptu acting, and so your creativity shines in how you embody that character, whether you're in costume or your favourite t-shirt.

And how you determine your character responds to the world and characters around them helps build empathy and understanding for others. While our characters almost always have a small (or perhaps not so small) part of ourselves in them, players who want to push themselves create characters with races or genders or backgrounds different to their own. These kinds of interactions let us experience the world a little more broadly, and give us a tiny insight into what it's like to walk in another's shoes.

Creativity is also reflected in critical thinking and problem solving. Devising unique ways to tackle the obstacles of the scenario or campaign is where the challenge and excitement comes from. Juggling limited resources such as ammunition, spells, or matches, also helps teach some careful management. While we're not often throwing literal fireballs in an office meeting—though I have lobbed some metaphorical grenades—this kind of resource management can often be an important skill.

Creativity, empathy, and critical thinking are all necessary skills for thriving in any business environment, whether solving issues, understanding customer complaints, or managing a limited budget.

Co-operation

You're managing, or part of, a diverse team working together to overcome unique obstacles. Whether this is your dungeon delving party, a pack of wayward werewolves, or a team of travel consultants, the principle is the same.

Each member brings unique experiences, skills, and talents to the group. Identifying these strengths and weaknesses allows the team to work together more cohesively. Members may prefer certain tasks, or perform strongly in them. This preference or

ability can be used by the team to train others, or to assign roles or duties that complement them.

As anyone who might have learned an instrument can tell you, practice builds skills. This is true even, or especially, for interpersonal skills you might need in your place of employment. While many of the conflicts you experience in your game sessions are solved by die rolls and the application of relevant statistics, your Game Master is still likely to encourage you to play the role, rather than just playing the roll. This means that in situations where an axe isn't necessarily the answer and your group needs to take a more subtle approach, the Game Master will often coax you into playing out a negotiation or dialogue scene.

Practicing negotiation in a relaxed setting—perhaps not so relaxed when you're divvying up the spoils of battle—provides experience you can build on in the workplace, and learning to identify the skills and weaknesses of team members can help everyone work together toward a common goal.

... Chaos?

The best laid plans, and all that. Your Game Master may have spent hours tweaking things to create the best campaign they've ever written... and your party goes and ruins it by getting on a ship and sailing off into the sunset instead of searching for the missing prince.

Things hardly ever go according to plan, and in my experience most offices are organised chaos at best. Maybe that's just me. Whatever the reason, an ability to think on your feet and adapt to change is very handy indeed. Admittedly, I struggle with this one. I need time to think things through and consider the options, but sometimes I think fast enough to buy myself the time I need.

And, look, if anyone can adapt to change, it's role-players. Especially when certain game lines receive updated rulebooks every other year.

Handling player-caused chaos, or the unexpected debacle of a Friday afternoon when you're just about to log off, can take a combination of the first two points. Roleplaying builds our creativity. It helps us think about the world and our interactions within it in ways we wouldn't normally. It helps us set and achieve goals with a disparate team, and it helps lay the groundwork for new social skills.

Role-playing is a fun hobby and a great way to spend time with friends, and maybe you'll learn a few things along the way.

References

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