



TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITIES

COMMUNICATION AND ICEBREAKERS

Two Truths and a Lie

Time required: 15-30 minutes

Start out by having every team member secretly write down two truths about themselves and one lie on a small piece of paper. Once each person has completed this step, allow 10-15 minutes for open conversation where everyone quizzes each other on their three questions. The idea is to convince others that your lie is actually a truth; while on the other hand, you try to guess other people's truths/lies by asking them questions. Don't reveal your truths or lie to anyone – even if the majority already has it figured out! After the conversational period, gather in a circle and one by one repeat each one of your three statements and have the group vote on which one they think is the lie. You can play this game competitively and award points for each lie you guess or for stumping other players on your own lie. This game helps to encourage better communication in the office while letting you get to know your coworkers better.

Life Highlights Game

Time required: 30 minutes

Begin by asking each participant to close their eyes for one minute and consider the best moments of their lives. This can include moments they've had alone, they've shared with family or friends; these moments can pertain to professional successes, personal revelations, or exciting life adventures. Keeping their eyes closed, ask each participant to take a moment to decide what 30 seconds of their life they would want to relive if they only had thirty seconds left in their life. The first part of the activity enables participants to reflect back on their lives, while the second part enables them to get to know their coworkers on a more intimate level. The second portion of the game is the "review" section. The leader of the activity will ask each and every participant what their 30 seconds entailed and why they chose it, which will allow participants to get a feel for each other's passions, loves, and personalities.

Coin Logo

Time required: 5-10 minutes

Begin by asking all participants to empty their pockets, purses, and wallets of any coins they may have and place them on the table in front of them. If someone doesn't have any coins or only has very few, others in the room can share their coins with them. Instruct each person to create their own personal logo using the coins in front of them in just one minute. Other materials they may have on them, such as pens, notebooks, wallets, etc. can also be used in creation of the logo. If there is a particularly large group, people can be broken up into teams of 3-6 people and instructed to create a logo that represents them as a team or the whole room can gather to use the coins to create a logo for the organization/ group/department/etc. Each solitary participant can explain their logo to the group or if the room was split into groups, the leader can have each group discuss what led to the team logo and what it says about them. Not only does this activity promote self and mutual awareness, but it also enables participants to get to know each other on a more personal level.



The One Question Ice Breaker Activity

Time required: 15-20 minutes

In this icebreaker, the leader gets to decide the situation the question will pertain to. Example situations include babysitting, leading the company, or being married. After pairing participants into teams, the leader will pose this question: If you could ask just one question to discover a person's suitability for (insert topic here), what would your question be? Say the leader chose to go with a marriage situation. That means each person in a two-person team would come up with one question that would help them discover whether or not their partner was suitable to be married to them. If the topic was babysitting, each team member would have to come up with just one question whose answer would help them determine whether or not the person was suitable to babysit their child. This icebreaking activity can also get mixed up by issuing one situation for the entire group or allocating a different situation to each team member or pair to work on. Depending on the situation chosen, the activity can be very fun, but it can also demonstrate that crucial questions should be developed properly.

Classification Game

Time required: 10-15 minutes

Before splitting the room into teams of four, explain the concept of "pigeon-holing someone," which means classifying someone as something or stereotyping someone. It should be made clear that this type of classification is subjective and unhelpfully judgmental. Instruct the participants to introduce themselves to those in their team and quickly discuss some of their likes, dislikes, etc. After the introductions, reveal to the teams that it will be their job to discover how they should classify themselves- as a team- into two or three subgroups by using criteria that contains no negative, prejudicial, or discriminatory judgments. Examples of these subgroups can include night owls and morning people, pineapple pizza lovers and sushi lovers, etc. This activity encourages coworkers to get to know each other better and enables them to collectively consider the nature of all individuals within the team.

PROBLEM SOLVING

Picture Pieces Game

Time required: 30 minutes

This problem solving activity requires that the leader choose a well-known picture or cartoon that is full of detail. The picture needs to be cut into as many equal squares as there are participants in the activity. Each participant should be given a piece of the "puzzle" and instructed to create an exact copy of their piece of the puzzle five times bigger than its original size. They are posed with the problem of not knowing why or how their own work affects the larger picture. The leader can pass out pencils, markers, paper, and rulers in order to make the process simpler and run more smoothly. When all the participants have completed their enlargements, ask them to assemble their pieces into a giant copy of the original picture on a table. This problem solving activity will teach participants how to work in a team and it demonstrates departmental working, which is the understanding that each person working on their own part contributes to an overall group result.

Sneak a Peek Game

Time required: 10 minutes

The instructor will build a small sculpture with some children's building blocks and hide it from the group. The participants should then be divided into small teams of four. Each team should



MEDLINE UNIVERSITY

be given enough building material so that they can duplicate the structure you've already created. The instructor should then place their sculpture in an area that is an equal distance from all the groups. One member from each team can come up at the same time to look at the sculpture for ten seconds and try to memorize it before returning to their team. After they return to their teams, they have twenty-five seconds to instruct their teams about how to build an exact replica of the instructor's sculpture. After one minute of trying to recreate the sculpture, another member from each team can come up for a "sneak a peek" before returning to their team and trying to recreate the sculpture. The game should be continued in this pattern until one of the team's successfully duplicates the original sculpture. This game will teach participants how to problem solve in a group and communicate effectively.

The Great Egg Drop

Time required: 2 hours

This messy, yet classic and engaging problem solving activity involves the task of building an egg package that can sustain an eight foot drop. A variety of tools and other materials should be provided to the teams. After the packages have been built, each team must also present a 30-second advert for their package, highlighting why it's unique and how it works. At the conclusion of the presentations, each group will have to drop their egg using their package to see if it really works. Aside from teaching the groups to work together and communicate, it also brings them together with the common goal of both winning the egg drop and successfully creating an egg package.

Create your Own Team Building Activities

Time required: 1 hours

The group leader should present participants with this fake problem: The hour was going to be spent doing a problem solving activity, but as the group leader, you don't know any and you don't want to do one that the participants have already heard or tried previously. The goal then is to have each group of participants come up with a new problem solving activity that they've invented themselves. Groups should be no larger than four or five people and at the end of the hour, each group must come up and present their new problem solving activity. Aside from being a problem solving activity in and of itself, this activity also promotes creativity, communication, trust, and time management.

PLANNING/ADAPTING

Tag Team Game

Time required: 1 hours

This adapting exercise requires just a few simple tools, which include large sheets of paper, writing paper, pens, and markers. In this exercise, participants are broken up into groups of 4-8 people and instructed to share with their group their individual strengths and the positive attributes they feel would lend to the success of their group. They are to write these strengths and attributes down on a piece of paper. After their group discussion, each team will be given one large sheet of paper, writing paper, markers, and a pen. The groups should then be instructed to make the "ultimate team member" by combining each team member's strengths and positive attributes into one imaginary person. This "person" should also receive a name, have a picture drawn of them, and have their different attributes labeled. The group should write a story about this person, highlighting all of the things their imaginary person can do with all of their amazing characteristics. At the end of the exercise, each group should share their person with the group.



MEDLINE UNIVERSITY

and read the accompanying story. This exercise will help coworkers adapt to weakness they feel they or a team member may have by understanding that as a group, they are capable of having more strengths and positive attributes than they would have working solo.

The Take Away Game

Time required: 5-10 minutes

This planning game only requires 15 coins of any value. To play, the instructor can create multiple teams of two or have on group play another, with one representative from each team participating in each game until everyone has had a turn. The setup is simple: a coin is tossed to decide who goes first. Each side may remove two coins every time they call it (heads or tails) correctly. The winner is the person/team remaining who removes the last coin. The game can be made more complex by upping the number of coins a team can take when it's their turn or by allowing coins to be put back. With increased complexity, the activity allows the teams a strategic planning stage. The goal is to have the players realize that simpler versions of the game can easily be planned and controlled by the team/person playing first.

The Paper Tower

Time required: 5 minutes

This planning exercise is very simplistic in its approach, but it teaches participants the importance of planning, timing, and thinking on their feet. Each participant is given a single sheet of paper and told that it's absolutely necessary that they construct the tallest free-standing structure in just five minutes using no other materials. After the five minutes and a review of the structures, a discussion can be had concerning who planned out their structure, who ran out of time, and what could be done differently next time.

Road Map Game

Time required: 30 minutes

The participants need to be split into two groups with an equal number of players in each group. This planning exercise also requires that the participants have paper, pens, and a map. The map can be of the state the participants are in, the whole country, or a specific area. The area the map covers doesn't matter as much as the fact that each group needs a copy of the same map. Instruct the teams to plan a vacation, which must be planned within certain parameters. Each group should be given a list of what they have for their trip, how much money they can use, what kind of car they will have, the size of its gas tank, m.p.g., the price of gas, the beginning and ending destination, and anything else you can think of. Each group should write down their travel plans and any group that runs out of money or gas will be disqualified. Awards can be given to the team that saw and did the most with what they had or for the most exhausting trip, the most relaxing, etc. The goal of team building exercises like this is to get coworkers working together as team with the common purpose of planning this trip in 30 minutes.

The Paper Tower

Time required: 15 minutes

This planning game is ideal for small groups and requires drinking straws and some paper. The group leader needs to draw a large circle on a large piece of paper with concentric circles within it. Then, each circle must be assigned a score, with the biggest score being saved for the smallest, middle circle. This paper is taped onto the middle of a large desk. Then, each participant must gather around the table and be given a drinking straw. The group leader will make dime-sized balls by wadding up bits of paper. It is up to the group leader how many balls will be in play. The



MEDLINE UNIVERSITY

participants must blow into their drinking straws to push the balls around. It sounds easy, but as more balls come into play, the participants must plan with their coworkers how they will push balls into high-scoring sections without moving balls that are already in place. This may require re-positioning themselves in different locations around the table or having different players blow in different directions; it's up to the participants to create their plan of attack. The group leader can end the game once they've reached a specific score or once each ball is in the middle. These simple team building exercises help coworkers work together to create and follow through with a plan and it also encourages them to communicate.

TRUST EXERCISES

Mine Field

Time required: 20-30 minutes

This trust exercise requires some setting up before it can be executed. It also requires a large, open area such as a room without furniture or an empty parking lot. The leader must distribute "mines," which they place haphazardly around the area. These "mines" can be balls, bowling pins, cones, etc. This exercise gives coworkers a chance to work on their relationships and trust issues, which is why they are paired into teams of two. One team member will be blindfolded and cannot talk and the other can see and talk, but cannot enter the field or touch their blindfolded teammate. The challenge requires each blind-folded person to walk from one side of the field to the other, avoiding the mines by listening to the verbal instructions of their partners. Penalties can be put in place for each time a blindfolded person hits a mine, but the real idea behind the game is to get the team members to trust their partner's directions and to teach them to communicate in a more effective way.

Running Free

Time required: 20 minutes

This trust exercise requires some setting up before it can be executed. It also requires a large, open area such as a room without furniture or an empty parking lot. The leader must distribute "mines," which they place haphazardly around the area. These "mines" can be balls, bowling pins, cones, etc. This exercise gives coworkers a chance to work on their relationships and trust issues, which is why they are paired into teams of two. One team member will be blindfolded and cannot talk and the other can see and talk, but cannot enter the field or touch their blindfolded teammate. The challenge requires each blind-folded person to walk from one side of the field to the other, avoiding the mines by listening to the verbal instructions of their partners. Penalties can be put in place for each time a blindfolded person hits a mine, but the real idea behind the game is to get the team members to trust their partner's directions and to teach them to communicate in a more effective way.

Slice 'n Dice

Time required: 15 minutes

This trust building exercise should take place outside and should be done with a large group of 20 or more. Participants should be instructed to form two equal lines facing each other (creating a corridor) and to put their arms straight out in front of them. Their arms should intersect, overlapping by about a hand with the arms of the people opposite of them. The person at the end of the corridor will walk down the corridor of arms. In order to let the person pass, the other participants will have to raise and lower their arms. That person will then join the corridor again and then the next person in line will walk through. This process will continue until everyone



MEDLINE UNIVERSITY

has had a turn. Now that the group is more confident, participants should be instructed to walk quickly, run, or sprint down the corridor, trusting that the other participants will let them pass without making them pause. For the last turn, the participants making the corridor should be instructed to chop their arms up and down as people run through. This exercise allows participants to build trust in their teammates while also having fun.

Eye Contact

Time required: 5 minutes

This trust exercise requires no special equipment, just an even number of participants. Making eye contact is sometimes difficult for people, as it requires a certain amount of trust and respect. This exercise, though simple, can help coworkers become more comfortable and trusting of each other through the practicing of eye contact. For this activity, have people group into pairs and stand facing each other. The idea is to have them stare into their partner's eyes for at least 60 seconds. Neither participant should be wearing glasses or sunglasses of any kind. There may be some giggles at first, as it can feel somewhat awkward during the first try, but as participants get the hang of it, it should become easier for them to make eye contact for prolonged amounts of time.

Willow in the Wind

Time required: 20 minutes

This particular trust building exercise goes by different names, but usually illustrates the same idea. This exercise is best suited for coworkers who already know each other fairly well. One participant must volunteer or be chosen to be the "willow." The willow must stand in the middle of a group with their eyes closed, their feet together, and body upright. They will perform a series of "trust leans" against the fall or feel frightened as if they're going to fall. Before beginning, the instructor should discuss "spotting" techniques to all participants. Those who are not the willow must have one foot in front of the other, have their arms outstretched, elbows locked, and fingers loose, as well as be ready and alert. This will ensure that they will successfully pass the willow around without any troubles. Various co-workers can take turns being the willow. This technique helps coworkers establish and build trust with each other in an open, fun environment.¹

Reference:

1. Quick and Easy Team Building Exercises [Part 2]. Available at: <http://www.huddle.com/blog/team-building-exercises/>. Accessed April 25, 2014.