Team Building Exercises for Your Workforce Management Team

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Victoria Marcella – VW Credit, Inc
Todd Gladden, CWPP – Planmen US Consultancy
Speaker Bio – Jodi Wright

• Employed with Allstate for 20 years

• 15 years of Contact Center experience – 10 years managing WFM (my profile picture is probably just as old but I’m not changing it!)

• Manage 5 different teams across 8 different locations and 4 different time zones
Speaker Bio – Victoria Marcella

• 11 years, Manager, WFM for VW Credit, Inc., subsidiary of Volkswagen Group of America

• 18 years, WFM & Contact Center experience in captive auto finance, catalogue/retail sales, & outsourcer

• SWPP Advisory Board Member
Speaker Bio – Todd Gladden

• 40 years of contact center experience & only 32 yrs old
• VP of US Operations for an International Contact Center Consultancy; Former Executive of Business Operations for WFM at utility & telecom companies
• SWPP & QATC Advisory Board Member
• Certified Workforce Planning Professional
Our Agenda Today

• Why Team Building?
• Determination of Appropriate Team Exercise
• Sample Team Building Exercises
  - Scavenger Hunt
  - Amazing Race
  - The Great Egg Drop
  - Tower/Bridge Building
  - Virtual Teams Exercises
• Accommodating Potential Constraints
• Characteristics of High-Performing Teams
Here’s a Question for you.....

Is there anything unique about WFM that influences the team-building challenge?
Why is Team Building Important?

1. Facilitates better communication
2. Motivates employees
3. Promotes creativity
4. Develops problem-solving skills
5. Breaks down barriers and builds trust

Overall, team building in the workplace enables better communication, better relationships, and ultimately increases productivity.
Can’t we just have Fun?

Determine the appropriate exercise based on your purpose. Activities need to be planned strategically – have a purpose behind your exercise!

- Problem Solving
- Communication
- Trust
- Collaboration
- Develop relationships

So are Icebreakers considered teambuilding activities?
Photo Scavenger Hunt

• Put the team together with a mix of functions WFM (e.g., Forecasters, Schedulers, RT Analysts if possible)

• Items needed for this activity:
  – Digital cameras or smartphones
  – Copies of the shoot list for each team
  – Transportation for each team, if necessary
  – Laptop or a TV + camera cable to view the photos afterwards
  – Prizes for the winners
Photo Scavenger Hunt - Instructions

1. Prepare a list of interesting places, things, and circumstances that can be captured using a camera.

Examples:

- A photo with someone famous
- A photo with a yellow car
- A photo with a fast food worker
- A photo with someone in a tuxedo
- A photo of the group in a human pyramid
- A photo of the team’s reflection in something other than a mirror
- A photo of the entire team showing ‘I can’t believe we all fit in here’
- A photo of the team standing in front of (or sitting on) a statue
Photo Scavenger Hunt – Instructions

2. The teams must find as many things on the list as possible in the time allotted and take a picture with all of the group members in the photo.

3. When time expires, teams return to a central location and present their photos.

4. Download the photos to a computer and then show them to the full group on an LCD projector for the best impact.

5. Award one point for each successful photo item and bonus points for extra creativity or effort. The winning group members receive prizes.
Amazing Race - Prep

• Site Selection
  – Accessible on foot/wheelchair, with interesting clue potential

• Course Design
  – Ten to twelve clues in varying order (a scramble)

• Clue Design
  – Somewhat challenging with central location for clue solving assistance

• Team Assignments
  – Functional from various locations, intact teams...

• Rules of the Game
  – Photos at each clue marker including all team members
Amazing Race - Execution

• Prizes
  – Gift certificates for winning team

• Post-Race De-Brief
  – Finish line at a restaurant so teams could enjoy soft drinks as they waited for all the finishers.
  – De-brief to review photos, discuss the experience and learnings followed by lunch.

• Elapsed Time
  – Depending on number of clues, 2 hours plus time for de-brief and lunch afterwards.

• Planning Time
  – Three to four weeks in advance to scout course, write the clues and select prizes.

• Results – Mission Accomplished!
The Great Egg Drop

• Activity Premise
  – To build a protective container for the Egg so that it can be dropped from a height without breaking.
  – The Great Egg Drop is a team building activity that involves creativity and problem-solving skills given a set of resources.

• Participants Needed
  – 3-5 per team
  – Single or multiple teams

• Supplies Needed For Each Team
  – 20-25 straws
  – Roll of masking tape
  – One fresh egg
  - Sheet paper
  - Newspaper
  - Box of tissues
The Great Egg Drop

• Instructions for Participants
  – Instruct teams to use materials given to them to construct protective structure for egg
  – Must be sufficient to drop egg from height of 8 feet without breaking.

• Instructions for Facilitator:
  – Move from team to team during exercise
  – Observe ‘dynamics’ of the members as they work
  – Note roles individuals take on, both positive and negative
  – Encourage teams to use ‘all’ their resources available to them.
The Great Egg Drop

• Dropping/De-briefing
  – Take turns dropping structures, with egg encased, from ladder (or other safe structure) at least 8 feet above floor.
  – You may want to spread newspaper on floor to ease in clean-up.
  – When de-briefing, don’t single out individuals, but ask teams:
    • How they felt
    • What worked/what could have worked better
    • What they learned about teammates they hadn’t realized before

• Time for Exercise: 35-55 Minutes Total
  – 5-10 minute Intro
  – 20-30 minute Exercise
  – 10-15 minute Debrief
The Tower/Bridge Building Adventure

• Activity Premise
  – To ‘build’ a tower or bridge structure using the resources provided.
  – This activity studies leadership, cooperation, diversity, and conflict resolution.

• Participants Needed
  – 4-6 Members per team
  – Multiple teams preferred, but 3-4 teams maximum

• Supplies/Props Needed
  – 25-50 straws
  – Paper clips
  – Roll of tape
  – Sheet paper
  – Paper pie plates
The Tower/Bridge Building Adventure

• Instructions for Participants
  – Participants must construct the tallest tower they can, or build a bridge that spans between two tables (about 2 ft).
  – The tower must stand on its own, and the bridge must stand alone and be able to hold about a one pound item (e.g., stapler, coffee mug, book).
  – The team determines the most appropriate design, roles/assignments, process.

• Instructions for Facilitators
  – Move from team to team during exercise and observe ‘dynamics’ of the members.
  – Note roles that individuals take on, both positive and negative, that move the team in a direction.
  – Encourage teams to use ‘all’ the resources available to them.
The Tower/Bridge Building Adventure

• De-Briefing
  – Acknowledge effort and accomplishment of the team, no matter what the outcome.
  – Do not single out individuals – use generic examples and ask teams:
    • How they felt
    • What worked/what could have worked better
    • What they learned about teammates they didn’t realize before.
    • What would they do differently that could have improved the team’s performance

• Time for Exercise: 45-50 Minutes Total
  – 10 minute Introduction
  – 25 minute Exercise Running
  – 10-15 minute De-Brief
Commonalities and Uniqueness

• Have team identify things/traits that everyone has in common, along with interesting characteristics that are unique to someone in the group. This can even be done over a conference call.
  
  – **Commonalities** - First, the group compiles a list of the things they have in common. In order for it to make the list, it must apply to everyone in the group. You want to avoid things that people can see (e.g., “everyone has hair,” or “we are all wearing clothes.”)
  
  – **Uniqueness** - Next, compile a list where each item applies to only one person in the group. The group tries to find at least two unique characteristics for each person (Again, you want to go beyond the superficial, avoiding those things that people can readily see.)

• Promote communication, relationship development
Accommodating Constraints

• Handling constraints such as
  – Small teams
  – Little to no budgets for off-site meetings
  – Remote teams/multi-site
• Don’t pick the activity according to the constraint
• Select the activity according to the objective/gap and modify the activity to accommodate the constraint.
Small Teams

• Small teams
  – Many of the team-building activities discussed today are feasible for small teams.
  – Admittedly may need to rely more on individual coaching and development to address gaps for some issues if team is very small.
Small Budgets

• Little/No budget for travel or off-site meetings
  – Hold a team building activity right in your center.
  – Amazing Race clues could lead team members to other departments that generate calls into the center.
  – Egg Drop, Bridge and Tower easily conducted in conf. rms.

• Little/No budget for prizes
  – Coordinate with HR to offer time off as prizes in lieu of cash or other awards.
  – Award a role exchange or ‘ride along’ for a few hours. Pick the job that is perceived to be the most interesting and let the winner(s) shadow that person for a few hours.
  – Even small gift certificates for gas/groceries can make an impact.
  – Consider brand “goodies.”
Virtual/Remote Teams

- For teams located remotely, include them with locally facilitated exercises.
  - Ask someone at their site to help facilitate
  - De-brief centrally as one large team
- Individuals located remotely/virtually (either some or all of team) – use or create online team building activity
  - Snowflake Exercise (details ahead)
  - WebEx with Video/Audio
  - Who’s that Baby
  - Secret Talent or Little Known Fact
Virtual/Remote Teams

**Snowflake Exercise**

1. Create a paper snowflake of your own special design (this will take you back to your childhood days).
2. Take a picture of your finished snowflake that can be sent by e-mail.
3. Send instructions *(words only – no pictures)* for partner with details on how you created your snowflake.
4. Partner follows directions and then takes a picture of finished snowflake.
5. Compare original snowflake with partner created snowflake.
6. Have the entire team vote on the best look-a-like.
7. Bragging rights or prizes for the winning team(s).
Virtual/Remote Teams

Snowflake Exercise – let’s try it

8 ½ x 11 Piece of paper

With the paper in landscape orientation:

- Fold left corner up until the left side of the paper aligns with the top
- Cut away the excess paper on the right to square off the page - you will be left with a triangle
- Fold the triangle in half
- Fold the new triangle in half again
- Cut each corner off to make a straight line
- In each of the 3 straight lines on the triangle, cut in two equally sized triangles – leave space between the triangle cutouts
Virtual/Remote Teams

**Snowflake Exercise cont.**
By following those directions, this is what I got:

However, below is what the original design was:

What pieces of the instructions weren’t clear?

*Clear communication is everything! Don’t make assumptions.*
What about You?

What are some exercises that have worked for your team?

What characteristics were you hoping to build?
10 Characteristics of High-Performing Teams

Most members of high-performing teams report that it's fun and satisfying to work on collaborative teams because they are asked to contribute at their highest potential and they learn a lot along the way. Characteristics of high-performing teams include the following:

1. People have solid and deep trust in each other and in the team's purpose -- they feel free to express feelings and ideas.
2. Everybody is working toward the same goals.
3. Team members are clear on how to work together and how to accomplish tasks.
4. Everyone understands both team and individual performance goals and knows what is expected.
5. Team members actively diffuse tension and friction in a relaxed and informal atmosphere.
10 Characteristics of High-Performing Teams

6. The team engages in extensive discussion, and everyone gets a chance to contribute -- even the introverts.
7. Disagreement is viewed as a good thing and conflicts are managed. Criticism is constructive and is oriented toward problem solving and removing obstacles.
8. The team makes decisions when there is natural agreement -- in the cases where agreement is elusive, a decision is made by the team lead or executive sponsor, after which little second-guessing occurs.
9. Each team member carries his or her own weight and respects the team processes and other members.
10. The leadership of the team shifts from time to time, as appropriate, to drive results. No individual members are more important than the team.
Additional Resources

- http://www.greatgroupgames.com
- http://icebreakerideas.com
- http://www.innovativeteambuilding.co.uk
- http://www.quickteambuildingactivities.com
- http://www.teampedia.net
- http://www.eaglesflight.com (Facilitated)
Questions?

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