



Taking a Look at Teamwork and Teambuilding

Before your team can begin to solve its Challenge, it needs to recognize that it IS a TEAM, first and foremost!

1. **Allow some time at the beginning of the year (and periodically throughout the season) for the members of your team to develop a sense of team identity. Team members need time to:**

- ★ Get to know each other
- ★ Trust each other
- ★ Feel they belong
- ★ Respect each other's strengths and weaknesses
- ★ Learn to make decisions together
- ★ Accept that all their ideas will not be the final ones used
- ★ Start to take pride in the team's solution

Some ways to accomplish this are:



- ★ Do some things together away from your usual meeting place: Go out for a meal, play a game, watch a movie, or do something very simple like ride through a car wash. Just make some time to have fun together. The camaraderie that results is a valuable dividend for your investment of time.
- ★ Take a field trip. This doesn't have to be complicated or expensive. Go to the local hardware store, library, or museum.
- ★ Have team members create a team logo, nickname, and/or design. Forging an 'identity' is one way to create a sense of TEAM.
- ★ Have team members create a 'Team Bill of Rights' that spells out their expectations of one another.
- ★ Use the *Side Trip Specialties Inventory* (Can be found in this Resource Section) as a way to start a discussion of the diversity of the team members.

2. **Go over the characteristics of great teams, and help your team to recognize positive team attitudes, behaviors, and teamwork:**

- ★ Members trust each other.
- ★ Goals are clear and determined by the members.
- ★ Members feel as if they belong.
- ★ There is willingness to hear new ideas and suggestions.
- ★ Members identify with each other's experiences.
- ★ Conflict is recognized and discussed with the intent to resolve it.
- ★ Members accept responsibility for group functions.
- ★ Communication between members is clear and direct.
- ★ Members use each other as a resource and as support.
- ★ Members define and understand ground rules.

The way to accomplish this is through emphasizing the positive contribution of every team member. Continually reinforce these principles:

- ★ Help each other be right – not wrong.
- ★ Look for ways to make new ideas work – not reasons why they won't work.
- ★ Help each other achieve and take pride in each other's progress and growth.
- ★ Try to maintain a positive mental attitude – no matter what the circumstances.
- ★ Do everything with enthusiasm – it is contagious.
- ★ Have FUN!

Phrases and “thoughts” to encourage cooperation:

- ★ Encourage from the start that they are a “Team.”
- ★ There is no “I” in the word “team.”
- ★ It takes many types of skills and talents to get a well rounded solution.
- ★ The team is developing the solution, not one or two people.
- ★ The solution they will present is to come from THE TEAM’s ideas and THE TEAM’s work and that you are VERY proud of THEM – THE TEAM !!
- ★ If all team members are made to feel VERY important and VERY special from the start, there will be less conflict and more cooperation.

3. Share this story about Teamwork, and get the team to talk about what it means.

Lessons from Geese (by Milton Olson)

- ★ As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an *uplift* for the bird following. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if the bird flew alone.
LESSON: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.
- ★ Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into the formation to take advantage of the *lifting power* of the bird in front.
LESSON: If we have as much sense as the goose, we will stay in formation with those who are headed where we want to go (and be willing to accept their help as well as give ours to others).
- ★ When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies point position.
LESSON: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and share leadership. We are interdependent on each other.
- ★ The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.
LESSON: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging – and not something else.
- ★ When a goose gets sick or wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another formation, or catch up with the flock.
LESSON: If we have as much sense as the geese, we too will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong

4. Do lots of Teambuilding Activities.

- ★ **Newspaper Boat Role Play**
You need five participants and four sheets of newspaper.
Part of the room is a swamp filled with crocodiles. Your team must figure out a way to get all team members across the swamp without touching the water.
- ★ **Keep me Safe!**
One person leads another person through an imaginary situation, with or without obstacles, for example, a snowstorm (over drifts, teams, boulders). The leader should be encouraged to be thoughtful, gentle and kind.
- ★ **Silence Rules!**
Have them get everyone in line from the tallest to the shortest or in order of their birthdays, or the largest to smallest feet **WITHOUT** talking.

★ **Tug of Togetherness**

Lay a rope in a circle and then have the team members sit around it and grab onto it. Then have them all try to stand up (as a group) by pulling on the rope. If anyone falls, the GROUP must start over again.

★ **Conduct a Discussion and Survey about “KILLER Statements and Gestures”**

Conduct a discussion around the following questions:

“Have you ever worked very hard at something you felt was not understood or appreciated? What was it? What was said or done that made you feel your effort(s) were not appreciated?”

“Have you ever wanted to share things – ideas, feelings, something you have written or made – but were afraid to? Were you afraid that people might put you or it down? What kinds of things might they say or do that would put you, your ideas, or your achievements down?”

Introduce the concept of “**KILLER Statements and Gestures**” to the team. All of us have many feelings, thoughts, and creative behaviors that are killed off by other people’s negative comments, physical gestures, etc. Some “KILLER Statements” that are often used (even by teachers and Team Managers) are:

- We don’t have time for that now.
- That’s a stupid idea. You know that’s impossible.
- That will never work!
- Are you crazy? Are you kidding me? Are you serious?
- Only girls/boys do that!
- Wow, he’s strange, really strange!

Suggest that the team conduct a secret survey for the day. Ask them to keep a record of all the “KILLER Statements” they hear in school, at lunch, at home, and at play. Discuss the findings with them during your next meeting. You can also discuss why people use “KILLER Statements”, for example, it makes some people feel superior or better about themselves. You can also discuss statements to use instead. Utilize the lessons learned from this exercise when “KILLER Statements” surface in subsequent meetings.

(Adapted from a book by Canfield and Wells)