

Teambuilders 101

What is a Teambuilder?

Teambuilders are an active way of learning about group dynamics, communication, and creative problem solving.

Types of Teambuilders

Communication Exercises – Geared towards improving communication skills. The issues encountered in these teambuilders are solved when the group members effectively communicate with each other.

Example: Look Away. Divide the group into pairs. Ask the pairs to sit facing in the opposite direction, and ask one person to tell a story for two minutes. After two minutes, the person who listened then has to summarize and repeat back the story. After this, the pair turn around and face each other. The pair will repeat the exercise, facing each other, and the “listener” is now the “talker.” Discuss how the different methods of communication affected the exercise.

Problem Solving and Decision Making Exercises – Focus on groups working together to solve difficult problems or make complex decisions. Teams are given a problem that does not have an easily identified solution and requires creativity.

Example: Blindfolded Square. Tie the ends of a large rope together to make a circle, set the rope on the ground. Ask the group members to stand around the rope. The group members put on blindfolds and each pick up a portion of the rope. Then ask the group to make a shape (like a square, rectangle, or triangle) with a rope. If it's too easy, ask them to make a star or hexagon! Discuss how they found a creative solution despite not being able to see.

Planning/Adaptability Exercises – Focus on aspects of planning and being adaptable to change, important skills for teams to have before they're charged with solving a problem. The goal is to show the importance of planning before implementing a solution.

Example: Over the Top. Two volunteers or facilitators hold a rope about 4-5 feet above the ground. The group must work together to get each member safely over the rope. Use spotters and make sure that each group member is comfortable with this activity.

Trust Exercises – Involve engaging team members in a way that will create trust among them. Individuals must trust each other in order for the task to be completed.

Example: Blindfolded Journey. Divide your group into pairs. In each pair, one person is blindfolded and one is not. The blindfolded person has to make their way across a room containing various objects on the floor. If he or she steps on an object, they have to start over. Their partner, who is not blindfolded, watches from the side of the room and gives them the directions they need to make it across the room safely.

Things to consider...

- What is your audience? Are they comfortable with physical activity? Would they prefer something less physical?
- Remember that physical activities should be “challenge by choice.” Give group members a chance to opt out of any activity that they are not comfortable with.
- Logistics, including time and space constraints
- What are you trying to achieve? Select your teambuilder based on the skill you want to emphasize.
- Facilitate wisely. Ask follow-up questions and encourage discussion of the activity.
- Be prepared. Make sure you have the proper materials and understand the directions.
- Student Activities can help you plan your teambuilding activity – we can help make a teambuilder activity in response to a need or situation in your organization.

Find Teambuilders here:

<http://www.residentassistant.com/games/teambuilders.htm>

http://leadership.uoregon.edu/resources/exercises_tips/team_builders

Adapted in part from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_building