

Team building essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Effective Team Building Activities Quick Guide One of the most important activities a successful leader of a team does, particularly in the early stages of a team's development, is help to build trust and relationships. In the context of team building, trust is the confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good, and consequently, that there's no reason to be protective or careful around the group. How does a leader build trust? Certainly, it takes time — it requires shared experiences over time, multiple instances of credibility and follow through, and, an in-depth understanding of the unique attributes of team members.

Ultimately, the team leader and members must get comfortable and get to know each other beyond a purely work-related context. However, by taking a few specific actions, a leader can help the team accelerate this process and achieve trust in a relatively short period of time. This Quick Guide provides some tips and exercises that you can use as a leader of a new group to:

- o build relationships and trust through personal and professional self-disclosure
- o increase self-awareness and awareness of each other's strengths, blind spots, and unique contributions to the team

What you'll find in this guide:

- o o How to run a successful team building activity
- o Common challenges and what to do about them
- o Outlines for 12 simple and effective "Getting to Know Each Other" type team building activities
- o Running a Successful Activity

1. Before: Prepare ? ? ? ? Read through the activity several times. Make sure you're clear about what will happen and when, why, and how. Obtain all the necessary materials. Check them to ensure they'll work well for the activity. Set up the room, making sure tables, chairs, flipcharts, etc. are in place so they contribute to the activity's success.

Anticipate any potential problems and take steps to prevent them . After:
Reinforce learning ? ? Later, on the job, remind members of the activity. This could include bringing up something positive or personal that someone shared during the activity. Plan follow up “ get to know you” activities that will reinforce, emphasize, and build upon what was learned at the time 2.
During: Explain & check for understanding ? ? ? ? ?

Common Challenges and
What to Do About Them 1. People don't want to participate ? ? Welcome the team with enthusiasm and give a brief overview of the activity to get the team interested and excited.

Share why you're doing the activity. Explain the steps or rules – work from your notes or even post them on the wall. Address questions and distribute any materials after you've fully explained the activity. Make sure the team understands the activity – Ask “ What questions do you have before we start? ” and/or ask the team to summarize the steps (e. g “ So, how many minutes do you have to complete this? ”) ? Be clear about the purpose of the activity Remind them that in order for it to be team building, everyone must participate. Reassure them that everyone will participate (and no one will be singled out and maybe embarrassed).

If the activity allows, have the less shy people go first (or you go first) Speak slowly as you explain the activity; pause after each direction to let it sink in Repeat what may seem like the obvious Start over and repeat the directions. Ensure any difficult ones are put in context. Bring more than enough for all participants Test the activity with the materials you'll be working with Reword questions only if someone says they didn't understand; otherwise,

pause (silently count to 10) after asking the question and give them time to think.

Offer your own observation, then ask what others saw or felt that was similar or different from what you shared. As a last resort, call on someone by name to respond. 2. Unclear about directions ? ? ? Run the activity ? ? ? ? ?

Encourage and support all. Especially thank anyone who goes first; it takes courage to go first and risk embarrassment or failure Watch for opportunities to help clarify instructions Set clear expectations for time and give time checks if needed. Ask questions outlined in this guide or come up with your own. For most questions, there's no right or wrong answer.

Try not to critique, rather, provide positive non-verbal feedback and/or summarize responses offered. Try not to call on anyone by name unless you have to. Be comfortable with the silence. Ask the question and count to 10. The silence may feel like an eternity to you, but it feels just as long to the group. 3. Not enough materials ? ? Debrief 4. People don't contribute to a debrief ? ? ? ? . © The Employee Engagement Group 2011 All Rights Reserved Effective “ Getting to Know Each Other” Activities Instructions for running these team building activities are below.

For some activities, there are specific debrief questions outlined. Otherwise, the following debrief questions should work for most activities: ? Why is it important for us to get to know each other beyond a purely work-related context? ? How difficult (or easy) was it for you to share information about yourself with others? ? How can we learn more about each other back on the job? Hello, My N. A. M. E. Is... Overview: Members introduce themselves by

presenting their first names as acronyms. This allows them to learn some interesting things about each other. Materials: None Instructions: 1.

Give the group 5 minutes to think of interesting facts about themselves that correspond to the letters of their first name. 2. Share your acronym as an example. 3. Have each person share their acronym. Example: “ Hi. I’m Logan. L is for Led Zeppelin, one of my favorite rock groups. O is for Ohio, which is where I live. G is for German, the only foreign language I know. A is for Aunt Wendy, my favorite relative. And N is for No Fish because I don’t eat any seafood. A Penny for Your Thoughts Overview: A light activity that reveals a quick, personal fact about each person.

Materials: One penny for each participant. The best ones are shiny, easy to read, and less than 20 years old. Instructions: 1. Give a penny to each person (as you do this, jokingly ask if they realized they were going to get a cash bonus today). 2. Ask them to then share something significant or interesting about themselves from the year on their penny. 3. Go first to set the example. 4. As people share, let the other members ask questions.

Examples: “ My penny is from 1999, and that’s the year that I let my husband talk me into going skydiving with him. ” Variations: ?

Have the members explain what would be different if they could relive that year ? Have them tell what their favorite song, movie, TV show or other entertainment was from that year. What Makes Us Tick? Overview: Provide members with a way to share things about themselves that are not observable to others, but have an impact on others; also, to give the team an opportunity to look for ways to support each other. Materials/Equipment:

Flipchart paper/Whiteboard (or “ web meeting” equivalent); blank sheets of note paper
Instructions: 1. List sentence starters on a flipchart or whiteboard that each person needs to answer.

Include a few, or all from this list, as time allows: o What is important to me in the next 6 months is... o I feel very confident that... o I’m not as confident that... o The team can help me by... o If you see me doing something that you think is a mistake, please... o The best way to communicate with me is...
2. Give 5-10 minutes for each person to work individually to write down the answers. 3. Go around the group one question at a time (round robin) allowing each person to share his/her responses to the questions. Allow time for clarification and some reaction/discussion as each person shares so this is interactive and animated.

Debrief: ? What did you hear in common with particular team members? ?
Ask the team to synthesize by reflecting on the differences expressed during this exercise. How can those differences become an asset for the team? ?
What suggestions do you have for how we can honor each member’s needs?
Option: Give the team members a worksheet with the sentence starters listed as pre-work so they have more time to think through their answers.
Sweet Stories Overview: An activity where each person shares a story about themselves, based on the color of the candy they select.

Gives team members a chance to open up and learn to trust each other a bit more. Materials: A large bag of M&Ms, Skittles, or other colored candy pieces. Instructions: 1. Have each person take one piece of candy 2. Do not eat it yet! 3. Take turns sharing a story with the group based on the

following code: o Blue candy: A time at work when you felt very proud o Green candy: A boss you respected and why o Yellow candy: A reason that you're proud to be part of this company/team. o Orange candy: A time at work when you failed. o Purple candy: A funny thing that happened to you at work. Red candy: A time at work when you were (fill in the blank) 4. Eat the candy! Note: ? Set a limit for the length of the stories, so no one monopolizes the time. ? Post the color code so people can easily match their color candy to the story. ? This activity can be repeated. Just ask for different stories. Or, start every meeting with one person telling a story, and over time set the plan/expectation to hear from everyone. Variations: ? Remove the words " at work" for each color, to get to know people more personally. ? Divide the group into small groups of 3-5 people.

Give them several minutes to share their stories from one color. ? For a group who has gotten to know each other well, have them tell stories about each other rather than about themselves. © The Employee Engagement Group 2011 All Rights Reserved Effective " Getting to Know Each Other" Activities cont'd. Personal Histories Overview: Improve trust by giving members an opportunity to demonstrate vulnerability in a low-risk way. Materials: None Instructions: Go around the table (or virtual table) and have everyone answer four questions about themselves: o Where did you grow up? How many siblings do you have and where do you fall in the birth order? o What was the most difficult or important challenge of your childhood? o What is your best memory from childhood? Debrief: What did you learn about others that you didn't know? Variation: Other questions could be used here, as long as they elicit responses calling for moderate vulnerability. For

instance, “ What is your favorite food” wouldn’t work because it involves virtually no vulnerability, and also “ How do you feel about your mother? ” doesn’t work because it could be too invasive.

Inquiring Minds Want to Know... Overview: Give team members the chance to uncover something unusual or intriguing about each other. Materials: Flipchart paper/Whiteboard (or “ web meeting” equivalent) Instructions: 1. Ask each person in the room to pick two questions from this pick list displayed on a flipchart that they would like to ask someone: o If you could do anything, what profession other than your own would you like to do and why? o What profession would you definitely not like to do and why? o What is your favorite word and least favorite word?

Why? o What is a funny memory that you have from your childhood? o Pick 4 words that your best friend or spouse would use to describe you o What do you think is one of the first things that people (at work) notice about you? o If you could be a “ rock star” or an “ actor/celebrity,” which would you be and why? 2. Ask each person to pair up with someone that they don’t know as well as others. 3. “ Interview” the partner using the two questions previously selected. 4. Ask each introduce their partner and share their answers to the interview questions.

Variation: Instead of giving a pick list, in step 1, ask the members to write down two creative or interesting questions that they’d like to ask someone they are getting to know better. Use one or two of the questions above as an example. In Depth-Intros Overview: Give a new team/committee a chance to get to know each other indepth and to discover each others’ areas of

expertise Materials: Flipchart paper/Whiteboard (or “ web meeting” equivalent) Instructions: 1. Ask team members to pair up with someone. 2. Reveal this list of questions on a flipchart: o What is the name you prefer to be called? some people have nicknames, names they’d prefer not to be called, or will have stories about names used by family/friends) o What do you get paid to do? (this is not a job description. It could be something like “ to think and be creative,” or “ go to meetings” o What are your positive hot buttons? (Something you’d like to talk about if we ran into each other informally) o What are your negative hot buttons? (Something that irritates you, makes you angry) o What specific expertise do you bring to this team? o What is a personal accomplishment that you’re pleased with in the past year? What is a professional accomplishment from this past year? 3. Ask the partners to share the answers to each of the questions. You could go first with your partner as an example. 4. Each person introduces his/her partner to the rest of the group. Set a time limit based on the number of people in the group. You might ask someone to be the timekeeper and indicate when time is up for each introduction. Jot down a few notes for each person. Debrief: ? Ask questions that include each member who was introduced. “ This is a quiz.

Who likes to ride a bicycle on cross-country trips? Who’s going back to school next year? ? Request comments from the group: What surprised you? Did you notice any themes? Variations: ? Add or remove questions as you see fit/time allows. ? Ask members to share responses around the table (or virtual table) instead of pairing up with someone. What I Bring to the Team Overview: An opportunity for members to recognize and disclose their own

strengths and improvement areas. Also can be an opportunity for the team leader or members to give each other positive feedback.

Materials: None Instructions: 1. Ask each person to reflect on why they were chosen for their position on the team (strengths, experience, etc): o 1-2 things they are really good at o 1-2 things that they know they need to work on/can be a blind spot. 2. Each person reveals their answers. Variations: ? Have the team leader provide feedback to that person, in front of the group – commenting just on strengths: 1-2 specific things that he/she thinks make that person a good fit for the position or a unique and important quality he/she brings to the team ?

If appropriate/applicable/time allows – encourage others in the room to comment on what they see as strengths of the person ? Give each person a sheet of flipchart paper, and ask them to draw a symbol that represents their answers. © The Employee Engagement Group 2011 All Rights Reserved Effective “ Getting to Know Each Other” Activities cont’d. Scramble Overview: A frantic activity where members simultaneously strategize, gather, and summarize information about each other and present the findings to the team. Note: this activity isn’t suitable for virtual team activities. Materials: None Instructions: 1.

Divide the team into groups of 3-9 participants. 2. Give each team a topic. (Make sure you have enough topics for all sub groups.) Topics may be work related (e. g. College degrees, languages spoken, previous companies they’ve worked at) or non-work related (e. g. pets, birthplace, last vacation destination, hobbies, etc.). 3. Give the groups 3 minutes to strategize how

they will gather the information on their topic for all of the people in the room. 4. Give the groups 3 minutes to gather all of the information on their topic (this happens simultaneously for all groups). 5.

Give the groups 3 minutes to summarize all of the data they collected. 6. Give 1 minute to each group to present the findings to the whole team. Let them know this will be chaotic. Watch the time carefully. Debrief: ? How did you accomplish your goals during each phase? ? Did/How did you adjust your strategy once you started to implement? ? During which phase did you feel most rushed? Why? ? How does that relate to how you approach work – when do you feel most rushed/under pressure? Variation: Give the team an extra minute or two in the summarizing phase to record findings on a flipchart.

Rather than make a presentation, post on the wall and encourage folks to walk around the “ gallery” to view the findings. Who Cares? Overview: Allow individuals to identify a quality about themselves, and translate that quality into a benefit. Materials: A Koosh Ball or Foam ball Instructions: 1. Toss a “ Koosh” ball or foam ball (or toss the virtual ball/baton) randomly to someone in the group. 2. The person who catches it stands up, gives his/her name, and states a positive quality/trait or skill that he/she considers a strength. 3. The rest of the team members respond “ Who Cares? 4. The individual then needs to translate the stated fact/quality into a benefit or advantage, or states what the quality means to the client or team. 5. The individual then throws the ball to someone else. Repeat the procedure, moving through everyone. Rainbow of Diversity Overview: Help members recognize and appreciate what’s going right among them. Materials: A different colored crayon for each participant. A large box of 48 works well. Instructions: 1.

Give a crayon to each person. 2. Have them pair up with someone whose crayon is close to their own color. Note: Don't let them get too worried about the "correct" or closest color.) 3. They have 2 minutes to discover what strengths they have in common that contribute to the success of the group. 4. Have them pair up again, this time with someone whose crayon is very different from their own color. (Again, don't let them get too hung up on the exact opposite) 5. They now have 4 minutes to identify what each others' strengths are, and how they can learn from and appreciate those different skills or abilities. 6. Have all of the participants get together in a circle, standing next to colors that are most like their own.

Ask the debriefing questions while in the circle. Debrief: ? What did you learn about the person with a color similar to yours? ? What did you learn about the person with a color different from yours? ? What does this circle say about our team? Heads or Tails Overview: Icebreaker activity in which members tell an anecdote about themselves –some true or false. Gives members an opportunity to learn some interesting facts about each other: Materials: A coin and a paper cup. Instructions: 1. Have the team sit around a table so everyone can see each other. 2.

First participant starts by placing the coin face up or face down under the cup so no one can see it. 3. If the participant placed the coin face up, he/she tells a TRUE story about himself or herself. If the participant places it face down, he/she tells a story that is UNTRUE. 4. The group tries to guess whether the story is true or untrue. 5. Participant lifts the cup to reveal the answer. 6. Repeat until all members have had the chance to tell their story. Debrief: ? How did you decide whether the story was true or not? ? If you

made up a story, where did it come from? What's the value of getting to know each other outside of a pure work setting? Variations: ? Limit stories to work situations. ? Have participants make a statement about themselves rather than tell a story (For example: " I've been to every continent at least once. ") ? Make it a bit competitive. Break the team into two groups.

Alternative having members from each of the teams share their stories/statements, and the other team has to confer together and guess if it was true or false. The team with the most correct answers after everyone shares their story wins a small prize. This can work for virtual teams on the phone, just have the member reveal their correct answer without using the coin and cup. _____

References

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