

synesthesia

innovation labs at the dalí

seeing something in a new way has many creative benefits but one that is not frequently discussed is better understanding. that is, when we attempt to see something in a new way, we must come to an enhanced understanding of it in order to do so. one of the best methods for doing this is to engage in an act of translation, where you literally try to find the thing that can adequately transmit the idea of the original. in doing so, you are forced to grapple with what the original is so that it may be accurately translated. while translating from one language to another can be fun, at the innovation labs, we have a different favorite technique: synesthesia. technically, synesthesia is a phenomenon where people perceive things with the “wrong” sense, e.g., hearing sounds as colors or smelling colors as odors. here, we ask participants to translate the thing they are trying to better understand into their other senses.

for this activity, try doing two rounds: one round using a painting (see the full collection at the dalí [here](#)) and the second using anything you like (person/place/thing). for a fun and enlightening team building activity, try using your department or your team as the object of translation.

instructions:

- 1) choose the subject of the translation
- 2) if working with a group, make sure that everyone is clear on what is being translated
- 3) take a couple of minutes and let everyone jot down their thoughts using the prompt questions below and filling in the object of your translation in the blank
- 4) share the findings

5) debrief: discuss your findings. what themes emerged in the answers?
were there any disagreements? what was revealed that you
expected? what was revealed that surprised you?

sound: what song would be the soundtrack or the theme song to this
_____?

taste: what food or drink would be best paired with this _____?

smell: what is the scent of this _____?

touch: what animal skin does this _____ feel like?