

The Big Book of Team Building Exercises



Introduction

Team-building exercises are great tools to facilitate connections and synchronization within teams. They create opportunities for team members to engage, discover more about each other and have fun by learning new concepts and approaches.

Here are some of the advantages of using team building exercises:

- Exercises help build team morale by integrating elements of fun and liveliness into meetings, workshops etc.
- Exercises help team members to share, learn more about each other and build trust.
- Exercises help team members loosen-up, engage and voice opinions in an informal, non-threatening environment.
- Exercises help bring home important messages such as importance of togetherness, positive attitude etc.
- Exercises are a great way for managers to connect with their team from a different angle.
- Exercises help team members become more flexible as they discover more than one way to solve a problem.

Considerations:

In order for team building exercises to be effective they should offer the participants (despite the group size) the following:

1. A safe environment
2. Conversation topics that are interesting and non-threatening
3. Action to enable the group to relieve tension or nervousness.
4. The possibility for laughter and fun, for the same reason.

More:

When planning to use team building exercises, always clarify objectives - plan with a clear message and structure. Find the right time to implement them (intimidation, low energy, introductions etc.)

This Ebook is an excellent collection of tested team building exercises that will help you develop a better team while having fun. They are quick, easy, inexpensive, participatory and lots of fun! Enjoy!

Can you draw?

One of the challenges faced by teams is the inability to give clear and precise instructions to one another and also to ask feedback to check if the instructions received were the right ones. Using a simple drawing game you can illustrate the importance of clear and precise communication in a team, the need to ask for feedback and clarity etc.

Materials:

A simple geometric figure made up of squares and circles – one copy, blank paper and pencils for the rest of the participants.

Instructions:

Ask for one volunteer. With his back to the room, the volunteer must describe the shape so that the other participants can draw it, they should not be able to see the figure. He is not allowed to ask any questions, nor are the participants and he is not allowed to draw or gesticulate. He has 2 minutes to give them instructions. See how many participants got the shape right but don't share anything with them. In the second part of the activity, he is allowed to ask them questions and answer any questions they may have. There is no time limit for this round. He must still be facing away from them during this round. At the end of this round see how many participants were able to draw the figure correctly. Why?

The Straw Tower

Materials:

About 30 – 35 straws per group (divide participants into groups of five or six)
One roll of tape and one pair of scissors which are to be shared resources.

Instructions:

You will need to divide the team into groups of 5. Have 30 drinking straws per team and a pair of scissors and 2 rolls of tape. Each team is to nominate one team leader, only team leaders are allowed to leave their seats and talk to other team leaders. The team is allowed to ask you questions only during the first one minute of the activity. The team has 15 minutes to complete the activity.
Your team is to build a free standing straw tower the height of the facilitator.

Debrief:

The teams will not be able to complete this activity unless they collaborate with each other to build the tower. However this idea may not strike them until the very end and even if it does, it may only be one or two teams collaborating and not the entire team. Talk about the importance of collaboration and communication to get the job done in order to meet the customer's (you) expectations. If you have time give them 10 more minutes to complete the activity together.

Thinking as a Group

Materials:

No materials needed

Instructions:

Have each member take out the change from their pocket. After each co-worker has counted their change, have them combine the money and find something to spend it on. This is hypothetical, so there will be nothing actually bought, but it will enforce decision-making and will let you gauge the way the teams work together.

Debrief:

Afterwards, evaluate and assess how each team member felt, and how much they personally believed they could influence the outcome.

Treasury Box

Materials:

3x 5 cards, a small cardboard box

Instructions

This exercise creates team individualism and builds team spirit by helping members explore each others skills, talents and special knowledge. It also builds self-esteem as members share their strengths and discover what makes them unique and productive.

Start by explaining that skills and talents are portable and every member of the team is bringing a box full of knowledge and skills to the team. This next activity will help fill the team's treasury box.

Distribute 3 x 5 cards. Ask participants to write their names on the cards and below their names list two specialties or skills that they bring to the team e.g., knowledge of project management, organizational skills, or proposal writing. When participants complete the cards, have them stick the cards in a flip chart and engage everyone in exploratory conversations about the items.

During the discussions team members will be able to learn new things about each other and become aware of each others strengths.

Debrief

Once the discussions are finalized put all the cards in a box, labeled treasury box. Itemize it after the meeting and place the box in a popular spot in the office. Encourage team members to open it and read it every time they need encouragement or support on special tasks.

Solution-Seeker

Materials:

None

Instructions:

This exercise helps obtain several possible solutions or suggestions for the participants' current challenges or issues. The seating is an important element in this exercise. All the participants should be sitting in a circle. Ask each person to think about an actual job-related problem or concern. Each person writes his or her problem on a blank sheet of paper. E.g. "how can I get more team engagement?" Or, "how can I get my team more punctual?" After allowing a few minutes to think about and write out their problems, ask each person to pass his or her problem sheet to the right. That person reads the problem just received and writes down the first thought(s) that come to mind for addressing that problem. Allow 30 seconds to respond to that individual sheet. Repeat this rotational process every 30 seconds, and the process goes on until each person gets his or her own sheet back. Time permitting, they can then discuss some of the more practical solutions they received.

Puzzle-Making

Materials:

A 50 piece puzzle

4 small bags

Instructions:

Participants enjoy this activity because it engages them in cooperation quickly. Use it at any time to make a point about interdependence, the necessity of having everyone's input, or the importance of regular communication. Bring a 50-piece puzzle and divide the pieces from each puzzle into four small bags. Put one complete puzzle, four bags on each table. Organize participants into four sub-groups.

Ask each group to pick a bag of puzzles. Explain that they are going to put a puzzle together with their teammates, but they have to follow instructions closely: For the first 2 minutes, they should begin putting their puzzle pieces together by alternating turns. They are not allowed to talk or touch one another's pieces. When the 2 minutes have passed, they should continue taking turns putting pieces in silence, but they may begin touching one another's pieces. Continue for 2 minutes. Finally, they will have 5 minutes to finish putting the puzzle together in any way they would like. Talking will be permitted during the last 5 minutes.

Debrief:

After the final 5 minutes, stop the puzzle making. Ask participants for observations and feedback. Deliver the message that we often find ourselves doing things in isolation without involving one another. When we involve one another, using all of the pieces and communicating in many different ways, we have a greater chance for successful completion of a project.

Quick Outdoor Exercises Tips

A good activity is using sports as a means of building team unity. **Bowling** or any **team sport** like softball, **builds good will and a sense of togetherness**. You want to pick a venue that is easily accessible by everyone involved so that stress is kept at low levels. After making sure everyone is comfortable with bowling, meet together at the alley, and do one game of normal bowling. Then, have them switch to their non-dominant hands and try to bowling that way or playing softball by swinging the bat from the other side. This will cause them to try to learn to work with their weaknesses.

Another good game is using **golf** as a team building exercise. You can divide your team into groups, have them all hit their golf balls in unison, then, after deciding which ball is the farthest, best choice, have them keep trying to work together to get the ball into the hole. The same rules of golf apply where the person with the lowest strokes wins, but in this case, the team with the lowest strokes wins.

Rope Square

Materials:

All you need is a rope!

The purpose of this activity is to explore how a group works as a team on a difficult task and how people assume and fulfill different roles in a group.

Instructions:

Get a piece of rope that is tied so that it forms a circle, sufficiently long so that half the total group can hold onto it with both hands. Divide the group into two subgroups - the silent observers and the square-formers. Lay the rope in a circle on the floor, in the middle of the room. Ask the square forming group to stand in a circle around the rope. The observers should stand back and watch in silence. Ask the square-forming group to pick up the rope circle with both hands then ask them to close their eyes and walk around in a circle a couple of times so that they become somewhat disoriented. Then ask them to form a perfect square with the rope(without looking). The other group should only observe the dynamics without commenting. Change the roles of the groups and then debrief. Use the discussion to draw points as: Who felt frustrated? Why? Who took the lead? Why? When?

Have the team member's pair up. This activity consists of 2 rounds. Each person will have a chance to relay some information. Have the partners decide who will go 1st (or just assign the person with shortest commute, biggest shoes, or some other fun characteristic).

Round 1: The 1st person tells his partner something he enjoys doing or something he has passion for. Give him 1 minute, and then it's the other person's turn. Discuss how they communicated their passions.

Round 2: The 1st person tells the same story he did before, except now he is having a very bad day, woke up on the wrong side of the bed, and just doesn't care. The difference is the attitude. Give each partner 1 minute to share this version of the story. Discuss how they communicated their negative attitude.

Tips

Be ready with a quick energizer to end on a high note! For an easy one, just have participants put their pens between their teeth, forcing their faces into a smiling position. This has been proven to send out energy-enhancing endorphins. Ta-da!

Blind Soccer

Materials:

As many blindfolds as half the number of people in your team
1 soccer ball, a whistle or a bell.

Instructions:

Divide the team into two sub-teams. Divide each team into two halves. For example if you have a 20 person team, each football team is made up of 10 people, and 5 people from each side will play each half of the game which lasts for 10 minutes.

Designate a 40 foot area as the football field, and half each team stand on the opposite side of their goals. There are no goal keepers in this game. The other half of the teams members stand on the side of the field nearest to their goal. The players on the field are blindfolded.

Once play starts they need to score as many goals for their team as possible, their team mates on the sidelines are allowed to give feedback but not allowed to come into the field at any point in time. After ten minutes switch the team players.

Debrief:

Using this game as an illustration, talk about communication in teams, the importance of feedback, trust in team members, having a common goal, defending the goal, ignoring distractions.

Team Picture

Materials:

Flipchart papers, markers

Instructions:

The purpose of this exercise is to brainstorm participants on the qualities of a successful team. Have participants form groups of four to seven. Provide each group with flip-chart paper and markers. The groups must create a drawing that depicts the qualities of a successful team, including the individual contributions that are necessary to bring out those qualities. For example, the group could draw a tree. In the trunk of the tree, they could write all the qualities that make up a team (trust, communication, etc.). On the branches coming out of the tree, they could write team members' contributions (e.g. good listener, reliable, etc.). After 10-15 minutes, have the groups present their posters to the whole team.

Debrief:

Assess the posters together with the groups and identify what qualities already exist and what could we do to incorporate other missing qualities into our everyday work.

Say What?

Materials:

Any materials

Instructions:

The purpose of this exercise is to overcome barriers of communication and to also show that both the sender and the receiver have equal roles in the communication process.

This quick activity demonstrates what it takes to be understood. Divide the group into three teams, and line them up in three parallel lines (large groups can be divided into smaller three-team groups). The object of the game is for the team on one side to try to get a message to the team on the other side, while the team in the middle tries to drown out the message in any way they can.

- Team 1 is the message sender.
- Team 2 is the message receiver.
- Team 3 provides distraction.

Give teams a few minutes to strategize before beginning. The message-sending team will also need time to come up with a message to send (at least three sentences in length). Play enough rounds so that each team can play each role.

Debrief:

Ask questions like:

1. How did you get your message across?
2. What did the message senders do to ensure you *received* the i message?
3. Did your strategy change during the activity? In what way?
4. How many different ways were used to communicate messages"
5. Which ways were most effective? Why?
6. What are some reasons our messages get "drowned out" in the'
What can we do to prevent that from happening?

Source: Mary Scannell & Edward E. Scannell

Johari Window

1. Present the Johari Window, clarifying the contents of each of the four windows:
2. As the group members to draw their own Johari Window filling in several examples in each box
3. As participants to discuss some of their examples The window on the top right is good for getting feedback from other people about how we sound, what impressions we make, etc. This exercise can also be used to explore differences of perceptions, perspectives tec.

Open Knowledge <i>Things that other know about me (eg. my name, what my face looks like)</i>	Blindness <i>Things that others know about me which I don't know (eg. what my back looks like)</i>
Hidden Knowledge <i>Things I know but others don't know about me (eg. my secret wish, my pin number)</i>	Knowledge that will be revealed <i>Things no one knows about me (eg. where I will live ten years from now)</i>

