

Team Building TIPS and TOOLS

When asked to facilitate Teambuilding work, I'm never surprised to find that staff members are less than enthusiastic about participating. Staff feel that teambuilding won't be useful, will take away time from other important tasks, and will require doing touchy feely stuff. Often staff members don't believe that the leadership is serious about true collaboration. Some may have experienced teambuilding as an image restoring exercise with little benefit to their own work or priorities.

Spending time together in a retreat environment can ignite—or re-ignite—the team building process. Retreats provide opportunities to practice team building, design action plans, and address particular collaborative barriers. Making teamwork an agency norm takes powerful, concerted, and ongoing action. Teambuilding can't be relegated to a one-day offsite retreat; it has to be worked on every single day.

Building effective teams takes commitment, knowledge, skills and practice. Learning about team-building strategies and methodology can benefit the teambuilding process. Doing research, talking to your colleagues about their team building activities or hiring a team-building consultant will help you map out your approach. Consider taking these powerful actions to foster your team building efforts.

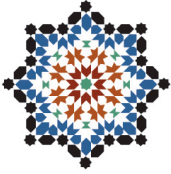
TIP: Truly commit to quality teamwork and clearly communicate process parameters and expectations

TOOL: Quality teamwork is inclusive and respectful of individual knowledge and strength. Trust in and commitment to team building relies on clear communication of the process parameters and group expectations. If individuals feel valued, respected and appreciated for their contributions the team will develop cohesion and promote collective efforts.

TIP: Model teamwork in your interactions with each other and the rest of the organization.

TOOL: Have team members give updates on their group's process. In addition to the successes, have members share the challenges and how the team addressed them.

Include management in supporting and sustaining a team oriented approach. Emphasize shared responsibility and input in creating group solutions. Seeing management value, engage with and actively promote teamwork helps sustain collective efforts overtime.



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group

TIP: Understand that your role as a team leader is to share information, trust others, surrender authority, and know when to intervene.

TOOL: Form teams to work around specific projects or issues. Provide clear direction on what the team is expected to accomplish and when. Support the teams in setting objectives, defining roles, and agreeing on a work plans. Make sure that team members have the skill, knowledge, and resource to accomplish the project. Ensure that team leaders have the capacity and organizational skill to carry out the work. Help mentor or train leaders when possible. Establish guidelines to report team progress. Intervene if the team is having problems getting started, carrying out tasks or meeting deadlines. Assist team members with consensus building or conflict resolution as needed.

TIP: Emphasize struggle or conflict as part of building stronger and more cohesive teams

TOOL: When conflict arises it is easy to slip into frustration, reluctance or fixation on individual conflicts or agendas. The growth and cohesion in the teambuilding process can quickly be replaced by distrust, isolation and exhaustion. If leadership can utilize struggle as an opportunity to uncover the causes of conflict and to practice team redefinition and resolution the impact will renew commitment and energy.

TIP: Reward and recognize teamwork through compensation and bonuses; reward collaborative and individual achievements.

TOOL: Support teams in sharing their stories with each other. Profile teamwork efforts at staff meetings and on internal bulletin boards. Give bonuses to teams that exemplify effective teamwork.