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## Tips for Writing/Presenting the Team Challenge Destination ImagiNation Production Checklist

### Questions to Ask:

#### Background/Backdrop/Props

- What is it made out of?
- Can it be easily seen/identified from 30 feet away?
- Does it make sense with the script and whole production?
- Is it colorful? Should it be?
- What purpose does the backdrop serve?
- Can you do without one?
- Can anything do double duty?
- Maybe one look when you see it from the front and other from the back or light up from the back for another look
- Is it a shape other than rectangular?

#### Characters

- What is the reason this person is in the play?
- What is his/her background?
- Why is she doing what she does in the play? Does it make sense? If not, why is he doing it?
- Could you easily explain your character and what he or she is like in under a minute to someone else and have them understand the type of character you are
- If people say "Huh?" when you explain your character, that should give you a clue.
- What time frame and culture are your character from?
- How old is he/she, does she have kids, does he have a job? What is his/her motivation for being in the play and doing what they do?
- What type of clothes does the character wear?
- How should he act? WHY??
- Make the character believable within the time frame and culture and the whole feel of your play.
- Does your character walk tall or slouch? How does he manipulate his hands? Is she an in-charge person or a follower?
- What kind of body language does your character exhibit?
- Will he or she exaggerate any characteristic?

## Costumes

- Is regular unaltered street clothes/stuff you can buy at Goodwill constitute a costume?
- If you could design the ideal costume for your character, what would it be? What would it be made out of?
- Can you make this ideal costume? What will making it involve? What materials and what skills?
- Does the costume make sense for your character? To more than just you. Does your team like the costume? Does it jive with the rest of the costumes in the performance?
- What about shoes, hair, hats, wigs, glasses, socks, jewelry and accessories? What would your character wear? Dress your character from the ground up - ignore what you can easily get - decide what would look best on the character - use your imagination!
- Make a costume that instantly tells the audience the type of character you are – make it easy on them - that way they can concentrate on the play. Besides, they only have a very few minutes to see your character, decide what your character is and his motivation AND watch the play and figure out what is going on –do you want the judges/audience to spend all their time trying to figure out your character and why you’re dressed like that - esp if it doesn’t make sense to them? Don’t make them think too much or be bewildered – there’s only a few minutes from beginning to end - make your best use of it.
- At world, I saw one play where they put on the first act with regular clothes, but then in the second act - when it was set in “heaven” or at least when most of the characters were dead - they wore the same costumes - but now all in white
- Make versatile clothing - can it serve more than one purpose?
- Sweat pants & shirts - can paint them, attach things to them, can wear over something
- Footwear - boots/shoes can be painted to match outfits or material of pants goes downs and covers boots - makes a smooth look
- Make-up - what type of make-up is necessary to give your character the proper look? If the make-up is dark, can it be seen/distinguished at 10 feet? At 20 feet? Experiment to find the right look for your character - make-up can make the character.

## Script

- What is the play about?
- It must make the people and their plight come to life

-Should it be humorous? Humor does sell. Puns sell very well - even if we moan over them. Some of the best performances are very quick-paced and are filled with puns about a given topic.

-But drama can be VERY compelling - but it must be good - well written and well acted

-RESEARCH YOUR TOPIC. Weave facts and interesting details into the play - shows you've done your work and can be interesting to judges.

-Who is your audience? Are you playing to kids or adults? Who are the judges? You've got to keep the interest of your audience.

-What is the action? What is the conflict - there must be a conflict.

-How complex is the script? If it is too complex or too many subplots, no one will be able to follow the story in an 6-8-minute format.

-Is it a re-write of a story that is already written? How creative is this?

-Question every line of the play - does it add to the plot and finished product?

-How many scene changes are involved in the play? Too many scenes can be a problem.

-What is the ending? Does it grab you? Make you laugh? Make you think? Have a moral at the end? Does it build logically to a conclusion? The ending is the most important part - it wraps up all the ends and is the last impression you make on the judges.

## Improv

-How can an improv time be inserted into the play?

-How can we decide how to use it creatively in the 1 minute given?

## Acting

-How should your character act? See character section. Decide how he should act and make that happen. If you don't know how to do it, watch movies, ask a team member or experiment until the character is YOU.

-How will she walk? What type of attitude does her walk show? What kind of attitude does his voice show?

-Do you believe that the characters are who they are supposed to be?

-What is the motivation of the character? Does that come through to the audience through the words you say, how you say them and what you do?

-Body motions betray character

-Accentuate with voice and body movements what you want the audience and judges to really see and understand and notice.

-Acting is very difficult - unless you are a naturally-gifted actor, you will make mistakes and MUST be willing to take constructive criticism from your teammates.

- Read the faces of other people (not on the team) - did they understand what you said or did or what the play is about?
- Utilize special talent of team members.
- Does each team member use crisp movements?
- Are you exaggerating movements and words so that the audience hears it and understands it easily?
- ENUNCIATE, ENUNCIATE, ENUNCIATE!!!! Nothing can be more important.

## Dialogue/Sounds

- How should your characters talk? Do they live in Elizabethian England or are they cave men or baseball players from the 20s?
- Do they have to have an accent? Can you hear/understand accents very well? Can other people understand your lines - not team members who know the play by heart?
- Do the lines reflect what your character might say or how he might say it?
- How might you decide how your character might speak? Different people on the team can read the lines in the way they think they should be read. Try the lines as a character from a play or a movie. Try the lines as a “set” character like a mobster or a Valley girl. You’ll find that the lines and the understanding of the motivation of the character will be completely different depending on how your lines are delivered and the character that it shows.
- Will music or special effects enhance the performance or the understanding of the audience?
- Can part of the lines be delivered as a song?
- Can music or other sounds actually reveal what is happening in the play?

## A Performance that Follows the DI Rules

- Has anyone read the DI challenge rules and rule book?
- Remember, the judges will be judging on the rules and what they are bound to judge on. So if one part of your play is terrific, but you forgot to work on parts that are worth lots of points, then your score will be low.
- Has everyone AT LEAST WEEKLY re-read the challenge rules? When you get deeper into the challenge solution, make sure you are addressing all the rules of the challenge.
- Does your performance follow these rules

## Script-Writing Tips From A to Z

- A - Action, appropriate, keep the audience in mind
- B - Backdrop, background of characters, balance, build logically to a conclusion
- C - Conflict, costumes, number of scene changes, characterization
- D - Dialogue
- E - Expression, emotion, enunciation
- F - Finish, fit in the performance area, function of each prop & backdrop
- G - General tone of the script - drama or comedy, reality or fantasy
- H - Humor - is it funny to all?
- I - Innovation, imagery, improv, imagination (but it still has to make sense)
- J - all team members join together to give input and write script
- K - Knowledge of subject - research before and while writing script, keep the interest of the audience
- L - where is the play located geographically, do props fit in limited space
- M - moving in the presentation area, who moves where when? Music, moral at end?
- N - accentuate what you want the judges/audience to notice
- O - originality, opening, start with an outline
- P - plot, plot, plot, parody, props, is your script practical?
- Q - question each line/action to make sure it fits
- R - resolution of conflict, are you taking a risk? rewrite, rewrite, rewrite
- S - sound effects, number of scene changes, have you solved the challenge? Setting, does it tell a story? Special talents of team members
- T - transitions between scenes (are they smooth), time period, technical aspects
- U - understand the challenge and the characters, does every line have a use?
- V - voices of the characters
- W - write tight, write long first - tighten and cut it later
- X - eXamine the script for eXcellent eXamples of eXcessive eXaggeration
- Y - yesterday - when the script was due!
- Z - does it pass the *ZZZZZZZ* test - does the script put people to sleep?

## Hints & Tips

- Discuss side trip elements early and often when writing the scripts and making the props, backdrops and costumes.
- Attract attention through dramatic elements & use repetition to get the theme or point across.
- Elaborate on characters and the details.
- Make sure the judges can see any element you want judged. Something in the far back of your backdrop or eclipsed by another prop or character will not be able to be seen during the presentation.

- Make certain the theme is understood by the audience and judges.
- “When in doubt, throw it out” applies to appropriateness of costumes, dialog, etc. Remember the general rule – would you want your grandma to see/hear this performance?
- Be prepared for glitches and practice for Murphy’s Law. & make & bring an emergency box. Include first aid supplies (band aids, etc.)
- Practice in a simulated competition area. Practice entering from both sides and the back – be prepared no matter what the competition site looks like.
- Make sure your team can compete in the smallest guaranteed area -- and that they can stage from the left or right.
- Practice timing the performance including setup.
- Practice talking to the appraisers – kids are nervous on competition day – if they feel comfortable explaining where they got their ideas, who made what and how it was made, they will do better on competition day.
- Make sure the team
  - rereads the challenge - many times
  - asks for clarifications/reads the posted clarifications - each week
  - works on items that receive a score
  - stays within the rules (read the rule book)
  - fill out forms in advance & have the right number of copies at competitions
  - brings all forms and required items to the competition, including any clarifications your team has asked
- After the presentation, make sure that the team talks with the judges and points out any specific ways that an element was created, any outstandingly creative objects or anything else they want to make sure the judges understand and see.