TEAM-BUILDING:
Icebreakers and Initiatives
Orientation to Team Building

Why Team-Building?

When people work together in a collaborative manner the effect is synergistic. Productivity, innovation, and quality, as well as satisfaction, are all greatly enhanced. Team-building activities instill a spirit of cooperation and mutual support within an organizational culture. Teamwork within an organization, however, does not just happen. A team is not a team just because a group of people are given that designation. The extent to which a "team" is really a team depends on the communication and leadership skills of all members, both staff and management. Certain qualities and characteristics of effective teams and team members are evident, and continue to develop over time when careful attention is given to team-building.

Team-Building Activities

Ice Breakers

Icebreakers are intended to “break the ice “ by helping people get to know each other and help group members work together as a team. Icebreakers are generally quick and easy to complete. Their singular goal is to help participants become more familiar with members of the group.

Initiatives

Initiatives focus participants' efforts on the accomplishment of a common goal. An action learning approach is the basis for these team-building activities. This approach has two components: action and reflection. The participants learn by doing an activity and then reflecting on what happened. The format is interactive and highly participatory and suited to a variety of learning styles. Participants find the experiences enjoyable as well as educational. They especially appreciate gaining practical knowledge and skills that can be put to immediate use within work teams as well as in the classroom. Participants practice making connections between seemingly unrelated events by analyzing what happened during each structured experience and reflecting on how that relates to or applies to their work.

Processing or debriefing brings closure to team initiative activities. It is a method for helping the participants focus on their teaming experience. Processing, through verbal or written communication, is one of the essential components in any
Suggested reflection/debriefing questions for teambuilding activities.

The role of the facilitator is to ask appropriate leading questions that will elicit a response from the participants. It is important to allow time for some reflection to occur. Participants’ insights and observations from the activities should guide the processing. The facilitator should ask questions that are perceptive in nature. Questions may focus on specific thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the participants. The following questions, some of which have been adapted from Knapp (1984), are useful to refer to when preparing for post activity debriefing.

Select debriefing/reflection questions appropriate to the team building activity and expected outcomes. Prepare for the debriefing by anticipating and visualizing how the group will respond to the initiative. Select and write down a series of questions on 3 x 5 cards to help guide you. Remember to sequence your questions using Bloom's Taxonomy (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation). When using team-building activities in the classroom modify for students' grade level.

**Trust and Support**

1. What are the similarities and differences in the way you supported each other here and the way you support others back at home, school and the office?

2. What impact does trust have in your relationship with others at home, school or at work?

3. What is the relationship between managing risk and establishing a support system?

4. How can you effectively communicate trust and responsibility with others?

**Communication**

1. What were some of the effective forms of communication that you used in completing this task? Ineffective forms of communication?

2. How were differences in opinion handled?

3. In what ways could the group's process of communication be improved to enhance its problem-solving skills?

4. How could you improve your communication and networking?
**Making Group Decisions**

1. How did the group make decisions for completing the tasks?

2. Were you satisfied with the manner in which the group made decisions?

3. Were decisions made by one or several individuals?

4. Did each person express his or her opinion when a choice was available?

5. What did you like about the manner in which the group made decisions? What didn't you like?

6. What is the best way for this group to make decisions?

**Cooperating**

1. What are some specific examples of group cooperation during the activity?

2. How did it feel to cooperate?

3. How did cooperative behavior lead to the successful completion of the tasks presented during the activity?

4. What are the rewards of cooperating?

5. What can you personally do to produce a cooperative environment at home or work?

**Teamwork**

1. How well do you think you did?

2. How effective were you in completing the task?

3. How efficient were you?

4. How did you develop your plan of action?

5. What is the relationship between input into the plan and commitment to action?
6. What were the differences between having a common vision versus not having a vision?

7. What did you learn about the team process during this activity?

8. What happens when a new person is added to your team at school, home, or work?

9. In what ways do you or can you make that new person feel like a member of the team?

10. Could you have completed the tasks without working as a team? Why or Why not?

**Problem-Solving**

1. How did you evaluate your progress?

2. How do you react to new tasks or problems?

3. How did the group identify the problem to be solved and the role that each member would play?

5. What effect did planning time have on the process?

6. How well did you execute the plan?

7. Did you use all of your resources to solve this problem?

8. On a scale of 1-10, how committed were you to executing the plan?

9. What are the similarities and differences between the ways in which you have approached solving problems here and the way that you approach them at home, school, or work?

10. What would need to change in order to enhance your problem-solving ability?

11. What did you learn from team problem-solving that you can apply at work, at home, in the classroom?
Leadership Roles

1. Who assumed leadership roles during this activity?

2. What were the behaviors that you would describe as demonstrating leadership?

3. How did the group respond to these leadership behaviors?

4. When and how did the leadership role change during the activity?

5. Was it difficult to assume a leadership role in this group? Why?

6. What are the characteristics and qualities of a good leader?

7. What specific skills do you need to develop to become a more effective leader?

Following Others

1. Do you consider yourself a good follower? Was this an important role during the activity?

2. What type of leader was it easiest to follow?

3. What was difficult about being a follower?

Giving and Receiving Feedback

1. What are some examples of when you received feedback during the activity?

2. Did the manner in which the feedback was given make a difference to you?

3. What are some examples of when you gave feedback during the activity?

4. How did you express appreciation for another?

5. How can you improve your skills in giving and receiving feedback?
Respecting Personal Differences

1. What are some of the significant differences among group members?

2. How did these differences strengthen the group as-a-whole during the activity?

3. What would this group be like if there were very few differences among the group members?

4. What specific instances did being different help or hinder the group from reaching its objectives?

5. How can you increase your ability to respect and utilize personal difference?
GETTING ACQUAINTED ICEBREAKER

**Supplies**
Chart paper
Markers
Tape

**Task**

**Step 1:**
Prepare charts with a characteristic or trait printed on each one. The number you choose depends on the number of participants. Post the charts around the room.

**Step 2:**
Instruct participants to choose one characteristic which best describes them or one they most closely identify with. When groups are formed around the charts, ask the participants to introduce themselves and discuss why they chose the characteristic and what kind of role they play within a group/team.

**Step 3:**
Ask each small group to report back to the whole group.

**Suggestions for Characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependable</th>
<th>Risk taker</th>
<th>Organized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visionary</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Player</td>
<td>Resourceful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spiderweb Icebreaker

**Supplies**
1 ball of yarn

**Task**
To open or close a training session in a sharing way by tossing the ball of yarn to each participant and forming a web.

**Step 1:**

Begin by communicating the purpose for the activity (introductions, sharing expectations, feedback etc.) A large spider web of yarn is formed as participants toss the ball of yarn to each other. Communicate constraints - yarn cannot be tossed to a person next to you. The first participant tosses the ball of yarn to another participant being sure to hold onto the end. The ball must be tossed "over" to avoid getting tangled. Participants share requested information as they toss the ball of yarn. The procedure continues until all participants have caught and thrown the ball of yarn and are “connected" through the web.

**Step 2:**
The process is reversed and the ball of yarn re-rolled with the first participant ending up with the ball of yarn.
CONSTRUCTION INITIATIVE

SUPPLIES
2 - sheets of chart paper
3 - paper clips
1 - 4x6 index cards
3 - 3x5 index cards
1 - styrofoam cup
2 - rubber bands
2 - three foot strips of masking tape
1 - straw
1 - pencil
1 - pair of scissors
1 - sheet of green paper

Task
Build the tallest freestanding palm tree.

Step 1:
You have 10 minutes to plan your palm tree. You may not touch any of the building supplies while planning.

Step 2:
You have 10 minutes to construct. You may only use the materials made available to you.
An Effective Team Member:

☆ Is a good listener

☆ Demonstrates a positive, participative attitude

☆ Encourages the creative potential of others

☆ Coaches other members to think, solve problems and takes responsibility

☆ Shares decision making

☆ Creates a safe environment

☆ Leverages time, energy and involvement

☆ Makes sure the job gets done

☆ Pushes for continuous improvement

☆ Is actively involved in the development of others
Characteristics of an Effective Team

★ Understands and shares the commitment to agreed upon goals

★ Guarantees freedom of expression and willingness to listen to others

★ Has a willingness to share the leadership role when a situation requires an individual's expertise

★ Reaches decisions that will impact all the team members by consensus

★ Demonstrates a trust and acceptance of all team members

★ Uses flexibility in making decisions and in adapting those decisions as the situation requires
Qualities of an Effective Team Effort

☆ Leader and participants are well prepared

☆ People understand and carry out their roles

☆ Safe, stimulating environment, where participants are able to contribute fully

☆ Efficient and effective team process, time is used well

☆ Clear agreements are reached

☆ Decisions are fully supported, and team commits to implementation

☆ Clear understanding of who will do what, by when, to follow up on agreements