



SAINT JOSEPH CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

STRIVE
TEAM BUILDING

Running a Successful Team-Building Activity

1. Start with a clear objective in mind, one that is attainable, is relevant to where they are as a team and will be reinforced long after the activity.
2. Plan on this activity being one of many small steps your team will start taking now. Trust, and thus team-building, can rarely be accomplished in one giant leap.
3. Be prepared to run the activity
 - a. have the necessary supplies
 - b. set up the room
 - c. have rules/steps written down if they are lengthy
4. Executing the activity
 - a. Welcome everyone with enthusiasm and optimism.
 - b. Explain the activity and its goals.
 - c. Explain the rules and steps.
 - d. Make sure the group understands the activity
 - i. What questions do you have?
 - ii. Ask specific summary questions: How many minutes do you have to complete this? What happens if one of the balloons pop?
 - e. Make sure everyone is following the steps/rules.
 - f. Encourage & support everyone.
 - g. Clarify and redirect as necessary.
 - h. Throughout the activity, watch for things you will want to bring up during the Debrief.
 - i. Don't stop the activity unless it gets completely out of control.
 - j. Debrief the activity once done – this is where the learning is linked to the outcomes. Ask questions about how the activity went, how it felt, who took a leadership role, was the activity difficult or easy and why, why was the activity important...

Team-building activities do not always run smoothly. Here are some ways things could go wrong and what to do if it happens.

One or more people don't want to participate

Causes:

- past team-building exercises were unpleasant or unproductive
- not understanding the purpose or value
- shyness or fear of being embarrassed
- activity doesn't sound fun or worthwhile

Prevention:

- be clear about the purpose during the introduction
- be sure purpose is needed and valued
- reassure that everyone will participate
- have less shy people go first if possible
- if you expect resistance from a particular individual, privately approach him or her beforehand to gain their commitment to participate.

If it happens anyway:

- don't make a big deal of it; perhaps witnessing one or two activities will help them be more willing
- remind them that in order for it to be significant, everyone must participate
- find a way for the person to still be involved perhaps as a scorekeeper, timekeeper or observer (with the expectation that he or she will offer observations after the activity)
- always acknowledge effort and recognize when an activity pushed people out of their comfort zone, thank participants

They don't understand the directions

Prevention

- read and reread the directions to make sure you understand them well
- practice explaining the activity to others until they readily understand and use their questions to help you adjust how you will explain
- pause after each direction and let it sink in
- speak slowly
- have the directions written so they can follow along

If it happens anyway:

- start over, but slow down even more asking clarifying questions after each step
- ask someone who did understand to help you explain
- demonstrate if possible

Participants don't join the Debrief discussion

Causes

- did not understand your question
- you haven't given them enough time to formulate their response
- fear embarrassment of a "wrong" answer

Prevention

- ask questions slowly
- pause after each question (10 seconds), may feel like an eternity but gives participants a chance to formulate their response
- accept and appreciate all responses

If it happens anyway

- reword or restate the question
- explain that the activity is only as valuable as our ability to transfer what we learned back to our lives
- after asking a question, offer your own observation and ask what others saw that was similar or different
- as a last resort, call on participants by name to respond

Resource:

Miller, Brian (2004) *Quick Team-Building Activities for Busy Managers*. Amacom Books New York, NY.