

Team Building: Simple Techniques That Maximize Productivity

Team building has been around as a corporate training technique for decades, but recently it's fallen into disuse. Why? Because many of the techniques of team building seem more like play than work, perhaps.

Or because managers decided that the team building they'd already done was enough to make the group cohesive and maximize their productivity.

However, team building is a continuing process. As the military has found in decades of trial and error, when you have units of people playing and competing together, they grow closer, start thinking as a group instead of as individuals, and find it easier to work as complementary parts rather than as units.

Communication improves. And almost like magic, a bunch of people are transformed into a functioning team.

How Team Building Works

Great team building exercises use a variety of techniques to build group cohesion. Communication is an essential part of team building, as are group focus on a single goal that requires strategy to accomplish.

Often, but not always, it helps to have separate teams competing against one another.

One especially effective method is the scavenger hunt. The manager conducting the team building exercise takes into account the individual strengths and weaknesses of each team member and includes challenges that will exploit both of these for each member.

Team members have to work together at times to accomplish certain goals, like using landmarks that different members are familiar with as markers for the hunt. And the reward at the end must be applied equally to all.

Paintball is used by the military to bring units together. This exercise requires not just physical fitness and good aim, but the more important and hard to train skills of strategic thinking, communication, and learning to bond.

While the sport is a little rough and tumble for many offices, it can be a great teambuilder for the right group.

Other great team building exercises can include things like round-robin quiz games, word puzzles, and ordinary sports. That office softball team? It can be fun and also a great team builder.

Including Team Building Into A Meeting

Team building exercises are generally fairly involved and take a considerable amount of time. For this reason, they are inappropriate for most meetings outside of office half-day or full-day retreats.

For these longer meetings, get away from the office so creativity can flow and natural barriers are broken down. Start the meeting with something relaxing and positive, then move into the team building games.

Only after the team builders should you get into serious work. Why? Because fresh from the team builder, your people will work better together and find fresh creative ideas. You'll notice an immediate result, and you'll begin cementing those new bonds right away.

When To Use Team Building

Every office with numerous workers who frequently do not interact directly should look into using team builder exercises. However, there are a number of situations that almost require the use of team building.

For instance, in an office where there has been considerable friction or small groups competing in negative rather than positive ways, team building can break down barriers and create rapport where only strife existed before.

This is really excellent if you can do a contest pitting upper management with the people in cubicles, between whom a natural and healthy rivalry

already exists in most cases.

Also, in offices with high turnover a regular team building exercise can build bonds that will help slow that turnover rate as well as improve interworking relationships for new and established employees.

In this case, team building exercises when your turnover hits a critical mass of 10-15% new employees can help bring the new people into your current corporate climate.

About the Author

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