

A PUBLICATION OF LEADERSHIP-TOOLS.COM

FREE EBOOK

Team Building At Work

TEAM BUILDING IDEAS, EXERCISES AND
ACTIVITIES FOR LEADERS SEEKING TO
INCREASE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND
OVERALL PERFORMANCE



www.Leadership-Tools.com

Introduction

Our free Team Building At Work guide provides fun and memorable activities that leaders can begin immediately. Try one out at your next staff meeting.



Having motivated people is essential to growing a great business. Great leaders are constantly on the lookout for quality team building ideas and tools that will assist them in bringing their team members together to support building strong relationships and a positive work environment.

Effective teamwork is critical for every successful organization. Having team members that trust, respect and support each other helps to ensure quality results.

To assist leaders in achieving this goal, we've created an effective activity guide that leaders can use to help keep their meetings fun and positive. These activities help promote meaningful discussion on a wide range of leadership related topics.

Too often leaders don't take the time to ensure their people are connecting. Don't make this mistake! If your people aren't connecting, then odds are very high that you are also not connecting with your team, and that would be a major mistake. You might even call it, "*leadership malpractice*".

*"Getting the 'People Equation' right is the hardest thing you will ever do in business."
- Logan Loomis*

Team building is good for everyone - leader included! Leaders need to lead their people - not just to higher results, but also to a higher frame of mind. Your team

members want to feel part of something special. Going to work is not nearly as much fun or productive as "enjoying your work".

As the leader, you have the opportunity every day to let your people know how much you value them. One of the many ways you can demonstrate this is by taking the time to get to know them and encouraging them to have strong relationships with each other.

Before we introduce you to the actual free **Team Building At Work** tool, let's first review a few common tips that leaders should keep in mind each time they prepare for their next important team meeting.

Team Meeting Preparation Tips

A highly effective team proves itself each and every day. Teams that run on continuous highs and lows typically are not made up of individuals with a high degree of pride in themselves or their company.

High functioning teams possess a spirit and an enthusiasm that can be seen and heard on an ongoing basis.

It's obvious to anyone paying attention when a team is fully engaged. Everyone deserves a work environment where people are squarely focused on doing their part to take care of customers and ensure the success of the overall team.

If you aren't getting the results you desire from your team, then perhaps your team is not connected in a way that promotes a commitment to teamwork.

Use our **Team Building At Work** tool for some fresh team building ideas and learn how you can get your people more engaged and working together effectively.

Open Communication

In today's high paced work environment, leaders must make time to keep the channels of communication open at all times. A team that does not feel empowered to speak up will eventually shut down.

Many of the exercises provided focus on bringing out each team member's personality and encourages them to share and learn more about one another in an effort to get people talking.

These team building exercises are key to building trust and rapport, which must be present in order for people to communicate openly and honestly.

Have Fun, But Keep It Professional

Although we want to encourage our team members to connect personally, we still must maintain a professional work environment at all times. Leaders should never confuse having fun with having a free pass to act unprofessionally.

Your team can and should be having fun at work. People should simply keep in mind that they are there for a specific purpose and the main goal is to achieve results for the team and for the organization. As I often say my kids, "Have fun, but don't be the fun."

Many of the activities provided in our **Team Building At Work** tool, provide creative and effective ways for leaders to promote fun in the workplace, while at the same time maintaining a professional discipline that is so important.

No One Gets To Opt-Out

Once you choose a team building exercise, pay close attention to your individual team members during each team building activity. Almost every team has at least one person who wants to sit back and observe. He (or she) is the person that you need to convince to get engaged.

As the leader, your job is to set the example. You are the one that gets to say what an acceptable level of interaction and participation is or is not.

Use these team building activities to send a powerful message to all staff that you expect them to WORK at teamwork. No different than how we all must work at maintaining and growing our personal relationships, we must also work at how we interact with others in the workplace.

Our efforts in this area clearly show how much we value our team members. Anyone not making an effort, may not be in the right place. Ultimately, it's a choice that each team member must make, or you must make for them. As the leader, you need to be the catalyst for each person making that clear choice. Are they committed to the success of the team or not?

The bottom line is that if any individual is not making a clear commitment to the team, then he or she is standing in the way of the team achieving maximum results.

"The person who comes up with a means for doing or producing almost anything better, faster, or more economically has his future and fortune at his fingertips."

- J. Paul Getty

What Is The Team Building At Work Tool?

So, what exactly is this team building guide all about?

Answer: *Team Building At Work*, our free eBook, provides team building exercises and activities that you can easily implement at your next staff meeting. By referencing this guide before an important meeting, you will save valuable time as you work to ensure that your meeting is fun, engaging and meaningful to your team.

Activities focus on a variety of benefits gained, which are listed in the Table of Contents. Each benefit has its own unique message and associated team building activities.

Read about each benefit, print out the specific activity that interests you and implement it with your team.

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Chapter 1: ACCOUNTABILITY

Effective team building ideas will assist you in communicating important points to your team. Our *Team Building At Work* guide emphasizes several important leadership topics. For each topic we provide at least two helpful activities that you can use to communicate your expectations and support your team.



Our first team building ideas are on the topic of accountability. Each team member must understand that he or she is accountable for their personal and professional growth; accountable for being solution-oriented; accountable for being a team player; accountable for demonstrating a commitment to their customers and to the organization; accountable for meeting their goals and helping the team to be successful.

The idea of team members being held accountable for their results, while not new, can sometimes surprise employees. Particularly those employees who have not been held to a standard of performance in the past. Therefore it's so important for leaders to take time up front to be very clear about the expectations of the role.

Successful organizations recognize that the more you hold your employees accountable for their results, the more likely it is that the individual will perform at the expected level. People inherently want to be successful and most will rise to the level of expectation if given the necessary guidance and support.

Goals must be realistic and achievable and should require employees to be fully engaged in order to be successful.

The top performers will far exceed your expectations. Average performers have demonstrated a baseline for success and can be coached upward. Bottom performers are probably in the wrong job to begin with so it's important to help them be successful quickly or help them find happiness elsewhere.

"Accountability takes place when leaders INSPECT what they EXPECT."

No one should be surprised to learn that if they do not consistently follow through on their commitments to the team, then they become a liability to the team, and top performing teams don't allow members to continually be the weakest link.

Every team member must understand that in order to remain on the team you must consistently earn your position and demonstrate a commitment to achievement ongoing performance.

However, leaders must hold themselves accountable before they attempt to hold team members accountable. Leaders must balance their message of accountability with supportive actions that help to teach and coach employees to new levels of success. If you haven't taken the time to teach and coach your people, then it's not fair to hold them accountable for not achieving a goal that you haven't prepared them for.

Large and small companies are now linking their success in service delivery, employee satisfaction, customer retention and business growth, directly to their ability to hire and retain high functioning employees who thrive on personal accountability.

As the leader, you must establish expectations for your team members in two primary categories... **Performance & Behavior.**

Be a leader who practices what you preach. Demonstrate daily that you hold yourself to same high levels of achievement that you expect from the team. Doing so will greatly improve the chances of the team being successful.

Try These Team Building Ideas

Ready? BREAK...Old Habits!

Purpose: To show team members that they are accountable for continuous improvement. In order to grow and expand their skill-set they must remain open to trying out new ideas and creative solutions.

Explanation: Ask each team member to identify something very basic, something they are used to doing almost daily. For this team building idea, each task must be something that they can demonstrate right now. Ideas might include:

- Putting on their coat
- Tying their shoe laces
- Combing their hair
- Writing their name

Once everyone has identified a common task, explain to the group that they need to work in partnership with another team member and they must complete the task using the opposite hand that they are used to using.

Encourage each team member to try his or her best knowing full well that it will be uncomfortable. Instruct the teams to take turns conducting the task and observing the other person as he or she attempts to complete his or her task.

After the first round, instruct the teams to repeat the exact same task.

Once two rounds are complete, lead a discussion on the importance of the following:

- Being willing to attempt new ways to solve common problems.
- The more you do something different, the easier it becomes.
- Knowing that it's fear of the unknown that is our greatest enemy
- Challenging ourselves to seek out new ways of improving service delivery and product quality
- Holding each other accountable for bringing new ideas to the table versus simply leaning back and being an "order-taker".

After a short group discussion on what was learned from the exercise, identify ways to incorporate the lesson(s) learned with a current challenge or obstacle that your team or team member is facing.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed. It is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

US vs. THEM-blem

Purpose: Increasing awareness of team members on how they can positively or negatively influence the work environment by how they choose their words. This team building idea holds employees accountable for the words they use in meetings and in the workplace.

Explanation: Too often, employees respond to a newly introduced challenge by using words that reflect poorly on the employee as well as on the team. Without even noticing the impact of their language, they limit their ability to be successful.

Although the employee may have good intentions, they mistakenly use words such as:

- Sure, **but** are you sure we can do that?
- I'll **try** my best.
- I **can't** say for sure, but I'll give it a shot.
- I **won't** promise anything, but I'll see what I can do.

In the above examples, while the overall message may seem to be positive, they still give off a sense of doubt by using the words "BUT, TRY, CAN'T, & WON'T".

Coaching your employees to become more aware of this in their everyday life, and especially when they are in your meetings and on the phone with customers and/or business associates, will aid them in their future success.

Encourage your employees to replace the words **BUT, TRY, CAN'T, & WON'T** with more positive and constructive words such as **AND, WILL, CAN, & WILL**.

Ask for examples of negative language they have heard from someone they know. Not profanity, but just statements that reflect what we call "stink'n think'n". Then challenge the group to rephrase the sentence in a more positive way. This team building idea is a fun way to get your people thinking about the impact of the words they use.

"Employees often unknowingly send out messages of doubt, uncertainly and low self-esteem when they respond."

After you've implemented this team building idea, consider holding employees accountable for their words by creating a special item known as the **THEM-blem** award.

The item can be something as simple as a rubber chicken, a stuffed animal, or a trophy of some sort.

Whenever a team member catches another team member using negative or unproductive language, they get to pass on the award to the offending team member – in effect holding that team member accountable for their choice of words.

The person who holds the Them-blem award is now the person who must identify someone else using language that is either unbecoming or not in the best interest of the team.

Make the point to your team that **"negative and unhelpful language is fine for your competitors, but not for US. That's what THEY do, but WE are better than that."** Creating an US vs THEM mentality is a team building idea that can do wonders to promote teamwork and a strong sense of accountability.

Chapter 2: COMMITMENT

Too often, leaders mistakenly assume that every team member should naturally be committed to whatever is asked of them. When leaders fail to take the time to assess and understand the commitment level of their associates, they unwittingly lessen their chances of success.



Successful leaders realize that they cannot simply assume that because they give someone a job the person will be fully committed to performing at the highest level. They may or may not, but too often 'success' is not clearly defined upfront, so if the employee doesn't fully understand what is expected they may not be on the same page, and this will inevitably cause problems.

In addition, as roles and expectations change, employees will naturally become unsettled unless leadership works closely to ensure that everyone has the information they need.

Without taking the time to make certain that an employee has overcome any initial fears or doubts related to a changing environment, the leader may mistakenly accept a hesitant "Yes" from the employee when they are actually feeling fear and anxiety about their newly assigned tasks.

"Commitment of your employee may mean one thing to you and hold a totally different meaning to your employees."

Great leaders realize that sometimes people cannot quickly commit to something without first going through a process of getting their natural fears addressed. An employee's hesitance should never be mistaken as "I don't care." Rather, the employee simply needs time to process the request.

While a leader may believe that an employee's commitment is demonstrated by how focused and hardworking they are, that same employee might assume you measure their commitment solely based on how many extra hours they clock in or how many extra widgets they produce. This is why it is so important that leaders are pro-active in communicating why change is necessary and what tools and resources will be provided to help ensure the success of each team member.

Take the time to clarify in the minds of your team members how you measure their success, and in doing so you'll quickly earn their trust and personal commitment to successful lead in the change that is required. Leadership discussions like these will go a long way toward limiting employee's fears and gaining their buy-in.

Try Our Team Building Ideas

What Do We Stand For?

Purpose: Help team members clarify what they want to become the team to be known for, and what they personally aspire to hold up as their mantra, slogan or battle-cry; to improve team commitment by providing certainty for each team member what standards they must uphold in order to exemplify the values of the team.

Explanation: As team building ideas go, this one is simple, yet very powerful. First, vertically write down the letters of your team name. For example, if your team name is the *Northside* team, then ask your team to collaborate and take the first letter of the name (in this case the first letter is N) and agree on a word that begins with the letter N that properly describes the team you are committed to create and maintain. In our example, we chose the phrase "Never Give Up!", as it starts with an N. You can choose a single word or a phrase.

Continue this exercise for the second, third and remaining letters of the team name until all of the letters are used. To complete our example, here are the words that we chose to define the **NORTHSIDE** team:

N = Never Give Up!
O = Optimistic
R = Resolute
T = Tenacious
H = High Spirited
S = Steadfast
I = Insistent
D = Dogged or Determined
E = Efficient

Now ask yourself, if you heard the above words connected to your team name, how would that make you feel? It makes you feel good, right? It makes you proud to be a part of a team that holds itself to such a high standard.

Moreover, when your people begin to connect themselves to a team that regards itself so highly, they will realize how important it is that they earn that designation each and every day.

Right there, that's the big opportunity! This is one of the simplest and most powerful team building ideas that leaders can use to kick-start a process of developing team pride and a commitment to continuous and never-ending improvement.

However, in order for your team to gain and maintain momentum you'll need to revisit your mantra regularly. As progress is made on an important project, take the time to connect that success with the team slogan to remind team members that each and every day they have to live up to the standards they set for the team.

"Teamwork is so important that it is virtually impossible for you to reach the heights of your capabilities or make the money that you want without becoming very good at it."

- Brian Tracy

Who's All-In?

Purpose: To raise the awareness by your team members regarding their personal commitment to the team. This self-assessment asks insightful questions that encourages employees to re-think what they can and should be doing **more of, less of, better or different.**

Explanation: Introduce this exercise to your team by letting them know that you are going to provide them with a short and simple quiz that will help to identify from both an individual and team perspective where we are strong and where there is opportunity for improvement.

Assure your team that their answers will remain confidential and that you will not be asking them to turn in their answers. What they write down is for their eyes only.

It is important, however, to communicate to your team that you will be asking them to identify areas for group discussion that they feel the team as a whole can benefit from if it were to modify some activities and behaviors.

Ask each team member to rate themselves on each of the following questions on a scale of 1-5; 1 = Never, 5 = Always. (Tell them not to overthink the ratings. Encourage them to go with their gut and rate themselves based on their initial instinct.)

Provide a sheet of paper with the following survey questions to each team member:

- Fully participates in team meetings?
- Demonstrates a positive attitude?
- If I have an issue I deal with it directly with that person rather than complaining to a third party?
- I listen openly to new ideas?
- I sincerely celebrate others success?
- I follow through on anything I agree to do?
- I represent my team positively to non-team members?
- I willfully share the load?
- If facts are not clear, I check for clarity rather than make assumptions?
- I look for opportunities to make others stars?
- I meet deadlines?
- I take the initiative to do whatever needs to be done?

Again, the goal here is to identify areas where the team can do **more of, less of, better or different - and in doing so, enhance the effectiveness and value of the team.**

Next, after each team member has completed their self-assessment, ask them to review the same questions and identify another team member who they believe does the best job for each question on the survey. **By doing this, you are arming your team members with the opportunity to reward and recognize a co-worker, while at the same time establishing higher expectations with your entire team.**

"We must encourage people to be committed to a project rather than just being involved in it. Commitment comes down to taking ownership."

As the leader, you now have a wonderful opportunity to lead a discussion and brainstorm with your team on what success looks like in each of these key areas of performance. Do you see the value of team building ideas such as this one? It's simple, easy, yet can be very powerful.

Try to have team members talking most of the time versus you lecturing the team. Ask team members to share what stood out to them while taking the self-assessment. Ask what they learned. Ask what they now realize they could do more of,

less of, better or different to improve their results and increase their contribution to the team.

Take advantage of the opportunity to recognize and reward employees who were identified as top performers. In addition, thank those individuals who were fully engaged in the exercise and encourage everyone to seek out other high-value team building ideas for future meetings.

Lastly, as a group, identify your top three to five objectives that you want to accomplish as a result of this exercise. Take time to gain consensus and revisit these commitments regularly in future meetings.

Team building ideas like this one are so easy to employ - and keep in mind that your team benefits simply by having a positive discussion about how team members can make simple changes and improve the quality of their results.

Chapter 3: COMMUNICATION

The importance of effective communication by a leader cannot be overstated. In this chapter we focus on effective communication among team members.



When your team is not performing to the standards that you expect, ask yourself how effectively you are communicating to your team. As a leader, are you an effective communicator?

Although it would be great if everyone saw the world in the same way you do, but the fact is that everyone is different and tends to view the world through a slightly different lens. As a result, the leader needs to ensure that he or she is communicating to each employee in a way that works for that individual.

In the end, the ultimate responsibility for non-performance falls directly on the shoulders of the leader. Therefore, it's imperative that leaders understand the importance of consistent and effective communication. Following are communication and team building ideas to help with this challenge.

But first, let's discuss some basic best practices that you can use to improve communication with your team. If you have direct reports who also manage people, this information is great for your next one-on-one coaching session.

Three important tips to communicate to your team more effectively:

1. **Observe More, Never Assume** - you can learn a great deal in how an employee will either **react** (negatively, emotionally or impulsively,) or **respond** (thoughtfully and professionally) to a situation by observing how they interact and communicate with other team members, customers, and business partners.

2. **Ask for Direction** - while observing employees in action is a great way to get some initial ideas on how employees prefer to communicate, nothing takes the place of a direct discussion and simply asking the employee his or her preference. Use open-ended questions such as, “Help me understand...”, or “Can you please explain to me...”, or “Am I correct in thinking...”, etc.
3. **Supportive Yet Firm** - it’s important to learn as you go when coaching each employee to maximize their level of performance. Open communication is key to ensuring that you are able to make steady progress. There will no doubt be times when you need to counsel an employee because he or she is not meeting your expectations. When communicating to employees it’s critical that you always maintain a healthy balance in your message.

"Leaders need to continually assess whether or not the team has its priorities in place and is spending its resources wisely."

Balancing your message simply means that while you may need to be firm in setting your expectations, you also want to make certain the employee knows that you are committed to their success and that he or she has your support. Your comments should always be focused on specific performance or behavioral issues that you’ve identified. Always keep it strictly professional, never personal.

In order to keep the team at the top of their game, many leaders have adopted the leadership strategy of **“subtle pressure, relentlessly applied”** - it works, after all, isn’t that how mountains are physically moved? Our communication and team building ideas will assist you by encouraging clear and concise discussions with your employees.

While some degree of feeling pressure on the job is healthy - especially in a quick-paced, ever-changing, competitive working environment – leaders should never lose sight of the fact that people can become overwhelmed if the leader isn’t an effective filter for the team. This is an area where a leader can truly support the team.

To the level you can effectively filter what is passed down to your employees, the better chance they have of remaining focused on your top-level priorities.

Now let’s take a look at our communication and team building activities that will help you in your quest to more effectively communicate with your team members.

Try These Communication Team Building Ideas

It's Showtime!

Purpose: To promote relationship building and communication by providing workplace-friendly shows that can help to connect team members.

Explanation: Have you ever arrived early to a meeting and noticed that no one is really talking to one another? Maybe they're quickly saying hello as they grab a cup of coffee but then soon retreat to find a place to sit, but they aren't truly engaged in conversation.

Leaders can utilize the pre-meeting time to their advantage by implementing one of these ice breaker ideas. Simply utilize a DVD player and a television or projector. Place the TV at the front of the room and provide a movie or show that might have a theme that is related to the topics of your meeting.

For example, let's assume your meeting is focused on the topic of *Change*.

Choose a movie or show that you believe might help begin a discussion about how *change* has always been a part of any successful organization. You can make the point that the events of the present-day require us to continually take ownership of leading our team through changing times.

The show can be something as simple as one of those old Dean Martin variety shows, or Bob Hope, or Johnny Carson, or a concert performance from the Rat Pack. You could play an old Saturday Night Live show or an old Steve Martin movie.

Anything from the past that has evolved over time and appeals to the mass market can be effective communication and team building topics. Use these shows to spark discussion on how one of the performers or actors from long ago has had to change and evolve in his or her career to grow and expand their skills and thus increase their opportunity.

These old shows are fun to watch, and they will no doubt bring back fun memories for your team members. The laughter that is heard will liven up the atmosphere of the room and help to wake folks up and prepare them for a fun and engaging team meeting.

To be more current, search YouTube for some funny clips that you can show on a loop prior to, or during the meeting, to help support your message. A bonus of this communication and team building activity is that your team might just realize that you actually have a good sense of humor. :)

"It is amazing how much people can get done if they do not worry about who gets the credit."

- Sandra Sweeney

Outlook = Outcome

Purpose: Use this communication and team building exercise to teach team members that they can often control their outcome by how they choose to see the world. How they

choose to communicate their feelings and opinions to others is an important lesson in this communication and team building activity.

Explanation: In general, people tend to either react negatively or respond positively to any given situation. Reacting is usually out of habit and comes from a lack of self-awareness or insight on how one can better respond.

Use the definitions below to spark discussion among your team as to how they communicate and go about identifying issues and solving problems. Leaders can use the following definitions as a leader's guide but try to get your team to come up with the definitions themselves.

There are three categories of people when it comes to how they see the world:

1. **The Victim** - this person is the complainer, the blamer, the attacker, who sees the glass always half empty, it's always someone else's fault. He believes that someone is always out to get him. He has no hope for a brighter tomorrow and he puts himself first and is quick to overreact to any given situation.
2. **The Passenger** - this person remains neutral. He makes every attempt not be noticed, flies under the radar and is careful not to make waves or call attention to himself. He appears satisfied on the outside but may very well be talking trash behind everyone else's back. Depending on the situation and who he is talking to he may respond positively or react negatively. The passenger goes through life simply as an order-taker. He let's the world happen around him and waits for circumstances to happen to him.
3. **The Leader** - this person has developed an instinct to thoughtfully respond to situations. He or she makes every effort to hold his or herself fully accountable for the events taking place in his or her life. A leader expects things to work out to his advantage. He believes in himself and his team members. He knows there is a solution for every problem. He is a free thinker and doesn't allow others to determine his path. A leader puts others first, because he knows that by doing this his team will respect him and make every effort to ensure the team is successful.

Make the key point... our outlook determines our outcome.

Now that you've placed your team in the proper emotional state, it's the perfect time to ask them an important question.

Ask your team members to get out a sheet of paper and list every single thing about their job that they like and appreciate.

The list will quickly grow as people begin to focus their thoughts on what they'd miss if they didn't work for your organization.

"Unless you remind people, they are quick to forget the many benefits and opportunities that come from being fully employed."

For example, they would miss out on receiving a steady income; retirement/401k; heating and air-conditioned workplace, benefits; co-workers/business associates; career development and training; short commute; free parking; challenging work; and the list goes on and on.

Once the lists are completed, go around the room and ask people to share. Write a master list on a flipchart to capture all the many benefits people have identified.

Completing this exercise is a great way to communicate and remind your people of all the good things in life as well as all the great things going on in the workplace. For new employees, you can focus on the things they look forward to enjoying now that they are on your team - this is one of our powerful communication and team building exercises.

Chapter 4: CREATIVITY

Be creative with team building activities to inspire and motivate your team members. Leaders who are creative thinkers understand that much can be gained by showing team members how to think outside the box.



Encouraging teams to work creatively is a critical ingredient to staying ahead of the competition. You must always be seeking ways to improve your product, the process in which you deliver it, and how your people present it in the marketplace.

Given the pace and speed of this new global economy, it's now more important than ever to hire and retain creative thinkers. These are the people that will figure out the newest, best and brightest way of making the sale or producing additional widgets for the organization.

Creativity in the workplace also helps to keep the work environment fresh and inviting. When people are creating and pursuing new ideas they are far more engaged than if they were simply filling an order – the same order, the same process, the same everything, each and every day.

"An essential aspect of inspiring creativity in the workplace is making sure employees are not afraid to fail."

Creativity within your team has many benefits, which include:

- Motivates people to seek out and identify new solutions.

- Improves team morale as each team member feels empowered to introduce change.
- Builds confidence as team members see themselves as innovators.
- Inspires team members to grow, learn and expand their skill-set.
- Breaks down traditional ways of team management.
- Rejuvenates the workplace creative thinkers are recognized and rewarded by management.

Team building activities are great tools for leaders who seek to continually improve the level of trust and loyalty among their team members. In addition, injecting some fun activities into the workplace for leaders to effectively teach and coach their team.

Effective team building activities can support engagement levels and bring new ideas to the table, which might provide the leading edge you've been looking for.

Use our free team building activities to support and inspire your team. Doing so will increase their levels of success, and as a result profitability for your business will improve.

Try These Creative Team Building Activities

Silly Me!

Purpose: To lead your team to think more creatively. This activity depends on the leader's willingness to have fun and put his or her self out there, perhaps being a little silly, in order to take away the fear and anxiety team members might have over making a "silly" suggestion, which could ultimately end up being worth millions.

Explanation: Create a short audio or video "INVITATION" that announces the agenda of your next strategic planning meeting. Use iMovie or Movie Maker software to create the video. The software is probably already on your PC or laptop and is easy to use. Or, if you have the resources hire someone to assist you with the video.

As the leader, it's your job to rally your team and get everyone on board with thinking up new ways to produce more revenue and be more cost efficient.

Utilizing a combination of music clips, photographs, video and audio clips, illustrate your invitation to your employees. Let them see your humor and the fact that you want this process to be effective, but also fun and entertaining.

It's best to write out your invitation first. Then, think of ways to illustrate the words in a fun, inspiring and/or humorous way. For instance:

- **To all of my TOP GUNS** (play the sound track of the movie Top Gun in the background, showing Tom Cruise high-fiving his co-pilot as they say “I feel the need for speed!”)
- **You are cordially invited to attend a breath-taking event.** (play a clip from Close Encounters of the Third Kind as humans catch their first glimpse of aliens)
- **As a member of this unstoppable team,** (play an assortment of athletic clips in quick progression of basketballs being slam dunked, football players making touchdowns and wrestlers being body slammed, etc.)
- **I’m counting on you to help lead this team to victory.** (show clip of a scoreboard counting down, followed by scenes from a Rocky movie as he wins the heavyweight title of the world!)

Hopefully the above example inspired some of your own ideas on how you can take these team building activities to the next level. Perhaps you will film some footage of yourself doing some crazy stunts and use those clips to make your key points.

With today’s technology being so widely available, the options are only limited by your own imagination.

If you have the resources, you might consider hiring a student film class to create a special video invitation on your behalf. You can also outsource the project by hiring a professional on [Upwork.com](https://www.upwork.com/). Remember, the more engaged the leader is in the creative process, the better the team will ultimately receive the message and perform accordingly. So, go out there, be a little silly if you need to be, and inspire your team to have fun and win.

"I've always found that the speed of the boss
dictates the speed of the team."

- Lee Iacocca

Finding The Hook

Purpose: To assist employees in capturing their creative ideas and not losing the opportunity to make a real difference in the long-term success of the team.

Explanation: It's a well-known fact that every successful songwriter carries a pen and paper everywhere they go. The reason is that they must capture an idea or a phrase for a song immediately when they think about it or they might forget the idea within a matter of hours or even minutes.

Capturing new and innovative ideas is a skill that every good leader should promote, and team building activities such as this one can help.

Quality ideas are the lifeblood of every successful organization. However, many times your employees may identify terrific ideas but never share them simply because they don't remember the idea - or because they aren't aware you'd even care to hear it.

As the leader, you can promote creative thinking and increase awareness of this issue by making this a topic of your next staff meeting.

It's a fact that whatever we focus on, we gravitate towards. It's the *Law of Attraction*. If you focus on debt you'll obtain more debt, but if you focus on prosperity, you'll become more prosperous.

The same is true as you challenge your team members to focus on coming up with new, original and innovative ideas. The more they are aware of the need to think creatively, and the more you ask them to contribute creative ideas to the team, the more they will positively respond with some wonderful, and potentially highly profitable ideas.

"Engagement is the product of inspiration, motivation, and a dash of creativity."

Songwriters are always seeking "the hook", or catchphrase for a song that will stick in the music listener's mind. You want your people to be seeking "the hook" or that one simple tweak to the system that will help the company produce more, spend less or increase consumer demand.

Let your team members know that you may not have all the answers, but that you are confident in their collective intelligence and creativity to find multiple solutions to key issues.

Encourage team members to seek out "hooks" when speaking to business associates, customers, and even competitors. Provide a meaningful reward that will motivate your team to be competitive in their quest for a new idea, or "hook", that will help the team be more successful.

Meet again in one or two weeks to discuss their findings. Team building activities such as this can produce some surprising opportunities for everyone!

Chapter 5: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Use our free team building exercises to enhance the quality of customer service. Smart leaders know that "service" is, without a doubt, the one key element that is completely within your control.



How you treat your customers and the overall experience that your customers receive will ultimately dictate your success or failure in business.

Not only is the quality of the service you deliver within your control, it's also a fact that SERVICE is the one thing that can and will always set you apart from your competition – for better or for worse.

Identifying and retaining team members who naturally possess good judgement, people skills and a desire to please and serve others, will remain an ongoing challenge for every leader and the organization at large.

As our free team building exercises point out, great service delivery requires people who care about their customers. In addition, leaders must recognize that the **Golden Rule of Service** consist of the same *Golden Rule* we all heard as a child. **"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."**

Attention to the details will set you apart in the marketplace. If you can focus your team on this consistently, with an eye to continually enhance the customer experience, you'll earn and maintain your position at the top.

"It's safe to say that whoever wins the service game, will win the broader race within their industry."

Always treat people the way you want to be treated. If someone in your organization makes a mistake, empower that individual to go out of their way to make it right for the customer. Let your people know that you don't hire "order takers". Rather, you empower people to make decisions that are reasonable to ensure that the customer's perception of the organization is protected and constantly improved.

If the customer isn't happy because of a \$5.00 fee, waiving the fee as a courtesy is far less expensive than making that customer so angry they tell all their friends about it on social media. The same is true for a \$50.00 fee - SO BE SMART in how you handle customer complaints!

The rewards your company will realize through a commitment to the customer includes increased customer retention, as well as increased customer referrals. The value of a strong customer service brand will far outweigh any cost involved in absorbing the cost of the error. The following free team building exercises will assist you in enhancing your team member's focus on their customer.

Try These Free Team Building Exercises

Play-It Backward, Flip-It Forward

Purpose: Increase awareness of living up to your Customer Service standards. Clearly communicate what customer service activities are expected from all staff.

Explanation: This is one of our most simple, yet highly effective, free team building exercises. By asking employees what they can do to get the opposite result that you want, forces them to look at a common situation very differently.

Leaders can quickly engage team members in a discussion asking the following two questions:

1. **What can we do today to make certain that our first customer closes his account today?**
2. **What can we do today to make certain that we obtain zero sales today?**

Although your team may mistakenly assume you've gone a little crazy, remain serious in your quest for logical and realistic answers to each question.

Answers to the first question might include:

- Demonstrate by actions and words that you do not value their business
- React to questions in a negative or unprofessional manner.

Answers to the second questions could include:

- Don't ask for the business.
- Make zero effort to get new business, or discourage people who come in to make a purchase

Your team will come up with some very interesting, and probably some laughable responses. Write that all down on a flip chart so you can refer to them later.

Next, make a point of recognizing that at times your organization may very well have been guilty of some of the errors listed. Next, inform your employees that many of your competitors are currently making many of these same mistakes, which will cost them loyal customers. Hey, isn't that a great opportunity for your team?

Next, it's time to turn all those negative practices into positive opportunities. As you turn each negative action into a positive goal for your team you can state, "Okay, let's Flip-It Forward."

Your team has already identified the things that they must NOT do to a customer. It should now be very simple for the team to identify the right things they must do to retain existing customers and attract new customers.

The flip-side of answers for the first questions could be:

- In words and actions, make certain customers feel appreciated and perceive your team as highly valuing their business relationship.
- Always be courteous, finding out what's important to the customer and interact in a highly professional manner to identify and address the customer's needs.

Next, ideas for the flip-side to answers for the second question:

- Ask for the customer's business in a manner that is authentic and caring. Let customers know they can trust you and that you'll strive to meet and exceed their expectations.
- Have a sales plan for success and work that plan daily. Hold yourself and team members accountable for making a certain number of customer contacts every day. Track results and be sure to reward and recognize employees for their success.

As a team, identify your top 3-5 goals to improve the customer experience, and create specific ways for measuring your success. Goals should be written clearly – stating how much, of what, by when, by whom – for each goal.

This is one of our most popular team building exercises, probably because it's so simple. We encourage you to lead your team through this powerful activity.

"You put together the best team that you can with the players you've got, and then replace those who aren't good enough."

- Robert Crandall

Service for Results

Purpose: Teach your team the direct correlation between their ability to minimize and quickly resolve customer issues through top-notch customer service, and the organizations ability to grow and maximize profits.

Explanation: Smart leaders understand that RESULTS and LONGEVITY are the two main reasons for constantly measuring and improving customer service standards.

The results produced by your team will be directly impacted, positively or negatively, by how well the front-line employees are treating their customers.

*"People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care."
- Zig Ziglar*

If you take anything from the free team building exercises in this section, you should impress upon your employees that above all else, their focus can never be taken away from what the customer is actually experiencing.

In your next team meeting, ask your team to identify 3 ways that they can show their customer how much they care and appreciate their business, which will set them apart from your competitors.

Variations of this exercise can be done in future staff meetings. For example, ask your team to identify 3 things that employees can do to show the customer how much they care about:

- The Customer
- The Department or Team
- Their Job
- The Company

Create key "phrases of appreciation" that team members can work in to their customer service interactions. Examples might include:

- Thanks for your business today, we really do appreciate you as a longtime customer. (Note: Ensure all comments to customers are made in a genuine way. If an employee doesn't really mean what they're saying, then they shouldn't say it. And, if they don't mean it, perhaps this might not be the right place for that employee to work.)
- Mrs. Johnson, tell me, how are we treating you? Are you getting everything you need from us or can we do better in some way?

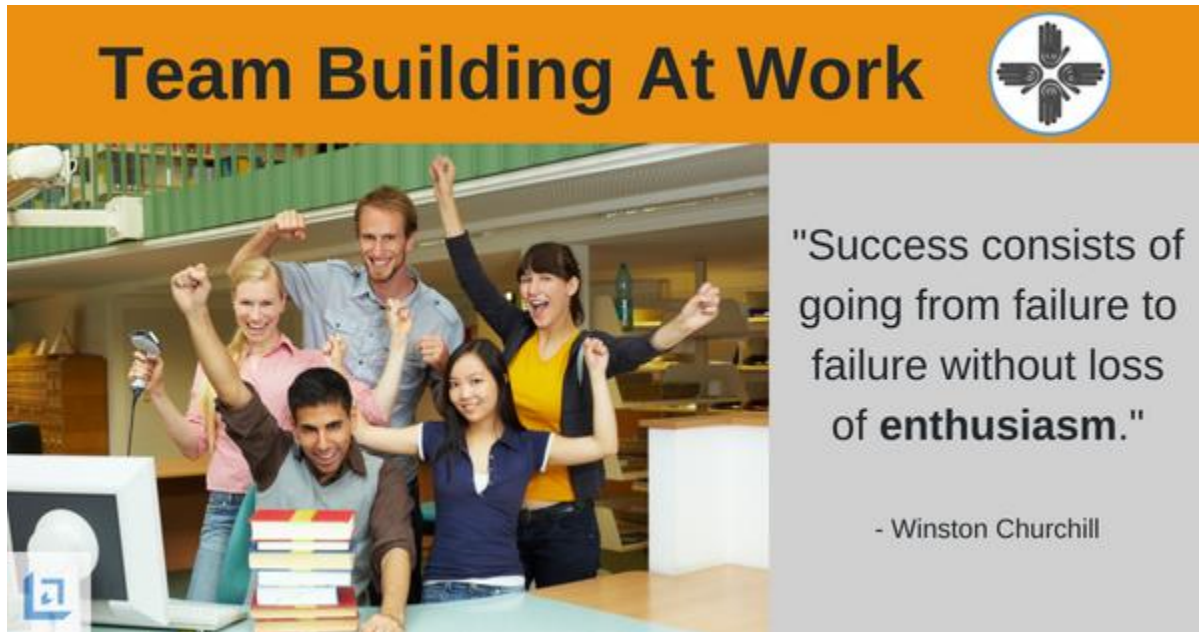
Encourage employees to customize the customer phrases of appreciation to their liking. Not everyone has to say the same thing as a robot. In fact, make sure they don't do that!

Results from these efforts can be immediate. (Hey, another great benefit of our free team building exercises!) Customers will feel an increased sense of gratitude and appreciation for your organization and for your employees.

As employees continue to have positive interactions with their customers, they will begin to realize they really enjoy the responses they get from their customers and will be open to trying new ideas in the future.

Chapter 6: ENTHUSIASM

Our free team building activities can help to inspire and motive your team members *by* providing powerful ideas to energize and engage team members.



Enthusiasm, pure and simple, should be one of the most highly prized traits of your team members.

A team member who is enthusiastic about his or her role provides a spark to the entire team to do more; to accomplish more; to become better.

Enthusiasm is an opportunity for everyone to be a leader. One's ability to continually be optimistic and add positive energy to the workplace, is something every team member can do to set themselves apart from their peers.

Energy and enthusiasm provides life to an otherwise lifeless team. We all need our spirits lifted from time to time. So, it makes perfect sense to assume that your team mates need to be taken away from their routine every once in a while, in order to rejuvenate and re-fuel themselves.

"Enthusiasm is contagious and you want to be a carrier!"

The great Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that *"It's faith in something and enthusiasm for something that makes life worth living."* That quote is so true, and as a leader you must do your utmost to assist the members of your team to realize that their individual role is something they can get excited about.

These team building activities will assist you in helping your team to replenish their energy reserves.

Try These Free Team Building Activities

Crazy Solutions

Purpose: To re-energize employees and provide fun solutions to workplace challenges and issues important to your team.

Explanation: Leaders must constantly be looking for ways to refresh and renew the spirit of the workplace. Providing fun and creative ideas, through free team building activities, is most helpful when a team is experiencing a low point.

The key to this exercise is getting your employees to see important situations in a different light in order to be more creative and enthusiastic about solving the problem.

First, write down the challenge your team is facing on a flip chart. Next, ask everyone to come up with 2 or 3 ways to address the issue. Go around the room and ask everyone to share their initial ideas. Write them all down on the flip chart.

Now, it's time to really start looking at things from a much different perspective! To facilitate some new thinking, you can utilize a variety of props.

For example, provide each team member with a pair of cheap crazy looking glasses, like those big circus sun glasses you might see in a Dollar or thrift store.

Ask everyone to put on their glasses and inform the group that their new glasses have super powers. These glasses enable the wearer to think in new, wild and crazy ways. It will enable you to think so far out of the box, that you'll have a hard time seeing the box.

Next, ask the group to take another shot at the same challenge. With no barriers or limitation, what other crazy solutions should the team be considering?

Yes, the leader has to participate too! Don't be that leader who takes himself too seriously, it's time to lead in the fun. Put those glasses on and let your team see you be willing to look a little silly as well.

Ask everyone to keep their glasses on as you hear the new ideas that come from the second round of wacky solutions. Direct your team to tackle the important task or issue at hand by considering options that they've never done before. Encourage them to come up with ideas that might even be uncomfortable to employ should you decide to use the idea. After all, it's when you're most uncomfortable, that you tend to learn and growth the most.

Enjoy the laughs and the team building aspect of the exercise. Write down all the ideas and funny statements. After everyone has shared their ideas, take a vote on the more creative (whether you're going to use it or not) award a prize or two and have fun.

You may discover through this exercise that sometimes the craziest idea is actually the best one to solve the problem.

NOTE: If you don't like the above activity, simply take the spirit of what you are reading and create your own activity - be creative and do whatever it is that you think will be well received. We realize that not all our team building activities work for everyone and you know yourself and your group members better than we do. Above all, have fun.

"If you won't be better tomorrow than you were today, then what do you need tomorrow for?"

- Rebbe Nachman

Bits O'Praise

Purpose: To support and maintain a positive, energetic working environment among all staff members. To raise confidence among the staff and help promote a sense of teamwork.

Explanation: Everyone likes to be recognized and appreciated. To some extent they even expect that it's the supervisor's job to do that on a regular basis. However, sometimes the boss can provide the opportunity for other team members to be the one to praise, recognize and reward their co-workers.

This is one of our easiest and most effective free team building activities. All it takes is a little bit of planning, pencils and paper.

Prior to your next meeting, perhaps during each of your weekly one-on-one coaching sessions with your team members, ask each employee to write down on a piece of paper something nice and positive about each of their co-workers.

Instruct each employee to be brief in their description, while at the same time providing enough information so that their comments will be clearly understood, and hopefully will be meaningful.

"People must know that for every opportunity missed because one is overly enthusiastic, you will miss a hundred due to a lack of enthusiasm."

Ask each team member to hand these notes in to you before the next team meeting, and you will be collecting similar notes from other team members.

As the leader your job is to sort through all of the notes, gathering the best comments into a small package for each employee. You might even want to wrap the package up with a nice big bow!

At your next staff meeting, present the *Bits O’Praise* package to each employee. It’s not necessary to have people read theirs aloud. Simply have your team open and read their notes to themselves.

Watch their faces. Watch their body language. Take note of how the mood of the room will lighten up as everyone is enjoying the gift of praise and recognition.

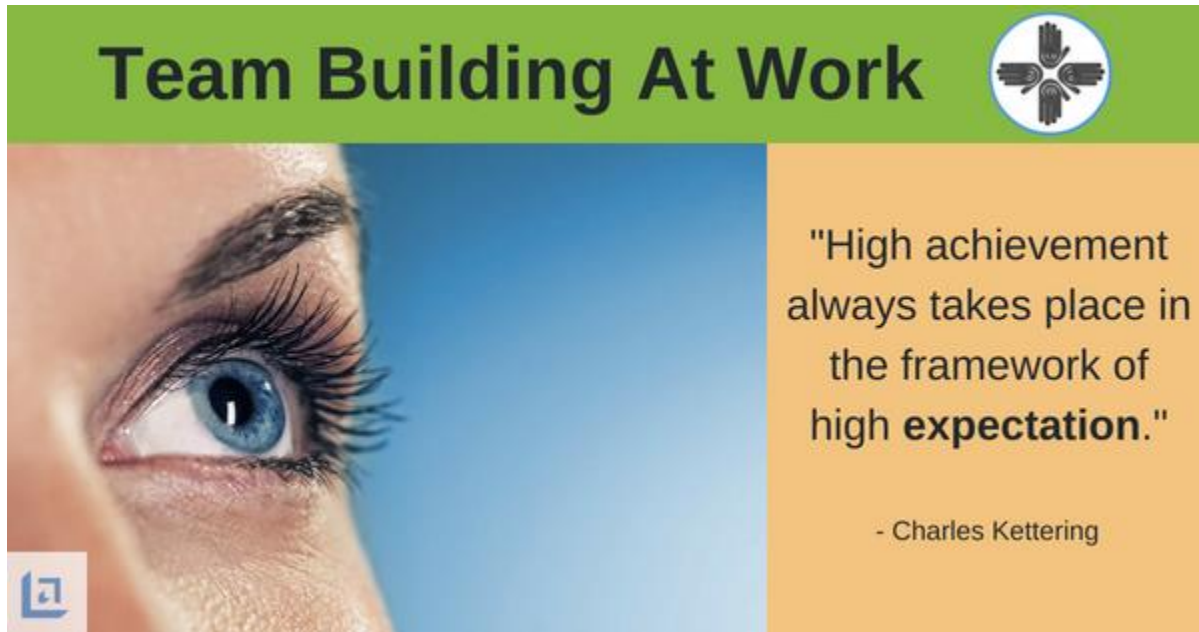
You might begin a quick conversation with your team about how this gift made them feel, pointing out that each team member has the power to give gifts like this to other co-workers at any time. In fact, you owe it to each other to take the time to recognize co-workers when they do something important for the good of the team.

Ask your people to be generous with their praise to each other, as it will come back to them in spades.

Encourage your team members to look for opportunities and reward and recognize each other. Now, as free team building activities go, isn't this a great one? We think so.

Chapter 7: EXPECTATIONS

Finding a teamwork activity that helps leaders set clear expectations with their team just became a lot easier.



Team building must be an ongoing priority for leaders and using the right activities can assist you in setting and enforcing team expectations with team members. Setting goals with clear expectation for job performance is not something a leader does TO an employee. Rather, it's something you do FOR the employee.

Establishing clear boundaries and managing to those expectations on a daily basis in a firm yet supportive manner, provides structure and contributes to a healthy work environment for the entire team.

A fact many leaders fail to realize is the more difficult discussions a leader has with team members the less number of difficult discussions will be necessary.

If you are quick to address non-performance or behavioral issues with your employees; and you maintain consistent accountability – your employees will have no doubt that you mean what you say and that you will not hesitate to hold them responsible for their actions.

"Your time is spent wisely when you invest time to communicate and clarify your expectations with your staff."

Since nobody wishes to be called into the boss's office for a reprimand, they are more careful to meet the expectations of their job when they know the boss will hold them accountable.

Enforcing expectations is not a scare tactic. Leaders should always communicate a balanced message of being firm in their expectations, while remaining supportive to the employee. Business is business, and the fact is that it's called "work" because you expect people to, well - WORK!

Try These Teamwork Activity Ideas

Expect the Best

Purpose: To illustrate and clarify for your team what your expectations are. To show team members exactly what it is that you are looking for as they work with each other and as they serve their customers.

Explanation: The leader is responsible for continually inspecting and measuring job performance. This effective teamwork activity will assist you in completing the task in a fun and creative way.

At your next team meeting, have your team make a list of the top 5 or 10 primary activities of their job. Ask team members to pair up for this exercise.

Over the next week, it will be your expectation that each team member will complete a picture collage of their partner, with proof in pictures of the employee meeting the expectations of his or her job.

*"Let's be clear. Everyone gets to participate.
No one gets the luxury of opting out.
We all win or lose together."*

At the next staff meeting, each employee will make their presentation to you and the team, highlighting their partner employee as they are "caught in the act" of delivering quality customer service, supporting other team members and working creativity to improve production and improve efficiencies.

Have each presenter talk about what impact those activities have on the customer experience and how it contributes to the success of the team. In addition, the presenter should share anything about their co-worker that they learned during the process. This might include special interests or hobbies, or any key skills the employee possesses that are critical to the tasks presented.

This teamwork activity is a great way for team members to get to know each other better and will add energy to the workplace as they prepare their presentations. This exercise can be particularly helpful for a new team since team members won't know each other very well.

This activity allows all team members to participate, hence giving the leader an opportunity to recognize each employee as presentations are made to the group. It also cements in the mind of each employee that you expect them to focus on the primary activities they are paid to perform.

"You will find men who want to be carried on the shoulders of others, who think that the world owes them a living. They don't seem to see that we must all lift together and pull together."

- Henry Ford

No More Secret Identity

Purpose: To clarify expectations of the team and to assist team members in understanding the value they bring to their customers and to the organization.

Explanation: As a group, work with your team to make a list of the most important values and/or benefits they bring to their customers.

Focusing on the customer, have the team clearly identify **What Value We Provide To The Customer?** For example:

- What's the service or product that we offer and what sets us apart from our competitors?
- What's our commitment to quality and customer service?
- Do we have a strong sense of ownership to make things right, whenever we make an error or come up short?
- Are we committed to, and exhibiting, quality relationship-building through regular contact?

Next, still focusing on the Customer, ask your team to discuss and clarify their expectations of **How We Take Care Of The Customer?** For example:

- Warm smiles, stand to greet, firm handshake, and eye contact
- Listen intently to what the customer came in for, and make that your priority
- Using the customer's name during each interaction. Probe for additional needs to ensure you meet as many needs as possible
- Always thank the customer for their business and let them know you value their relationship
- Ask customers what you can do better to serve them – gaining competitive feedback

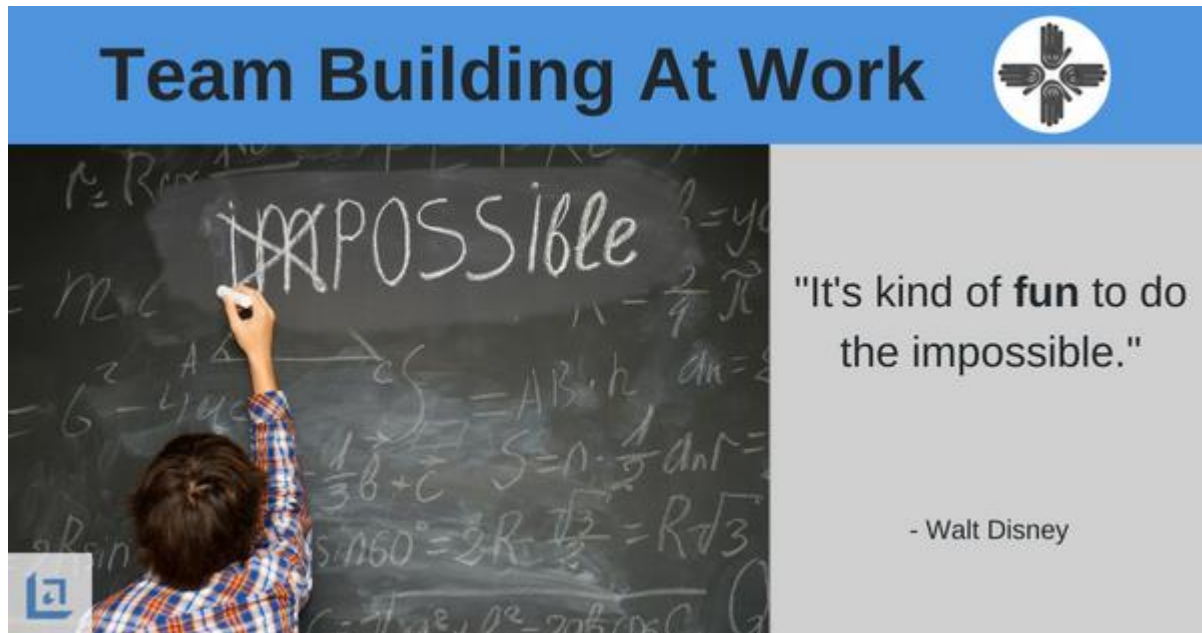
This teamwork activity provides an opportunity for leaders to facilitate a quality discussion on "why we're here", "what we do", and "why we do it". After the team has a chance to articulate their responses, then ask them how they think the team is doing in carrying out our primary responsibilities.

Be sure to praise team members on what they are doing very well and provide constructive feedback in areas that can be improved.

Lastly, create an action plan to address any areas of concern and schedule a date to meet again to review their progress.

Chapter 8: FUN

Identifying unique team building activity ideas can sometimes be difficult, but by now we hope you've realized that here you've found team building ideas that are top-notch. In this chapter we focus on the top of infusing fun into the workplace.



Many leaders downplay the important of having fun in the workplace, but the fact is that when work is fun, it doesn't "feel" like work, and that is when you know your people are passionate about what they are doing.

Without clearly defining fun that is appropriate to the workplace, however, sometimes it can be a fine line that a leader must walk. On one hand you want your people to enjoy their work, but you are also concerned that people maintain a level of professionalism.

You might also hesitate to encourage a fun atmosphere out of fear that fun activities will keep your team from producing at a maximum level. However, you can safely put those fears aside as we are providing a solution that everyone should feel good about.

The key to helping your team define what "fun" means is to first clearly define it for yourself. Don't worry, we've put considerable thought into this question, so you don't have to.

The definition for fun that we came up with is probably not exactly what you will expect, but we think you'll like our version because it's also very conducive to a productive work environment.

FUN in the Workplace can be defined as the following:

Working as part of a team environment where people are challenged, they learn new skills, they grow, they seek opportunity and advancement, they take risks, they ask forgiveness - not always permission.

People with these traits make an organization grow - these people succeed more often than they fail - and they ultimately reap the rewards and recognition of one who consistently achieves strong results.

Team members having fun stay motivated with the knowledge that they are the exception to the common rule of human behavior. They've taken ownership of their mood and disposition.

Ultimately, they are having FUN because they make a difference and a valuable contribution to their team - they simply do not allow themselves to settle for the status quo.

These employees would rather work hard and experience "full engagement" - because being engaged is what makes the job worth doing.

Working hard, getting results and experiencing the rewards that come with success and achievement – NOW THAT'S FUN.

Good luck and have fun as you teach your team important lessons using the following unique team building activity ideas.

Try These Unique Team Building Activity Ideas

Hot Potato!

Purpose: To add fun and energy to a team meeting. To assist with product knowledge retention.

Explanation: Leaders should check in and inspect the product knowledge of their employees on a regular basis. This unique team building activity is a fun way to review and inspect the product knowledge of your team members.

Choose a physical object that can be quickly passed from one employee to the other. Objects might include a ball or stuffed animal. This object is your HOT POTATO, so make sure it's not too heavy.

Gather your team in a circle and explain to them that the object of the game is to NOT get caught with the Hot Potato. Whoever gets caught with the Hot

Potato after 2 minutes of play, will be asked to complete a task no one else wants.

This task should be something simple like doing the lunchroom dishes or something similar in nature. (Keep in mind, the idea here is not to make it a negative, but simply to provide some motivation to not get caught with the Hot Potato)

With your team members in a circle, set your stop watch for two minutes and inform your team that you'll be asking product knowledge questions. As soon as one person answers a question correctly, he or she can quickly toss the Hot Potato to another employee. It's now that employee's turn to answer the next question.

As the 2-minute time period approaches, you read your questions quickly so the person answering the question has time to answer. If you run out of time in the middle of a question, allow the person to answer the question. If she answers correctly, she does not have to keep the Hot Potato, but if she answers incorrectly she is the Hot Potato winner!

You can be flexible in determining how many rounds you choose to play. Use this unique team building activity to engage your employees and infuse a little bit of fun into an otherwise mundane review process.

As always, for those employees who demonstrate a high level of product knowledge, make a point to recognize them for their commitment to excellence.

"I don't believe in team motivation. I believe in getting a team prepared so it knows it will have the necessary confidence when it steps on a field and is prepared to play a good game."

- Tom Landry

That's Entertainment

Purpose: To provide a fun and entertaining way to engage your employees and effectively reward and recognize top performers.

Explanation: Whenever you have an opportunity to reward and recognize your employees, you can easily elevate the level of energy and excitement by making your presentation into a competitive exercise such as this unique team building activity.

First, identify your top two performers for any certain task or area of performance.

"Live and work hard but also remember to play and have fun in life."

Recognize everyone for their performance. Be specific in your praise and give clear examples of what each employee has done to be deserving of your recognition.

Explain that both top performers have won an opportunity to win a larger prize. It can be something as simple as movie tickets, lottery tickets or a bottle of wine.

Bring out two hula hoops. Have each team member try out the hula hoop. Give them a minute or so to practice and prepare for the exercise. Keep in mind, most people haven't played with a hula hoop since they were in grade school.

Watch the team observe these top performers as they practice their hula hoops. The fun has already started!

Instruct each top performer to get ready, get set, GO! The person who can hula hoop the longest will win the Prize.

This simple activity is a sure-fire winner for injecting FUN within the team.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If a top performer is not physically capable of using a hula hoop, or you think they would be too embarrassed to do so in front of the group you don't want to put them in an uncomfortable position so here are a couple other ideas that you can use for the same exercise.

- Set up a dart board and add up the points for the best 3 throws
- Play trivia and the first person to get 5 correct answers wins
- Play a game of checkers, but use a timer, giving each person only 10 seconds to move each piece. The winner of the game wins the prize!

As you can see, the type of game or activity is not that important. The main thing is that you set up an environment for some friendly competition that also provides an opportunity to reward and recognize your top performers in front of their peers. Try this unique team building activity at your next staff meeting.

Chapter 9: GOAL SETTING

Team goal setting is the next topic we are going to tackle. For teams to be successful they need to know how success is defined. By setting clear goals for your team, you provide them with a clear understanding of what they need to achieve to be successful.



Goal Setting - why is it so important? Written goals are key to the success of every team or organization. Team building activities for goal setting can assist leaders to gain the commitment of their employees by connecting with them on a more personal level.

Clearly defined goals lay out the leader's vision for success. By initiating an action plan and the tracking systems for measuring incremental progress helps everyone on the team to view their own contribution toward the success of the team.

Leaders must take the time to break down the goals into short-term, measurable and attainable objectives, each with a set time period attached. By doing this, you gain greater buy-in from the team. It's much easier to accept a 10 unit weekly goal, than a 520 unit annual goal.

Breaking the goal down into bite sized chunks helps team members to more clearly see how they can be successful. People who believe things are possible are much more likely to achieve their goals.

"Your ability to identify details, plan thoroughly and consistently execute is everything if you want to succeed."

Goal tracking also provide a means for leaders to identify those who may need additional training or support. Leaders can also reward and recognize top

performing employees based on their abilities to achieve specific targets.

The following questions can be asked as you proceed with establishing clear and effective **SMART** goals:

- Does the goal support the overall purpose or mission of the team?
- Is the goal **Specific**?
- Is the goal **Measurable**?
- Is the goal **Achievable**?
- Is the goal **Realistic**?
- is the goal **Time Sensitive**?

Making your goals clear and easy to understand using the above SMART technique will ensure that goals are fair and reasonable, and by following this process, you are more credible as a leader in the eyes of your team.

Try These Team Goal Setting Ideas

Resume Builder

Purpose: To provide a team building activity that will help to identify your next project or team leader.

Explanation: Let's say you have a new project that you need someone to lead. You have several existing employees who have a high desire to take on a leadership role.

Since team members already know each other, you can be certain that there is already some office politics going on as people begin to jockey for position for the new role.

Your task as the leader is to not only identify the new leader, but also to do it in a way that supports the new leader. The new leader must have credibility in the minds of those that will be working for him or her.

Gather your group together and create team building activities that get everyone involved in defining the key roles and responsibilities of the new prospective leader. Next, get everyone involved in defining the skills that are necessary for this new leader to be effective in the role.

What you are doing here is getting your entire group to help define and eventually identify their new leader. By getting the feedback of the group, you are already helping to build valuable credibility for the person who is ultimately selected.

Give everyone a blank resume form that contains the following areas that need to be filled in:

- Skills Needed for the Position
- Proven Areas of Accomplishment
- Leadership Abilities
- Team Building Attributes
- Customer Service Commitment
- Team Goal Setting Experience
- Performance Management Skills
- Education Requirements

Inform your team that collectively you want to hear from them what is needed in the new leader in these key areas of performance.

Put the team in small groups first so they can talk among themselves and come up with their best ideas for each category. Then, bring the group together to share their thoughts. The leader will facilitate the discussion and work to find common ground and come to a consensus on what the team believes is needed from the person who is chosen to fill the position.

Once the discussion has ended, the leader is armed with great information to consider when interviewing the group of candidates. Your team will appreciate the fact that you took the time to get their feedback and that you will be seeking for the best candidate possible, based on their collective input.

Next, let your team members know that anyone interested in applying for the position should do so formally, and include with their application a personal assessment of how they believe they meet the requirements set forth by this team goal setting activity.

Once you've selected your new team leader, you can make the announcement to the team that in fact they selected their new leader via the process of defining the perfect resume for the job.

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships."

- Michael Jordan

Details for Results

Purpose: To engage the team in identifying the smallest details of a project to achieve their goals and ensure maximum positive impact to the organization.

Explanation: We've all heard some make the comment, "The devil is in the details", but it sounds much more positive and productive to turn that same phrase around and state, **"Success is in the details"**. In this team goal setting activity, we'll show you just how true that statement is.

When leaders are confronted with an opportunity for team goal setting or action planning for any objective, this is a great time to get your team involved in creating a clearly defined plan.

The more detailed the team can be in identifying every key aspect of the task, the more likely they are to succeed.

First take your group through a short team goal setting exercise by asking them to complete the following:

- Write down your next vacation destination.
- Make a list of tasks that must be completed prior to leaving (booking travel and lodging, arranging for pets, packing, arranging itinerary, planning to be absent from work, etc.)
- Make a list of important items that must be planned for during their trip. (meals, activities, childcare, etc.)
- Make a daily budget based on the planned activities. Give yourself some cushion to allow for unplanned extras.
- Make a list of items that must be addressed upon your return from your trip (paying bills, unpacking, getting photos developed, getting kids ready to return to school, etc.)

"There are two things to aim at in life; first to get what you want, and after that to enjoy it. Only the wisest among us achieves the second."

Team goal setting activities like this point out to your employees the fact that there are a multitude of small details that must be identified and planned for in order to limit the number of mistakes that are made, and to ensure the ultimate outcome of the project.

Make the point that most people take more time to plan their vacation than they do to plan their retirement. This is why 65% of all retirees must count on government assistance to make ends meet in their former years. Unfortunately, the government will not be here to bail the team out if they fail to properly plan for the success of an important project.

Highly effective teams and organizations are very detailed in their planning efforts. The more you plan before you begin a project the better prepared you will be to adjust and adapt to issues and barriers you encounter throughout the process.

Now that you've made your point, get your team on track with planning their next greatest success in a highly organized and detailed way.

For even more great ideas on team goal setting, we encourage you to check out our free eBook, [Goal Setting for Success](#).

Chapter 10: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In this chapters you'll discover team building strategies for leadership development. Use these team building and leadership ideas and create a legacy of leadership as you make leaders of your team members.



The level of effective leadership is often the root determination of whether a team is exceeding expectations, meeting them, or falling below minimum expectations.

A solid leader has the power to turn an otherwise good performer into a great performer; a respectable performance into an exceptional performance. When a leader is fully engaged, the odds are very high that the team will also be engaged. The opposite is also true.

Strong leaders provide a clear vision for what needs to be achieved, and a solid plan of action for how the team will get from point A to point B. Leaders focus their team by breaking down the project into small bite-sized tasks that will ultimately add up to achieving the larger goal.

Great leaders are also great communicators. They know how to relate to people and can inspire their team to buy-in to the vision and commit to working hard for a successful outcome.

"Leadership is the X-factor that provides an added edge to an individual or team."

Leaders that are most effective lead by example and often use team building strategies to encourage a strong connection among team members. At the beginning of a new project this can be critical to the success of the entire team.

The best leaders are not a stranger to the front line. They know the names of their team members. They not only talk the talk, they regularly walk the walk. They teach, they coach, and they hold themselves and their team members accountable for results.

Consider using one of the following team building strategies as you strive to lead your team to their next greatest victory.

Try These Team Building Strategies

No = Don't Know

Purpose: To encourage team members to educate their clients rather than accepting "No" for an answer. To ultimately educate clients on the benefits they can receive, meeting multiple needs. In return, the business increases sales and bottom-line results.

Explanation: Team members should often perceive a customer's initial "No" response, as a probable "I don't know."

The reason one should make that assumption is that most customers instinctively say no because they are often very busy and don't want to make the time to fully consider your offer. They are constantly being bombarded with sales offers and would prefer to get on with their list of tasks to complete for the day.

Your challenge as the leader is to teach your sales staff how to turn those "No's" into an opportunity to educate their clients so that they truly understand the cost of saying no. Until your customer is fully educated about the benefits of your product or service, they truly do not know whether it makes sense for them to buy it.

The customer must understand the true value of what they are being offered. If your sales staff can clearly and concisely define the value as being much larger than the actual price of the product or service, your sales will skyrocket!

Leadership and team building strategies like the one we're about to share will help your team define every possible benefit of your product or service. Once they are armed with the information, they'll be better prepared to win the business.

Provide each team member with a form to list every potential benefit of the product or service. Ask team members to share ideas in small groups and discuss the many benefits available to their customers. Encourage out-of-the-box creative thinking and reward your employees for the most powerful and unique ideas.

Next, bring the larger group together as ask each of the smaller groups to present their ideas. Facilitate a discussion to determine a master list of the most persuasive benefits.

Next, ask your team to identify a list of the most common objections they hear from customers. Then, using the benefits identify, have your team craft the

perfect response to each objection. By know what to say to effectively overcome objections, your sales staff will be more confident and be less likely to take No for an answer.

As you can see, team building strategies can be used to help your team create highly effective tools for success.

"The greater the loyalty of a group toward the group, the greater is the motivation among the members to achieve the goals of the group, and the greater the probability that the group will achieve its goals."

- Rensis Likert

Winner's Choice

Purpose: To teach team members the important life lesson of **responding** to adversity rather than simply **reacting** to it.

Explanation: Mary Crowley once said, *"We are free up to the point of choice, then the choice controls the chooser."*

Success in your job and in your life is directly dependent upon the personal choices you make. To ensure your team members are making good choices you must make certain that they understand the difference between reacting to a challenging situation, versus being disciplined to respond in a thoughtful and professional manner in any given situation.

As leaders we simply must not allow ourselves the luxury of having a bad day in public. Does that mean we never have a bad day? - no, not at all. However, a great leader is disciplined enough to realize that it does no one any good to share his bad day with others as it will only encourage others to do the same thing. If everyone is constantly telling his or her tales of woe, the workplace will quickly become a very dismal environment.

At your next staff meeting ask your team members to identify three scenarios that occurred recently that were disappointing or not in line with their expectations. List one instance in each of the following three categories: *(Assure your team that you will not be asking them to hand these in, the paper is for their eyes only.)*

1. Personal Relationship
2. Customer Relationship

3. Co-worker/Business Partner Relationship

Next, instruct your team to list what actions they took following their disappointing discovery. Be specific in terms of verbal responses, body language, tone of voice, etc.

Finally, ask them the following question. **In hindsight, did you quickly react, or did you thoughtfully respond?**

*"A thoughtful person can change the world.
Indeed, it's the only kind of person that ever has."*

Make the point that a quick emotional reaction tends to be an indulgence on the part of that person. It's a choice that is made almost without thinking and leaves the person open to being perceived as being undisciplined, unprofessional and unstable.

On the other hand, a thoughtful response will almost certainly help to gain credibility and respect from others. A thoughtful response demonstrates maturity and self-discipline.

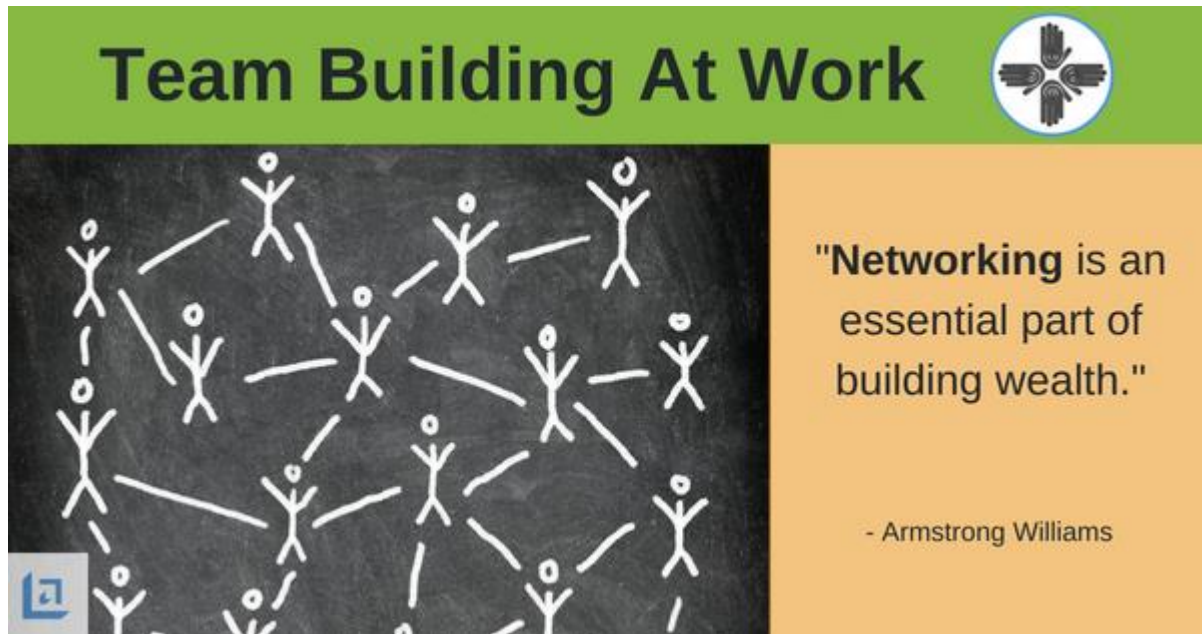
Use the analogy of how a doctor prescribes a medicine for an illness. When the patient takes the medicine, it's most desirable to "respond" to the medicine rather than have a "reaction" to the medicine. One is positive, the other is negative.

Consider sharing real examples of customer complaints based on employee behaviors. Have the team come up with how the employee could have better responded to avoid having an unhappy customer.

Teaching your employees leadership and team building strategies like this one, provides important life lessons that will assist them in virtually every aspect of their personal and professional life. They will always remember who taught them how to make the Winner's Choice.

Chapter 11: NETWORKING

In this chapter we focus on how important effective networking is for your business and your career.



Given today's ever-changing, competitive environment – people can take ownership of their professional future by always considering themselves as being “self-employed”.

Whether you are salaried, under contract or even unemployed – you will benefit by adopting the mindset of “self-employment”. The fact is that most people are where they are right now because of their collective decisions over the past 1-2 years. So, if you don't like where you are, you have the power to make different decisions, right?

No matter what your position is today, the fact is you are at risk. Gone are the days where people work for the same company for 30-40 years and retire with a nice pension.

The fact is that organizations are in a constant state of change. As a result, your job is always at some level of risk. Even if you are the business owner, your competitors pose a real risk to your livelihood, so you cannot afford to be caught off your guard. Never allow yourself to be complacent about creating options if your current position is downsized.

Yes, it can happen to anyone, even you can be "let go". In fact, the odds are that at some point in your career this will happen to you. Are you prepared for a forced career change? Have you created a network of resources that can help to minimize the impact, financially and emotionally?

*"The idea of networking is not to see how many people you can meet;
it's to compile a list of people you can count on."*

Effective networking is one of the most powerful ways to limit your risk of someday finding yourself unemployed or out of business.

Whether you have an immediate need or not, you should always be looking for potential opportunities. Having career options in your back pocket will minimize your risk and lower your blood pressure considerably when faced with a corporate downsizing.

Effective networking consists of the following three key areas of focus:

1. **Focus on your many areas of interest.** Identify individual you'd like to get to know who might also be in a position to assist you in achieving your goals.
2. **Adopt a habit of getting to know people.** Reach out to others in a sincere effort to know more about them. Freely share your goals and aspirations with those you trust. The connections you make will open many doors of opportunity. **Always be authentic, never fake.**
3. **Identify key decision-makers.** Know who has the ability and the authority to support you in your areas of interest. Your efforts to reciprocate are key to nurturing these strategic relationships so if you hope to "get", be proactive and willing to "give".

Networking is a great way to get involved in important community events, meet new and interesting people and increase your chances to learn and increase your knowledge and skill-set.

The following team building tips and activities provide great ideas for improving your effectiveness at networking.

Try These Team Building Tips & Activities

Lunch Anyone?

Purpose: To teach team members the importance of learning more about the people they interact with. The ability to make personal connections with clients or co-workers is an important way to ensure customer and employee retention, as well as increased sales and career opportunities.

Explanation: Team building tips and exercises like this one provides an opportunity for team members to connect with one another while learning an important sales management skill.

The benefits of simply taking someone out to lunch is often missed on professionals. Everyone has to eat so it's not like you don't have anything in common, right? Be smart and make the most of the "lunch" opportunity. Again, you can't be successful at

networking if you do it in a way that is not sincere. If you can't be authentic, then your odds of success will be greatly diminished.

The first goal should be to LISTEN and LEARN as much as possible about what makes the other person tick. Make a point of really getting to know that person's story. When you do that you'll find out that there are a lot of amazing stories out there. Enjoy learning about the people around you.

As you learn more about this individual, you should be trying to identify common interests that you can discuss in an effort to build rapport and connect on a personal level.

Ensure that you are doing your part to uphold your end of the conversation. Don't allow yourself to take over the conversation and make certain that your comments are more about the other person versus about yourself. Asking questions to learn more about someone else shows that you are sincerely interested in them and is flattering to the other individual.

After explaining the preceding importance points on effective networking, pair up and assign your team members to go to lunch with one another during the coming week. Provide them with the task of learning more about the other person. Seek to find out fun facts that they would otherwise never know.

In addition, ask them to identify common areas of interest and topics that helped them make a more personal connection with each other. Find out each other's "success story". What happened in their life and career that got them to where they are?

Bring your group back the following week to present their findings and enjoy learning amazing fun facts about your team. Next, use these same team building tips and lead your team in a brainstorming exercise to identify who they should be inviting to lunch next. If your team sells a product or service, then identify prospective clients and leverage the art of networking to increase the productivity of your entire team.

"Networking is all about building relationships with people. It's about being genuinely interested in their wellbeing. In turn, they'll be interested in yours. Be authentic, share your knowledge and time, and never burn bridges."

- Richard Gorham

Library Inventory

Purpose: To coach team members to learn more about people they meet and to recognize common areas of interest that can be utilized to create more solid personal and business relationships.

Explanation: A famous speaker once explained that whenever he visited someone's home he couldn't help but take inventory of the various books and magazines that were visible throughout the house.

The reason he became so accustomed to noticing the person's reading materials is that he recognized that it gave important clues to the individual's passions or personal interests. Taking the time to learn what interests others is one of our most important team building tips that will open many doors in your career if you do this on a regular basis.

Ask your team members to quickly make a list of all the books they've read in the last 3 months. Ask them to also share the book they are currently reading.

"Networking is an essential part of securing future opportunities and building wealth."

As each person shares their book list, seek to identify common ties between the types of books they are reading. Ask them why they chose those particular books; what got them interested in certain genres, etc. The details that will come from their responses will provide important insights into your team members unique interests.

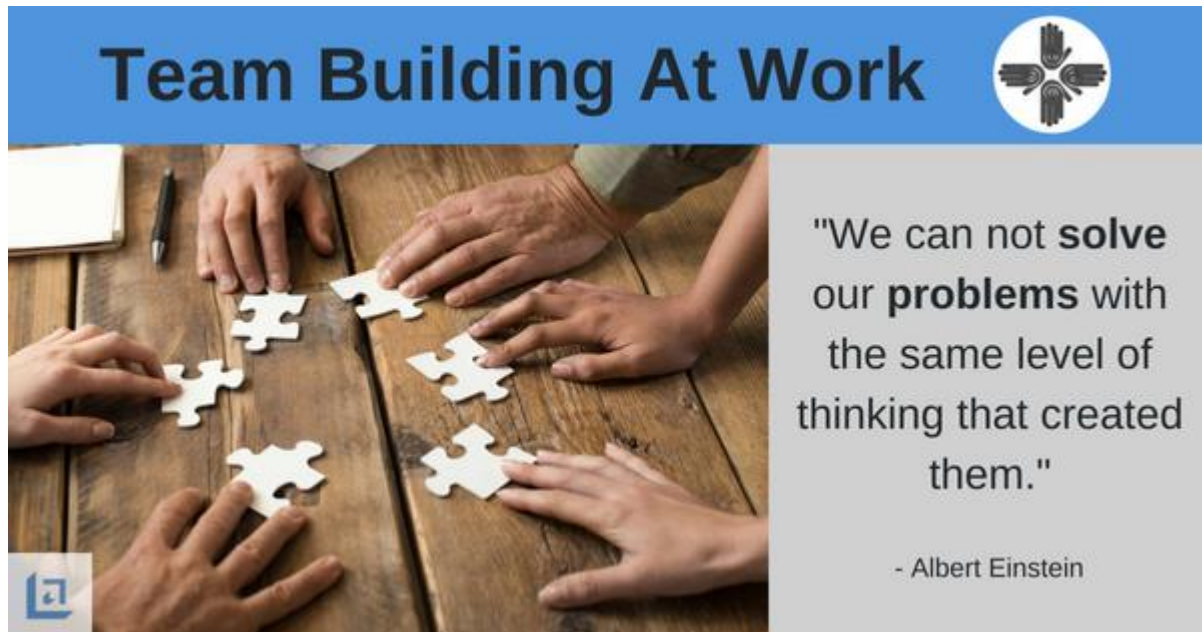
As a leader you might also take note of titles that employees are reading that assist them in their current roles. It's easy to recognize who reads just to escape, and who reads to learn and grow.

Famous author and speaker, Ken Blanchard encourages every person to become a lifelong learner. So what does your 90 day book library consist of? Are you seeking out new information and resources that will assist you in getting to the next phase of your career?

Take a personal inventory of your reading library today – and help your team members to do the same using our many team building tips and strategies. As you network with others, ask them what they read and why they read it? In doing so, you may discover you have something in common.

Chapter 12: PROBLEM SOLVING

Next, we address the issue of problem solving and why it's important to coach your team to address problems quickly for a successful resolution.



Effective problem-solving skills is one of the most valuable assets a team can possess. Solving problems quickly and professionally within the team requires open and honest communication and a sincere desire to identify a solution that satisfies the needs of all parties involved.

The best problem solvers are people who have clear intentions to come up with a solution that is a win-win. They do not respond with emotion, but address issues with a clear and thoughtful approach. They possess a high degree of common sense and good judgment.

These traits are critical for leaders and team members. The skill of problem solving isn't always taught as part of a formal education, so leaders cannot assume that their team possess this valuable skill.

Our fun team building activities provide ideas for teams to problem solve more effectively as they become better at identifying win-win solutions to tough challenges.

"Again and again, the impossible decision is solved when we see that the problem is only a tough decision waiting to be made."

- Rev. Robert Schuller

Poor behavior and lack of performance are often the subjects of workplace issues. Leaders can help their employees to effectively deal with these types of workplace issues by setting clear expectations up front and coaching team members on why it's

important to always communicate in a respectful and professional manner. Coach your team about the importance of increasing team awareness and sensitivity to others.

As the leader, you can utilize our fun team building activities to support an environment where team members value the different strengths of their co-workers. Having team members who are diverse, meaning different, makes a team stronger not weaker.

Teach your team to recognize and appreciate each other's differences. Discuss how those unique attributes can add dimensions to the team that can provide a competitive advantage. You'll limit the number of problems on your team by keeping team members focused on helping and supporting each other.

You should make a point of rewarding and recognizing team members who are pro-active and effective at solving workplace issues on their own, working together to come up with a solution that everyone is happy with. Now, let's get to those fun team building activities...

Try These Fun Team Building Activities

Walk-A-Bout

Purpose: To encourage team members to take time to effectively problem solve by creating win-win solutions to important challenges.

Explanation: At your next staff meeting instruct all team members to arrive with their walking shoes on. *(No high heels for this team building exercise)*

Divide your team into groups of three or more. Assign each group to a specific problem that the team needs to solve. Provide the full scenario, pointing out the key stakeholders and their respective points of view.

In each group, assign a timekeeper, a scribe (someone to take notes), and a crossing guard (Watch out for traffic).

Each group will take a 30-minute walk outside. The goal here is to take your people outside their normal working environment and break up their morning routines. Critical thinking is supported as people are challenged to work outside their normal mode of operation.

Let each group know that upon their return they will be expected to present their win-win solution to the larger group for consideration. Coming up with win-win solutions forces team members to identify what's important to all parties and to seek remedies that will be agreeable to everyone involved.

At the end of each presentation, the group must also share something that they noticed for the first time outside during their Walk-A-Bout. The purpose here is to have some fun and add some creativity to the process.

Reward and recognize those teams that provide the most unique and effective win-win solutions. Fun team building activities like this are simple and can provide solutions you may not have ever thought about.

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

- Andrew Carnegie

All Options

Purpose: To teach your sales team that they must never short change themselves of new opportunities to sell their product or service. Thinking outside the box for added benefits can create huge upside potential for maximum sales and earnings.

Explanation: During this team building exercise, introduce your staff to a product that has an established common use. As an example, let's consider women's pantyhose. (feel free to use whatever product you like)

*"Problems are meant to be solved, but unfortunately, a lot of people choose to complain, worry, and cry about them."
— Edmond Mbiaka*

Instruct your team that their goal will be to package and promote women's pantyhose as a totally new and different product. They will also need to identify a list of features and benefits that will appeal to a male market. Yes, you heard that right.

The key to this task will be to unlock the imagination of your team so they will become totally open to ALL OPTIONS.

After putting team members into small working groups, allow 20-30 minutes for groups to brainstorm and prepare their ideas. Each team will then be asked to make their sales presentation.

Here are a couple examples of what you might hear, so be open to having a few laughs with your team:

- Leg warmers for aging athletes w/poor circulation
- Thermal underwear for the avid hunter
- Micro-Scuba Gear

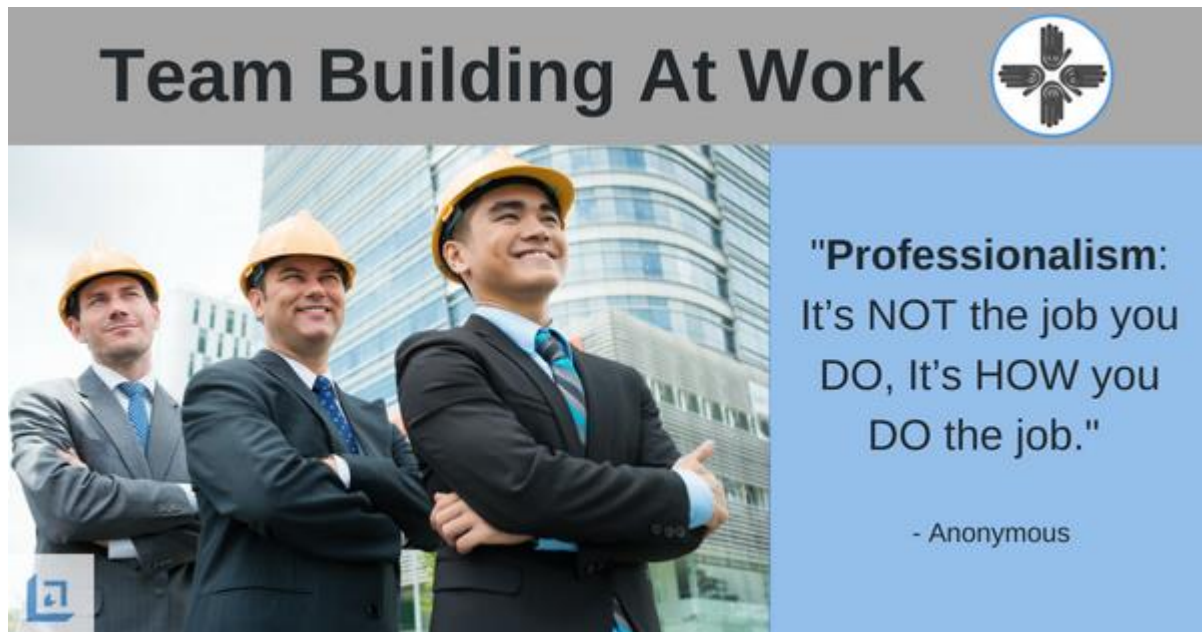
Rest assured the ideas will keep you on the edge of your seat. Simple ideas like this provide leaders with fun team building activities that will keep the creative juices of your team flowing.

After completing the presentations, point out to your team how interesting it is to hear so many different solutions to what at first seemed to be an impossible task. Through their collective creativity, they were able to effectively solve the problem assigned to them. Working together the team will show their ability to step up to the challenge at hand and have fun in the process.

Next time use a similar exercise to address an important business challenge. With that same level of enthusiasm and creativity, instruct your team to continue their out-of-the-box thinking. Turn the team's focus toward how you can increase market share by attracting new target groups to your product or service.

Chapter 13: PROFESSIONALISM

Receive answers to team building questions, along with activities to increase job performance. In this chapter we address the issue of professionalism in the workplace.



It's important for team members to discover and learn as a group so they can grow together for the purpose of building a stronger team. As team building questions are answered over time, team members better understand what's important to each other and what drives their respective performance.

See if you can identify with the following scenario... From the time we get up in the morning we make important choices about who we are. We choose the clothes we wear; perfume/cologne; women choose how they apply their makeup and men make a choice of wearing ties, shave vs. facial hair, etc. We choose the cleanliness of our automobile or the level of organization/disorganization we display in our work space.

Professionalism is measured in large part by how others perceive you. It's not about how much you spend on a suit, but the fact that your suit is nicely pressed, stain-free and that it compliments your overall appearance.

"Professionalism comes down to managing perceptions and making thoughtful choices about appearance, manners and character."

Professionalism is not about the kind of car you drive, it's about the pride and care you take in keeping it clean and well serviced. **Professionalism comes down to PERSONAL EFFORT.**

Smart and self-aware team members make the extra effort to ensure they are perceived well by others. In turn, those individuals will reap the rewards and benefits that go along with the increased credibility they earn in the eyes of their peers and supervisors.

Our exercises answer team building questions and suggest effective activities you can present to the team to raise awareness on the subject of professionalism.

Try These Team Building Ideas On Professionalism

Professional vs Personal Issues

Purpose: To teach team members the importance of keeping a professional distance between personal and workplace issues. Team building questions are asked and answered in an effort to elevate the level of professionalism in the work environment.

Explanation: Everyone has experienced days where its difficult to not allow ones personal issues work their way into their professional environment. As the leader, it is your job to understand first and foremost that this is a common issue, so you must be consistent in how you deal with it.

The key here is to address the issue before it actually happens by setting clear expectations of conduct and professionalism for your workplace.

One creative manager went so far as to purchase a large golden coat hook. One morning he proudly stood by the shiny new coat hook as his team walked into the office one Monday morning.

Later, during his morning staff meeting, as if on cue, one of his employees asked what the golden coat hook was for.

The manager explained that he placed it there as a reminder to himself and a symbol to the team. He said, *"You see, when I come into the office each morning, I'm going to mentally place all my personal issues onto this coat hook. I'm going to leave them right there securely on the coat hook knowing full well that every night before I go home, I will be able to walk over and pick up right where I left off with those issues. My goal is to ensure I never allow my personal issues to get in the way of my professional roles and responsibilities."*

He then went on to say, *"and folks, let me be clear, this is my expectation for each one of you as well. As a team, we must commit to this because we owe it to one another to be at our best when we are at work. As a member of this team, we are all empowered to hold one another accountable for this expectation. So, rest assured, when you come in each morning, leave your personal issues on the hook where they will be safe and secure."* Lastly, a bit jokingly, he said, *"You have my word that they'll remain right there for you to pick up each night before you leave."*

With a smile and a nod, each team member understood the analogy and realized that his request was a perfectly legitimate expectation for the workplace.

The leader closed by shared this quote by Frank Tyger who once said, ***“Professionalism is knowing how to do it, when to do it, and doing it.”***

Team building questions around professionalism and other important topics can often be discussed and answered using short stories such as this one.

"A professional is a man who can do his job when he doesn't feel like it. An amateur is a man who can't do his job when he does feel like it."

- James Agate

What Have You Done For You Lately?

Purpose: To raise the awareness and the commitment of your team members by pointing out the rewards that come from raising one's personal expectations of yourself.

Explanation: Demanding more of yourself is a key trait of successful leaders. Michael Jordan credits his success to the fact that he has always demanded more of himself than any coach or teammate would ever reasonably demand.

Leaders who excel in business, sports, or other vocation - upon hearing the goals and objectives of their immediate supervisors - will instinctively start planning to produce and deliver even more to ensure excellence in every key measurement.

Sounds like a lot of work, right? Absolutely, however these leaders are passionate about wanting to learn and grow in their career, so the extra effort is something they actually enjoy. It's the challenge of making something better that drives them to excel.

"In one moment, in an instant with one clear decision, we each have the power to change our path and begin the process of creating an entirely new and exciting future."

The rewards for these overachievers can be outstanding. They are typically the first ones to be recognized and promoted to the next level of management. Their energy, ambition and quality of performance quickly establishes their credibility, and no one seems surprised when they are first to move upward in the organization.

Upon discussing the rewards of increased responsibility, commitment and accountability – direct each team member to make a list from the following team building

questions: *(Inform team members to be specific and honest, no one else will see their answers.)*

- List every new or innovative idea that you've offered to the team in the past 90 days.
- List fundamental skills that you have recently practiced in order to stay at the top of your game. What special training have you proactively registered for or taken without first being prompted by your supervisor?
- List your key objectives for the coming year. Explain what you've done already to plan for achieving/exceeding these goals.
- List your current year-end goals and explain if you are on target to meet those goals. Explain what you've done more of, less of, better or different to ensure success.

The above list of team building questions is provided to point out to team members that they are the only ones that can truly control their destiny. Their daily commitment to professionalism and performance in the workplace will direct the course of their career as well as impact (for better or worse) the success of the team.

Personal ownership, accountability and consistent professionalism are all leadership traits that propel highly ambitious and determined individuals to success. By leading your team through a quality discussion, and having them answer the above team building questions, you can lead your team to improved levels of performance.

Chapter 14: PROFITABILITY

Great leaders intuitively understand the value of using team building activities for their employees. This chapter focuses on the important subject of profitability to the organization and how team building can help to maximize results.



One of the most important keys to increased profitability is the leader's willingness and ability to get employees fully engaged and working together. Aligning your team with a clear vision of the company's goals will assist all team members in meeting the expectations of their role.

Leaders can assume that for the most part, team members want to do a good job. They want to meet the expectations and goals that are assigned to them. However, their ability to do so can be limited if their leader is not a good communicator of the company's vision or does not possess the team building skill necessary to keep everyone working well together.

To ensure team members fully understand the importance of profitability, great leaders will teach their team precisely how the organization makes money. Above and beyond meeting a sales goal, employees must have a solid understanding of action they can take to increase profits by maximizing revenues and decreasing expenses.

By teaching your people the ins and outs of how the company makes money, you increase their awareness of the bigger picture of the business, and that better prepares them for a future leadership position.

"No matter what business you are in, you cannot afford to overlook the importance of profitability. Profits are the lifeblood from which all your dreams can be achieved."

Leaders who create a team culture where employees track progress and feel a sense of professional responsibility for the financial results of the organization are more likely to see improved production and profitability.

Those leaders who are successful at creating a team of people who do not hesitate to call out opportunities to decrease financial waste, are helping to secure the future of the team and the organization.

Try These Team Building Activities

It's A New Day

Purpose: To lead your team toward a brand-new vision of what your team or organization will be going forward. Make today the first day of creating a better vision for your team or company.

Explanation: Provide each member of your team with three blank 3x5 cards.

On the first card, ask each team member to write 3-5 words that currently describe the shortfalls of your organization. Encourage them to be direct and honest. There are no right or wrong answers.

On the second card, instruct your team to write 3-5 words that best describe the organization that they hope to create. *(Encourage your team to think BIG and to not impose any restrictions. Adopt an ambitious vision.)*

On the third card, have your team members list 5 specific actions the team can take to ensure the company will be able to achieve the vision on the #2 card. Once everyone has completed their list, next ask them to list at least 2 actions that will commit to doing personally to achieve the vision.

The leader can now collect all of the cards and spend some time prior to the next meeting to analyze the feedback presented.

At the next meeting, the leader will provide a detailed summary of the #1 cards listing all of the shortfalls of the current organization.

In a powerful display, the leader will either burn or shred all of the #1 cards. As the cards are destroyed, she can state firmly, ***"Folks, as of today we can no longer be this organization. The rest of our day will be spent on determining how we are going to be a better, more productive and more profitable organization."***

The leader will then detail the vision that has been determined based upon the feedback from the #2 cards and will reward and recognize team players for their personal commitments to achieving these new goals.

Using team building activities for work issues like this one, leaders can quickly identify barriers as well as solutions from the people who are closest to the front lines, their people.

"There's nothing greater in the world than when somebody on the team does something good, and everybody gathers around to pat him on the back."

- Billy Martin

Profitable Questions

Purpose: To teach a sales team the power of asking qualifying questions in order to properly recommend products and services to their clients. By meeting more customer needs, they'll sell more products and services and as a result, increase profitability.

Explanation: Interviewing, or Profiling, your customers in order to recognize their true wants and needs is a must for any great sales person.

A successful sales person understands that by asking quality questions up front they can minimize the number of withdrawals, cancellations and returns of their products and services.

Customers cannot argue with the answers that they give you. Therefore, if you ask questions in a way that will get your customer to tell you what he needs, you will be able to more easily make the appropriate recommendation and receive fewer objections to your recommendations.

*"You can get everything you want in life,
if you will just help enough other people get what they want."
- Zig Ziglar*

Work with your team members to identify the best qualifying questions they can ask their customers in order to clearly understand their needs.

For example, if you work in the financial industry and you are looking for ways to help people with their money, you may ask several key questions that will immediately uncover the customer's needs. Some of these probing questions may include:

- What are your current savings goals?

- What are some future things that you need to be saving for? *I.e. Weddings, Retirement, Education, etc.*
- How do you currently budget your money?
- Has anyone recently reviewed your monthly expenditures to see how you might realize some additional savings?
- When was the last time you had your insurance product reviewed and updated?
- What rate are you currently paying on your car, your house, your boat, other?
- How many credit cards do you have and what rates are you paying on them?

These are just a handful of qualifying questions that you can use to uncover the potential financial needs of your clients. Work with your team using this team building exercise to create the best possible interview questions that will assist them in identifying client needs. The more needs you identify, the more products you will sell. (Ka-ching!)

As a team, revisit this exercise often. Over time work to perfect the questions and watch your team's production steadily increase.

Ask your team to share the most common objections they hear from customers, then discuss how best to response to each one. Script each response and have team members practice responding to each example. As you create each response, remember the best way to overcome objections or barriers is by taking additional time to further educate the customer.

Don't think for a minute that you are doing anything that is not in the best interest of the customer. Your customer will truly appreciate the time you take to ask qualifying questions and by taking an interest to identify their needs and make quality recommendations, you will quickly earn their trust and build credibility as an expert in your field.

Have fun using team building activities for work-related challenges. Your team will appreciate your efforts to improve teamwork and will enjoy the rewards of their increased results.

Chapter 15: PURPOSE & PRIDE

Leverage our free team building games and activities to improve your team member's sense of purpose and pride in what they do. By leading fun activities , leaders can build stronger connections among their team, and improve overall results.



Great leaders understand that creating a sense of purpose and pride among team members is a major ingredient for a winning team. They are constantly on the lookout for ways to harness and cultivate team pride in order to create a culture and tradition of success.

Team members want to be a part of something special; something meaningful; something bigger than any one individual. They want to know that their contributions make a significant difference in people's lives. By recognizing those contributions, leaders provide a sense of significance that all team members need (whether they admit it or not)

Our need to feel that we have an important purpose and that we add value to the world is a universal basic human need.

One of the best ways to promote purpose and pride in your team is to recognize key individuals who are raising the bar and making key contributions to the team. Our free team building games can help you make the most of these opportunities.

"Pride represents a personal commitment. It is an attitude which separates those who achieve excellence from those who accept mediocrity."

The late Og Mandino once said, *"I am here for a purpose and that purpose is to grow into a mountain, not to shrink to a grain of sand. Henceforth will I apply all my efforts to become the highest mountain of all and I will strain my potential until it cries for mercy."*

No different than a successful sports team, leaders can use free team building games and create team awards for their most successful players. These awards might include:

- **Most Improved** - awarded to the team member who has demonstrated an exceptional work ethic and has achieved incremental improvement in his or her key role.
- **Most Inspirational** - awarded to the team member who has inspired the team, the department, the organization or the community.
- **Most Spirited** - awarded to the team member who is an exceptionally positive force on the team. This person always arrives to work with a smile on her face, willing to lend a helping hand to anyone in need.
- **Top Performer** - awarded to those top performers who are driving the team sales and service results, setting the bar to achieve top performance on a consistent basis.

The possible award categories are endless and can include key elements of your business. Awards may also be considered for key contributing partners either inside or outside the organization.

Reward and recognition of any kind can be a driving force for your team, use our free team building games for additional ideas on how you can continually improve the skills of your team members and increase performance.

Try These Team Building Games & Exercises

Team Battle Cry

Purpose: To lead your team in creating a team slogan or "battle cry" that inspires a vision of unity and teamwork. This workshop is focused on getting people to visualize themselves as a lean and mean TEAM-machine! A team working together, maximizing their talents and achieving outstanding results. This is one of our most popular free team building games.

Explanation: Anyone in marketing knows that a slogan or catch phrase can be extremely important to a company's success.

For instance, when you hear the phrase "Just Do It", you think of athletes who are winners and associate that good feeling with Nike. When you hear "Quality is Job #1", you immediately think of a quality automobile that is tough and American made and you associate that with Ford.

Why not take this proven marketing technique and apply it to your own team? Think about how the perfect catch phrase or slogan could quickly benefit your team. What is your team all about? Even more importantly, how would your team like to be defined?

Let's think of some words that describe what your team might wish to become. Key words might include: *(Sales, Convenience, Service, Leadership, Teamwork, Business Planning, Quality, Wealth Building, Freedom, Conservation or Volunteerism, etc.)*

Whatever key words or phrases your team chooses, help them to identify their slogan in no more than 5 words. Here is a real example of how one team created their TEAM BATTLE CRY.

In this team building game, the group consisted of a region manager and five district managers that had 20 direct reports, so about 200 employees in the entire region.

The management team felt that for them to succeed, it would require all 200+ employees to work together each and every day. After a lot of discussion, they identified their team with the following phrase, or battle cry:

"Our Winning Way: Everyone, Everyday!"

By leading your team through the process of defining what they want to stand for and creating a team slogan that they can be proud of, you are helping the team to create a stronger sense of purpose and identify. This is a pretty cool result coming directly from simple free team building games and activities, so take the time to plan ahead of time to ensure your team comes up with a great outcome.

Here are a few ways in which the leader shared the team's vision with their business partners, peers and customers:

- Formally introduced their "team battle cry" to all employees via teleconference, or rally
- Provided each employee with an item or gift with the battle cry imprinted, so each person knew they belonged to a team with an important purpose
- All employees included the phrase on their signature line with every email they send
- All formal communications included the battle cry (fax cover page, memos, letters, voice mail messages, business cards, etc.)
- Employees were asked to repeat the slogan when answering the phone, and often at meetings the phrase is used repeatedly to ensure team activities support their core mission

So, what is your team's purpose? How does the team define itself? Have fun finding out using our free team building games and exercises.

"Generosity is giving more than you can,
and pride is taking less than you need."

- Kahlil Gibran

Push - Pull

Purpose: This lesson is focused on getting people to think in terms of leadership. Create increased purpose and pride in your team by empowering them with clearly defined leadership expectations. When helping a co-worker or a customer, employees must understand their role as a leader.

Explanation: Introduction of the exercise is to simply share a meaningful story of how you have experienced change in your life: (feel free to create your own similar story to support the exercise, but here's one I've often used)

Like many who come from a small town, I was amazed at the number of homeless transients who made their home on the campus of the university I attended.

At first, the idea of having to walk past these individuals was a bit scary. I was not accustomed to being solicited for money or "spare change". However, after a few weeks of walking to class and regularly being asked for "a quarter for a cup of coffee", the experience quickly became routine.

In fact, after a while, if I didn't see one of the regular panhandlers for a period of time, I would wonder where he was keeping himself.

After a brief period, the transients became a small part of my environment; part of my daily experience of college life. Over time I got to know some of them by name. One of the most notable transients was a man who went by the name, Uncle Ben. Uncle Ben could often be seen dragging a short rope behind him as he walked down the street.

Uncle Ben would look back at the end of the rope as he walked, and say - "come on now, keep up." One might think by watching Uncle Ben that he was delusional and under the assumption that he had a dog tied to the end of his rope.

Very often someone would witness this behavior as Uncle Ben approached, and they would ask simply, "Why are you pulling that rope?"

"You can't give people pride, but you can help to create an environment that makes people realize we are all better together than standing all alone."

(At this point, give team members a short piece of string and ask them to experiment with the "rope". Pull it back and forth along the table. Then ask them to guess as to what Uncle Ben's response is going to be. Then continue the story.)

Again, very often someone would witness the behavior as Uncle Ben approached, and they would ask, "Why are you pulling that rope?"

Uncle Ben would quickly reply, "Well have you ever tried PUSHING a rope, it doesn't work very well." This always made Uncle Ben holler in laughter as he kept walking past the person who inquired. You must give Uncle Ben credit. Indeed, you can't push a rope very effectively.

In conclusion, make this strong point to your team: By "pulling" the rope, it will follow you anywhere. Try to "push" it, and the rope resists you and goes nowhere at all. The same can be said for the art of leadership and teamwork.

Leadership is the ability to make your people want to follow you. They do that when they see that you are willing to work alongside them and take a vested interest in their success. People will follow you if they feel you know where you are taking them. If they feel you have integrity and truly care about their success.

We must each pull our co-workers along with us. We must pull our customers toward us. Otherwise, we run the risk of pushing them away.

Meaningful stories like this one can serve as free team building games and exercises that provide valuable insights to your team. After you've told your story, make a game out of it by challenging your team members to submit their own story that also provides a meaningful leadership lesson. At your next team meeting ask folks to share their stories and provide recognition to those who participate.

More Team Building Games

Leaders can easily use free team building games such as Jeopardy, Concentration, Hang Man, Family Feud or others to create a fun training environment.

Jeopardy is one of our free team building games that is provided in more detail [here](#).

Chapter 16: RESULTS & PERFORMANCE

Success is measured by results. High performance is fueled by strong teams. Leverage our innovative team building ideas to improve performance with minimal prep time. In this chapter we focus on the topic of how leaders can achieve better results through improved team performance.



The role and responsibility of leadership is one that provides you with a unique opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of others.

While the key role of leadership is to drive results and maximize profitability, the people element of the equation must always remain at the very top of the leader's priority list.

The people you lead have been entrusted in your care. It's your responsibility to make sure they have every chance to be successful while under your supervision. Moreover, great leaders take pride in making sure their people are better prepared for the next step in their career when they leave the team than when they started.

Your team members are counting on you to advocate on their behalf when you can, and to hold them accountable when necessary. If the leader is only concerned with the bottom line vs the well-being of the front line, that person is not an effective leader.

"If you make a habit of practicing as if you are the worst, you will perform as if you are the best."

In today's high-pressure sales environment, it's easy to sometimes lose sight of the importance of taking care of our team members.

With so many increased expectations being placed on employees, it's no wonder why leaders have a harder time staying connected with their team members. But those not a good excuse because simple tools are available to aid in your efforts. Our office team building exercises can help.

The art of leadership is such a complex issue, we hope that you will use one of our office team building exercises to help your team stay focused, connected and improve results.

Try These Office Team Building Exercises

Visualize Exercise

Purpose: Office team building exercises like this will get your people perceiving challenging tasks, projects or goals more positively. Perception often dictates reality so it's imperative that your team begins every project with a positive outlook.

Explanation: Make the point to your team that they have the power to perceive virtually all things either from a positive or negative perspective.

Lead a discussion asking attendees to offer up negative circumstances resulting from a tragedy. For example, consider the crash of the Space Shuttle Columbia. (Creating this "list of negatives" will come easily for the participants given the nature of the disaster. Negative examples might include: The loss of life, the potential effects for radiation on the ground, the devastating blow to the space program, the children and families affected by the loss of loved ones, etc.)

In the interest of time, make the list no longer than 8-10 items.

Next, ask the group to come up with a list of positive outcomes from this experience. (This will be harder for the group because it is difficult to voice optimism when talking about such a tragedy, even more so if it's a personal tragedy. You can offer up a few of your own ideas to get people started thinking from a different point of view.

For instance, some positive outcomes may include:

1. The space program will learn from this disaster and become even safer for future flights - thus saving countless lives.
2. The nation came together from the crisis which was good for the solidarity of our country.
3. The family members will remember their deceased as American Heroes and throughout history their family will take pride in his/her commitment to space exploration.
4. The focus on the tragedy from the national media will inspire a new generation of space enthusiasts. Perhaps a child who will become the greatest space explorer of all time.

Now challenge your team to come up with 5 additional positive outcomes. You will be surprised now by their creativity and renewed vision for what is possible.

Lastly, go through the exact same exercise. This time however, choose the following topic appropriate to your own business: **Revising our results and performance goals UP by an additional 15%.**

After going through the negatives first (limit the list to 5 items), then go through the positives, and allow your team to have a lengthy discussion on how this 15% production increase will be achieved. In effect, let them create a mini action plan.

Once the group has agreed on how to increase the production by 15% you can ever-so-gently inform them that the goals did not just go up by 15%. However, now that we have a plan, don't you think we should use it? :-)

Have fun with office team building exercises such as this one. Be creative and come up with more scenarios if time allows. It shows people you are a leader with vision and that you understand the power of perception and personal belief in what is possible.

"When the leadership is right, and the time is right,
the people can always be counted upon to follow –
to the end and at all costs."

- Harold J. Seymour

Clear A Path For Progress

Purpose: Use office team building exercises to help your team members identify their limiting beliefs and feelings. Then explain how those beliefs and feelings directly impact (positively or negatively) their bottom-line results.

Explanation: What's holding your team back from experiencing **Breakout Performance**? Old beliefs/Personal Insecurities (aka: conceptual barriers)?

Before we proceed, keep the following quote in mind - it's a powerful reminder of why it is so important to complete sales management activities and invest time in office team building exercises.

*"Successful people DO, what unsuccessful people are not willing to do." -
Unknown*

Here are the Four Steps for Overcoming Old Beliefs/Conceptual Barriers:

Step One - Uncover Negative Self-Talk Ask the employee to tell you what they least enjoy about each step of the sales management process. Follow up by asking how that

aspect of the process makes them feel. For example:

- Prospecting/Cold Calling - **(feels like I am intruding)**
- Asking for the Business - **(feels like I am being pushy)**
- Cross-Selling/Up-Selling - **(feels like I am taking advantage)**
- Assumptive Closing - **(feels like I am being presumptuous)**

Step Two - Identify Beliefs that are the root source of negative feelings toward sales management practices Go back to our prior examples of Old Beliefs that get in the way of our progress in the sales management process:

- Don't talk to strangers
- It is impolite to talk about money
- Never interrupt important people
- Wait to be asked

Help the employee understand and be aware of why it is that they may feel the way they do. Employees should understand that they feel the way they do for a reason. They were taught these things from their parents and society at large from the time they could walk.

Once they understand this it can be much easier for them to make a decision to overcome their old belief(s).

Step Three - Turn Limiting Beliefs into Unlimited Possibility! Illustrate the following to your employees so they can clearly see how their beliefs and feelings ultimately "pre-determine" their outcome.

On one hand:

Positive Beliefs » Positive Feelings » Actions » Positive Results

And on the other hand:

Limiting Beliefs » Negative Feelings » Inaction » Negative Results

So based on the preceding, it's obvious which hand offers the most value - correct?

Step Four - CHOOSE a path together! Obviously, if an employee is unwilling to work to overcome conceptual barriers, then you should agree that a sales position is not the right fit.

*"Always you must expect the best of yourself,
and then do what is necessary to make it a reality."*

You should either find a more suitable role for the person or part ways, so he/she may pursue a more rewarding opportunity somewhere else. Let's assume however that the employee seeks to overcome their conceptual barriers and is willing to take ownership of a plan for improvement.

As the leader, you have an important role to play in your team members overcoming their limiting beliefs. You are responsible for supporting the employee in three key areas, which include:

- **TEACH** - lead by example, reinforce positive actions and behaviors
- **COACH** - help to improve technique, debrief progress, track results, ensure employee stays on task
- **EXPECT** - inspect what you expect, hold yourself and your employee accountable for continued improvement and increased results

In conclusion, ask yourself the following question. Can you name one person who is a top performer that:

- Believed they wouldn't be successful?
- Feels they shouldn't be successful?
- Does not take the actions necessary for them to become successful?

The answer to each question is "Of course not", right?

So, by default we must agree that for anyone to be successful, he/she must understand what is holding him or her back. This person must be willing to work to overcome obstacles and choose to proactively follow a corrective action plan.

Finally, they must "execute" the plan.

By taking your team through insightful office team building exercises like this, they will build new beliefs that will enable them to discard those old and tired, limiting beliefs.

Chapter 17: RETENTION

Retention of quality people is a continuous challenge for leaders. Use our team building activities to build strong connections among team members.



People don't quit companies, they quit their supervisor. Great leaders know that employee retention is key to your team's success so it's critical that you invest time in your people. If you fail to do this, it's only a matter of time before you lose your top people to the competition.

It's important to take a balanced approach when coaching team members. On one hand there are important goals to meet and you must hold team members accountable for producing quality results on a consistent basis. However, there is a personal side that must also be nurtured to maintain a strong sense of loyalty and trust.

Your people need to know that you have their best interests at heart; that you have a personal stake in their future success; and when personal issues arise you do what you can within reason to support that individual as they work through the issue.

While it's not appropriate for a leader to get overly involved in the personal lives of team members, it is important to help people come up with balanced solutions when personal issues get in the way of professional responsibilities.

"When you have balance in your life, work becomes an entirely different experience. There is a passion that moves you to a whole new level of fulfillment and gratitude, and that's when you can do your best... for yourself and for others."
- Cara Delevingne

The team building exercise examples provided in this chapter help leaders to increase employee retention in the workplace. As you read these team building ideas, consider how you can leverage each exercise to create a stronger connection among your team.

As a leader, you hold the power and the responsibility to look after your team. In the words of Woodrow Wilson... *"You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand."*

Leadership involves teaching your people about the bigger picture; about how to properly respond to life's challenges and how to recognize how to make good quality choices in when faced with unexpected challenges. Read each team building exercise below and consider introducing an activity to your team as your next staff meeting.

Try These Team Building Exercises

Momentum for Explosive Growth

Purpose: This is a great team building example that is fun and memorable for your entire time. Demonstrate the power of working together as a team and how teamwork creates momentum that can take the team to new heights at a faster rate of speed.

Explanation: Most folks know that once you experience **momentum** toward reaching a goal, the outcome seems inevitable. The process quickly becomes more fun, and with a stronger sense of confidence life in general feels more rewarding.

This fun team building exercise example will help you illustrate to your team the power of momentum. You will more easily gain buy-in to the notion that your team can achieve much more together than anyone can achieve individually. Here is the exercise:

Take four(4) large water bottles filled with water. Identify two (2) team members and have them compete to find out who can pour out the entire contents of their bottle the fastest. Assign a timer for each participant. When finished, log their respective times and ask the team to discuss ways to increase the effectiveness of pouring out the contents more quickly.

Then with the two remaining bottles, have another volunteer pour against you. (Since you are leader and it's your exercise, you get the inside scoop on how you are sure to win... watch this)

Now if one of your team members suggests swirling the liquid, let that person take your place in the 2nd round. It doesn't matter who wins, what matters is how they win. Let that individual shine with their winning idea.

Your other volunteer can try out the best idea that was created, so long the idea doesn't support cheating or damaging the bottle in any way.

As the above video illustrates, right as you start pouring out your bottle, quickly swirl the liquid in the bottle and you will find that with MOMENTUM, your bottle will pour the liquid out twice as fast as the one without momentum.

The lesson here is that by working together as a team, with everyone moving in the same direction, the team gains momentum and is better positioned to complete tasks more quickly and produce greater results.

Later, as you work with your individual team members, remind them about the power of creating momentum in their career planning by being proactive in learning new skills and expanding their knowledge base. This is a great way to create loyalty, employee satisfaction and team member retention.

"Just as your car runs more smoothly and requires less energy to go faster and farther when the wheels are in perfect alignment, you perform better when your thoughts, feelings, emotions, goals, and values are in balance."

- Brian Tracy

Life Goal Planning

Purpose: A fun team building exercise example that leaders can use in their meetings to retain team members. Encourage your employees to take time to appreciate what they've accomplished and to invest time to properly plan for their future.

Explanation: Leaders provide valuable insights to their team by encouraging them to take a step back from time to time to assess their own reality. It's so easy to forget to take stock in what the individual and the team has achieved over the past year when there is so much going on. It's important for leaders to take the time to remind their people of what's been accomplished and to ensure key contributors are recognized and feel good about those important achievements.

Leaders must be sure to highlight what's been achieved and create a moment for their team to soak in the rewards of feeling valued for what they do. Moreover, you can encourage your team members to take a moment to reflect on what's important to them in their personal lives, and to just "be grateful" for all that we have, all those whom we love, and for all the wondering opportunities that the future holds.

*"All the money in the world by itself will never make you happy.
It is the successful balance of personal achievements and
quality relationships that seem to do the trick."*

As most of us come to work each day, we sit down and plan our day. We then set out to complete and check off our "to-do" lists. However, how often do we sit down and purposefully plan our work, let alone our life?

Leaders should remind their team members to ask the following three questions to ensure they fully leverage their time and resources.

1. What is the business outcome(s) that I must achieve in order for this day/month/year to be successful and fulfilling?
2. Why is this goal important to me?
3. What specific steps must I take to achieve the outcome(s)?

Now ask your team members to apply the preceding questions to each of the following LIFE categories: (Note: These are the same categories used in our free [Life Balance - Success Wheel](#) tool, so consider using that tool when you present this to your team.)

- Family
- Financial
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Professional

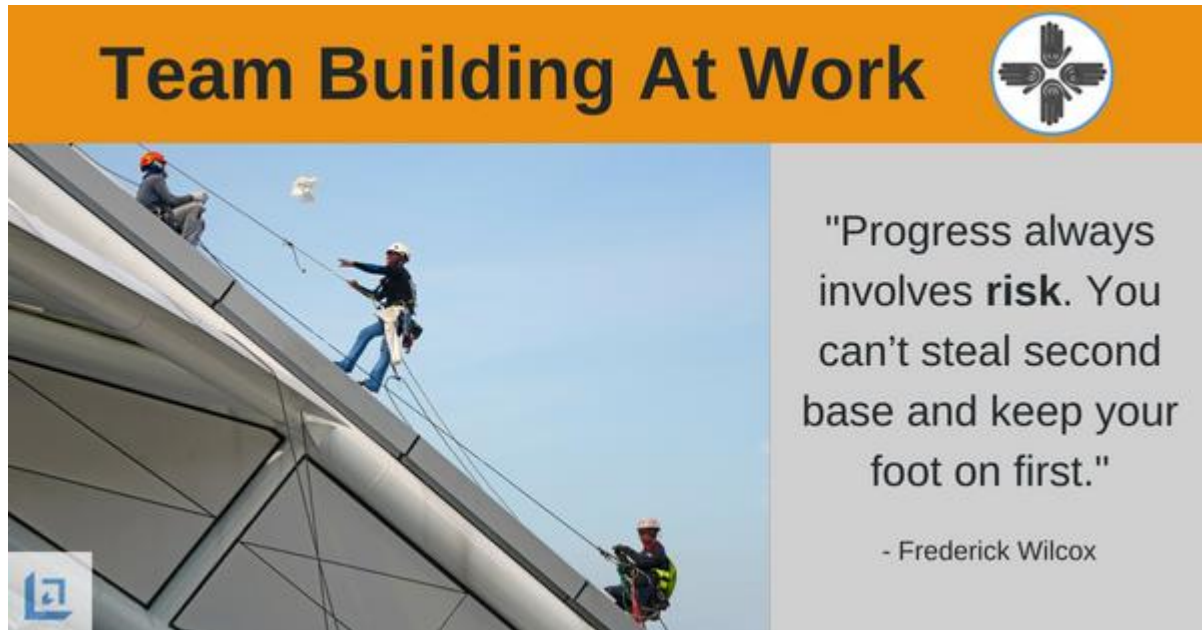
Key message for this exercise: **Take the time to plan your life, not just your day.**

By going through the above team building exercises, your people will quickly realize how effective (or ineffective) they've been at owning their outcomes.

There is another tremendous benefit you receive by taking your team through this activity. Your people will see that you are trying to add value to their life, both personally and professionally. That effort goes a long way towards gaining employee's loyalty and trust - and that is directly tied to increased employee retention.

Chapter 18: RISK TAKING

The following team building examples focus on how leaders can teach their team how to make decisions will minimizing risk.



Leaders can take important steps to limit risk when they increase efforts to educate and prepare their team for the challenges they will face. It's like how you can best eliminate stress - by being well prepared.

The fact is that you cannot 100% eliminate risk in business, but you can take steps to minimize the risk. Your goal should be to teach your team members how to walk and live in that special "zone" where their anxieties are low because they know they have the tools they need, and they are well prepared to tackle the challenges in front of them.

Okay, let's get more specific about how to live in the "leadership zone" using team building examples and activities with your team.

First, identify what high-leverage activities you need to be putting your time and energy towards in order to achieve the results you seek. These high-leverage activities must take up the bulk of your time so that you can experience the ultimate rewards. Our team building examples below will help you with this exercise.

You must instinctively shun unnecessary email, paperwork and any other "low-result activities" that can easily be addressed by others - leaving yourself and your team free to maximize the limited time you have on the activities that truly matter the most.

*"Progress always involves taking well calculated risk.
You'll never go forward staying right where you are. So, get moving!"*

The following activities are team building examples of "zone activities"; where the rubber meets the proverbial road: I.e., making prospect calls, developing new referral sources, marketing your product effectively, ensuring quality delivery of customer service, planning for expansion of your business, etc.

The preceding examples of high-leverage activities are what makes the difference in the level of growth and success that you experience. These kinds of focused activities take a salesperson and/or organization from simply being good, to truly being great. Focus on these key areas and you immediately limit your risk of failing or plodding along in mediocrity.

Use our team building examples and ideas to assist your team achieve greater results with less risk.

Try These Team Building Activities

No More Risky Business

Purpose: To quickly identify and overcome the obstacles and objections before they happen to minimize risk and increase sales results.

Explanation: A customer's objection is the one major risk to closing the sale. Imagine if you possessed an arsenal of ideas that would quickly overcome any customer objection - more sales, right?

Here is a great opportunity to educate your team members using a powerful Objection Clinic. Using this exercise, you will assist your team in quickly identifying and overcoming the obstacles that are hindering their performance.

Objection Clinic: Instructions for Overcoming Customer Objections:

1. Lead the group to quickly list their top, most common, customer objections. Use a chalkboard or flip chart so everyone can see the entire list. Make the list as long as necessary to capture the toughest and most common objections your team hears from their prospective clients. Once the list is complete, work with the team to quickly categorize the objections as many items on the list will be similar and you can use the same response to address objections that are closely related.
2. Point out to your team that each customer objection represents the fact that the customer who has this objection does not understand the total benefit of your product or service. Make the following points: 1. A good sales person knows their job is to educate the customer to make the best decision 2. Highly ethical sales people truly believe in their own product.

3. Break your team into 2-3 equal work groups. Assign each group to come up with the perfect "Response", to each customer objection. Make the point that no one knows what the best response is more than the experts who sell the product. Your team members are the experts, and they do know the perfect response. They just haven't yet taken the time to craft it, but now is the time.
4. Ask each group to share with the rest of the team their responses. Discuss each response briefly to ensure it's the very best. Let your team be the final judge - after all, they are the people who will be using this information to overcome sales objections.

After the workshop is complete, provide each team member with a full list of their perfect responses for overcoming customer objections.

Not only will you be surprised by the true knowledge of your sales team, they will look to you as a good leader. They will see you as an effective leader who brought them all together for helping them solve the problems that are keeping them from being their best. You will assist them in minimizing their risk of failure by making sure they are well prepared.

Over the next week, make a point of supporting your team members by quizzing them on their responses. Throw out a customer objection from time to time and ask them "How would you respond to that?"

The best team building examples and exercises will continue after the initial workshop, so encourage team members to continue to pop-quiz each other. The more they practice, the better armed they will be. Repetition is the key to perfecting their responses and overcoming customer objections. Let them know that you would rather they not get it right in front of you, rather than in front of a prospective customer and lose out on the sale.

"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with all that you can."

- John Wooden

Magic Time

Purpose: To help team members to identify the high-leverage activities that will lead to maximum results and therefore limit their risk of losing out on potential sales opportunities.

Explanation: Many folks will remember one of our most famous and beloved actors - Jack Lemmon. Jack Lemmon was special for many reasons, but one thing about him that most people aren't aware of is that he had a unique ritual he used to put himself into creative state that he referred to as the "magic zone".

As with many actors, what you see on the screen can be surprisingly different than what you might experience if you meet that person on the street. Their talent lies in their ability to persuade an audience to believe they are - well, whatever or whomever they want you to believe they are.

*"You'll always miss 100% of the shots you don't take."
- Wayne Gretzky*

Immediately before he walked on stage or came out of his trailer onto a movie set, Jake Lemmon would purposefully stop - close his eyes, take a deep breath, and say out loud (but softly under his breath) - **"It's Magic Time"**

Throughout his entire career he conducted this ritual as a way of putting himself in a mental state in order to perform as his best, to be in the "magic zone".

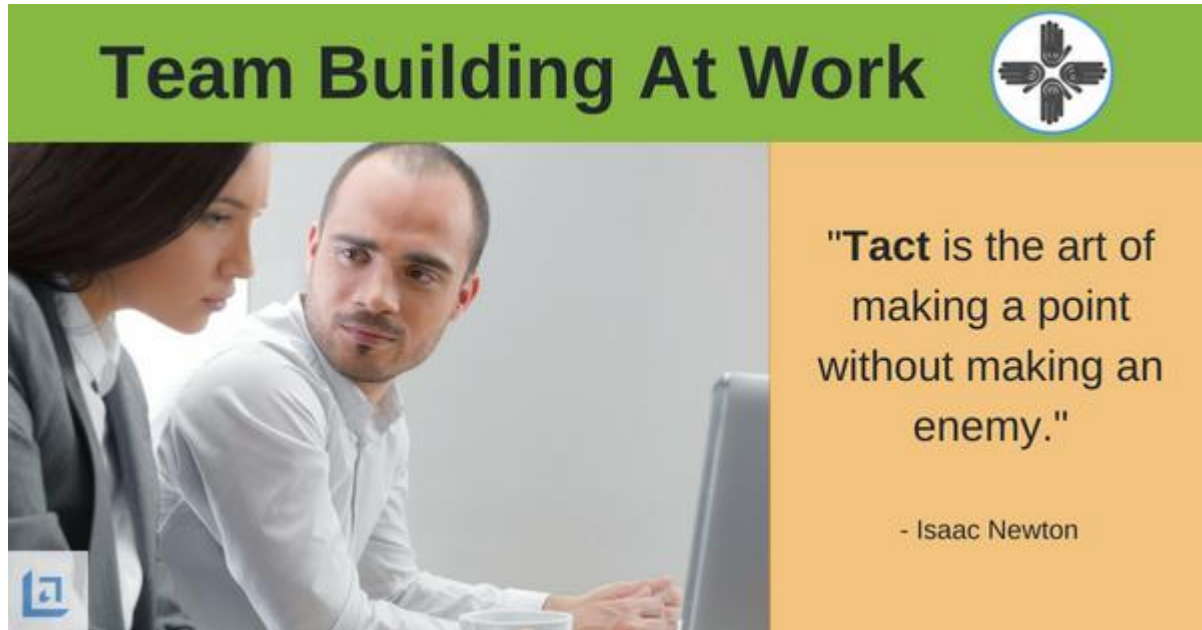
During your next staff meeting, take the time to share the concept of "the magic zone". Consider leading your team through the following exercise so they too will experience the ultimate rewards of living in the zone.

- On a flip chart, identify 5-10 high-leverage activities, that if done continually will lead to maximum results. Top performers are highly disciplined in their sales activities, and because they are successful they spend more time in the magic zone. List those activities that if done repeatedly will guarantee in higher performance.
- List out on a separate piece of flip chart paper all the potential **benefits of living in the zone** and being a top performer. I.e., more money, security and a feeling of being in control, greater fulfillment, increased joy, increased market share, improved customer and employee retention, lower training costs, earlier retirement, etc. Make the list as long as possible.
- When the two lists are complete, place the two lists side by side. Point to the "benefits" list and say to your team, "Folks, this is our motivation. We deserve all these things and more, and for us to experience these rewards we must (*point to the high-leverage activity list*) live here. This is where the rubber meets the road, and these are the activities that will make the difference in our results and in our lives."

This is one of our most popular team building examples and we encourage you to use it to help your team limit their risk and realize maximum success by finding their magic zone.

Chapter 19: TACT & DIPLOMACY

Leaders must teach and coach their team members on a variety of professional topics. In this chapter we'll discuss the benefits of using tact and diplomacy in the workplace.



Some people seem to be able to successfully navigate their way through the most difficult kinds of discussions imaginable. These folks understand that it's truly not what you say, but how you go about saying it, that gets that person to agree with what want.

They are especially skilled at finding ways to negotiate win-win solutions that quickly diffuse a potentially difficult conversation.

Leaders who can listen closely will key in on the root cause of frustration and quickly take ownership of how they can eliminate the "spur" that is stuck in the person's proverbial saddle.

Leaders who use tact and diplomacy in their communications earn trust and credibility by their team, co-workers and supervisors. They become known as well polished and thoughtful leader.

"Leaders who are tactful and use diplomacy effectively are almost always very strong listeners."

Using tact and diplomacy means taking into consideration a person's feelings when communicating bad news.

For example, assume you have a team member who just finished making a presentation to an important customer. In your mind it was clear the presentation was not well prepared. As soon as the meeting is over your team member asks you how you think it went? The leader can respond a couple different ways:

1. **Without Tact:** "I think it was clear that you did not prepare well for the meeting and I am disappointed in your presentation."
2. **With Tact:** "I know you want to do a great job, and I think the presentation went well in several areas. There are a couple things that I would like to work with you on to fine-tune the presentation. However, before I give you specifics, how do you think you did, and in hindsight, what if anything would you have done differently?"

While it's true that using tact can take a bit more time, the outcome pays much greater dividends than simply being harsh and running the risk of your people feeling demoralized. Use the following free team building exercises to teach people the art of using tact and diplomacy.

Try These Team Building Exercises

Power of Suggestion

Purpose: Using this free team building exercise, teach your team about the power of suggestion and the importance of thoughtfully choosing the words they use. Their words carry great influence on co-workers and their customers, so it is important they understand their responsibility of using words that are tactful and diplomatic.

Explanation: Leaders can often underestimate the impact (both positive and negative) that their words can have on a group or an individual.

Share with your team the following excerpt that was originally published in 1911 by Dr. Orison Swett Marden. This excerpt illustrates the fact that our words can have significant influence on those we lead, or those whom we meet.

The Power of Suggestion

We little realize how much suggestion has to do with health. In innumerable instances people have been made seriously ill, sometimes fatally so, by others telling them how badly they looked, or suggesting that they exhibit symptoms associated with a dreaded disease.

A prominent New York businessman recently told me of an experiment that the friends of a robust young man made upon him.

It was arranged that beginning in the morning, each one should tell him when he came to work, that he was not looking well. They did this subtly, in a way that would not make the man suspicious.

At one o'clock this vigorous young man had been so influenced by the suggestion, he quit work and went home ill - thoroughly convinced he must be sick.

To be sure, we are under the influence of suggestion every moment of our waking lives. Everything we see, hear, feel, is a suggestion, which produces a result corresponding to its own nature. Its subtle power seems to reach and affect the very springs of life.

It is almost impossible for a patient to get well while people are constantly reminding him how ill he looks.

What people need is encouragement, uplift and hope!

Instead of telling a friend in trouble that you feel sorry for him, try to pull him and help to restore his energy and reserves. Help the friend picture his ideal image, his better self.

The suggestion that comes from an enthusiastic and optimistic person can move mountains. Many a life has been stirred and inspired by only a few moments of positive conversation.

Many men and women have made their place in history, largely because their ambition was aroused by suggestion: some book or some individual who gave them the first glimpse of their possibility and potential and enabled them to feel for the first time a thrill of the power within them.

As leaders, we can identify people throughout our careers that have helped us along our journey.

As this free team building exercise suggests, we need to take the extra step each day to provide team members with words of encouragement and support. If you have an employee who is still not quite producing to the level you expect, recognize that employee for the effort they are putting forth and for any incremental improvement, before pointing out any shortfall.

A balanced message and encouraging words can provide powerful motivation. Because your employees look to you for leadership. Understand that your words have the potential to either inspire the heart or dash the dreams of those who seek your approval.

Use the preceding excerpt to lead a discussion with your team about how each team member is responsible for lifting the team up via their choice of words in the workplace. This free team building exercise can be of tremendous benefit for improving workplace moral.

Lead your team in creating a list of words that are not acceptable in your workplace. Words such as "can't" and "won't".

The final step in this free team building exercise is to have team members hold one another accountable for spending each day approaching new tasks with optimism versus doubt or fear.

"You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can't get them across, your ideas won't get you anywhere."

- Lee Iacocca

Are You Determined?

Purpose: To teach your team about how simply re-phrasing a question can gain an entirely different response or reaction. Tact and diplomacy depends upon your ability to choose quality questions.

Explanation: In business, the word *commitment* is often overused and has become somewhat of a cliché.

In your next team meeting, instead of asking for every team member's commitment, ask "***What are you determined to accomplish?***"

Simply by re-phrasing an over-used question you can shake things up and arouse your team's curiosity.

Now that you have their attention, take your team through the following steps:

- Identify one key activity or end-result that each person is determined to accomplish. Be specific.
- Ask why this activity is important. What is the ultimate purpose?
- Ask if they are certain the task is achievable. Make sure the goal is realistic. If their stated goal is too broad, help to break it down into smaller tasks that can be effectively tracked and managed.
- Get clear on how their success will be measured. How will each team member know if their determination has paid off?
- Ensure that a time for completion is stated clearly. By end of week, end of month, etc.

"It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt."

- Mark Twain

Does the above process sound familiar? Hopefully it does - you have just walked your team through setting **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time Sensitive) **goals**.

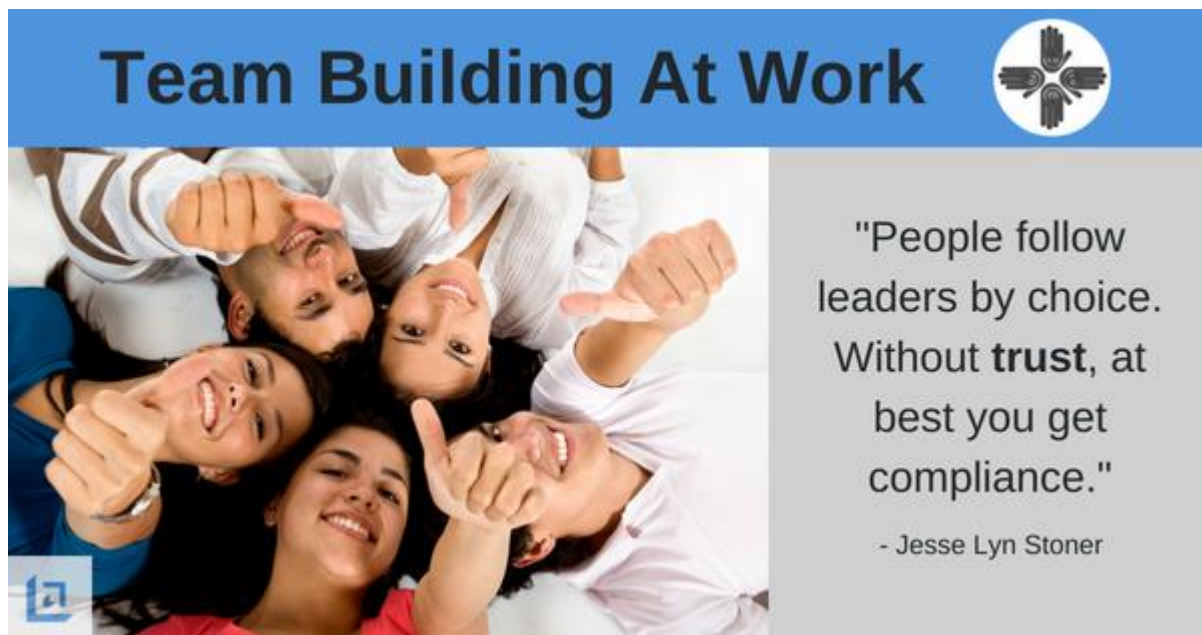
The key point here is that you did this in a new and creative way that got your team thinking differently.

Instead of mindlessly stating their 'tried and true' weekly commitment - they went a little deeper and considered more thoroughly their plan for accomplishment.

Go ahead and pat yourself on the back. By adopting our free team building exercises, you're sharing valuable tools and leadership lessons with your team members.

Chapter 20: TRUST & RAPPORT

Take advantage of team building activities and strategies that help build trust and rapport among your team and with your customers. Mutual trust consists of a shared belief between team members that they have each other's best interests at heart, and they can depend on one another to do their utmost to achieve a common purpose.



Leaders can do a lot to provide opportunities for team members to engage with each other and to get to know one another better. For example, taking your team to an event outside the normal workplace helps to break down barriers as people will feel more comfortable and connect on a more personal level.

Your team building lesson planning should include activities that encourage team members to share more about themselves such as their family background and outside interests. Doing so allows team members to feel more connected, which makes it easy to build trust and rapport.

The tighter the connection between employees, the stronger their commitment will be to help each other succeed, which means the team is likely to achieve better results.

*"To be persuasive, we must be believable; to be believable, we must be credible; to be credible, we must be truthful."
- Edward R. Murrow*

Team relationships that are based on mutual trust and respect are more sustainable in a highly competitive working environment.

Leaders that do not take the time to create and nurture trust among team members are being short sighted and putting the success of their team at an increased risk. Great teams are great because of that trust, not despite it.

Trust between team members and throughout an organization, will always be at the core of their ability to outperform their competition. We encourage you to use these team building lesson plans and exercises to increase and improve trust and rapport within your team.

Try These Team Building Activities

Who Are We?

Purpose: Use this team building lesson plan as a blue print for how a leader can build trust and rapport by clearly communicating the importance of Leadership, Teamwork and Customer Service. Some items are more applicable to non-leadership roles, and others are perfect for a team of middle and lower level managers.

Explanation: Use the following team building lesson plan as talking points for your next staff meeting. These notes contain key bullet points for multiple areas of leadership, so you may even want to use these key talking points over several team meetings.

Leadership

- **Teach/Coach/Expect** - talk about the importance for all managers to be hands-on in teaching and coaching employees - only then can you justify holding employees accountable to meet all expectations. **Teaching** happens in the classroom. (*Here what I want you to do.*) **Coaching** takes place afterwards in the field (Observe team members doing what you want them to do and working with them until you confirm they know how to do it.) **Expecting** should only happen after you've taught a team member what to do and watched them do it. You've done your part. Now it's a choice on the part of the employee. *Read more about the Teach/Coach/Expect model in this [leadership article](#).*
- **Motivation** - It's a personal choice every employee makes daily when they walk in the door. (*Remember the [Golden Coat Hook](#) exercise?*) It's not the leader's responsibility to motivate employees, but it is your responsibility to hire self-motivated individuals and then provide a working environment that supports and inspires employees to want to consistently improve their skills and continually add value to the team and the organization.
- **Lead A Growth Environment** - every 90 days the quarterly report comes out and the business is expected to grow. This means that every team member must also be on a growth path. Businesses either grow, or eventually they die. We will grow by anticipating and meeting our customer's needs, improving current relationships and developing new business. Continue to review and revise actions plans to support improved results. (*Our [Master Action Plan](#) tool can be of great help in this exercise.*)

Teamwork

- **Definition of "FUN"** - Fun in our organization is defined as when we achieve our goals after working extremely hard. The thrill of victory is only a thrill if the prize is hard-fought. When we are creative in finding solutions, plan appropriately and then put forth monumental effort toward achieving our vision - the feeling we then experience is whole lot of FUN! (Refer to the chapter on **Fun** for [more details](#))
- **Energy/Enthusiasm > Experience** - While experience is certainly valued in every company, it's been proven that individuals who are highly energetic and enthusiastic can more quickly gain experience and do a phenomenal job. To the contrary however, experienced individuals who do not possess the energy and enthusiasm for their job, should go somewhere else to work. Those without a passion for their work should not be hired in the first place. (Refer to the chapter on **Enthusiasm** for [more details](#).)

Customer Service

- **Every Employee Takes It Personal** - When a customer leaves to do business with a competitor, you should take it personal. Taking it personal means, you care. Taking it personal means, you are disturbed enough to change what you are doing so that next time you will win the business. Taking it personal ensures you get your team and yourself to the top of the performance rankings and stay on top. How "disturbed" are you when you lose a good employee? By continuous leading your people through team building lesson plans and activities, you'll decrease the risk of losing your best people.
- **We Have The Advantage!** - This is a great message for leaders to let their team know how much you value and appreciate them. How would you feel if you heard the following from your supervisor? *"We have the secret weapon. We have something that none of our competitors can claim to possess. We have "that which makes the big difference". What is it you say? Simple, we have you, which is a powerful competitive advantage. YOU are the key to the success of this organization. YOU make the difference with each customer interaction. YOU are my secret weapon - and I truly value and appreciate all that you do."*

The bullet points provided above are key messages that you can use in future meetings. These messages are powerful in helping to build trust and rapport with your team. Use these messages to help create a team building lesson plan for success.

"Trust men and they will be true to you: treat them greatly and they will show themselves great."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

People Power!

Purpose: To build trust and rapport among team members by providing a team building lesson plan exercise that will open dialogue and build strong working relationships.

Explanation: To build added trust and rapport, have each of your team members take a sheet of paper and write down the following facts:

1. List three words that they feel best describes their professional talents. *(Try not to give away your job description or you will be easily identified.)*
2. List any skill or talent that you possess that no one in the workplace is currently aware of.
3. Name 2-3 things that you aspire to learn or experience during your lifetime. ie. Bucket list

The leader will collect all the sheets, mix them up, and post them on the wall. The leader must assign a number to each of the sheets as a reference point.

*"Nothing we do is more important than hiring and developing people.
People make your business great, so treat them well."*

Next, have each team member write down the names of all their co-workers and then try to match the names of their co-workers with the correct numbered sheet that is posted on the wall. Ask team members to then grade each other's paper. Have awards for the person(s) who correctly matched the most names.

Once the winner has been announced, the leader will lead a discussion asking team members to identify their sheet. Ask each team member to elaborate on his or her special skill or talent. Inquire about what has motivated their life goals, etc.

In conclusion, the team leader can make a point of recognizing the "collective talent" in the room. They may even find an unknown talent that can now be used to help the team in a current or future project!

Learning new things about team members is an important part of team building lesson planning and a great way to further strengthen trust and rapport between team members.

In Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read *Team Building At Work*. We hope that you will use the activities and exercises provided here to motivate and engage your team members.

We are always looking for new and innovative ideas that effectively support leaders to improve teamwork and overall job performance.

If you have a unique and effective idea for team building we'd love to hear it!
Please share your ideas via our [contact form](#).

All the best to you and your team.