

41. To Build a Bridge

Objective

To develop cooperation among team members and to gain problem-solving experience

Team Size

Groups of 4 to 8 people

Time Required

10 to 15 minutes

Materials

- ❑ One entire issue of a newspaper per group
- ❑ Masking tape
- ❑ Bowl of candy
(disposable bowls work really well!)



Physical Setting

A space large enough for the team to separate into smaller groups

Process

Introduce the purpose of the exercise: to experience the importance of paying attention to work processes and team relationships, as well as results.

Explain the desired results of the exercise: the state or local transportation department needs a new bridge design and the group has been assigned the task. The available materials are newspaper and masking tape.

The criteria for building a successful bridge are to: (1) be able to stand up on its own, (2) be wide enough at the base for the bowl of candy to slide through (like a boat going under a bridge); and (3) be strong enough to support the weight of the bowl of candy (like a car traveling over the bridge).

Ask if there are any questions and if they all understand the process – then let 'em go!

When a group finishes the bridge, check for success and then celebrate by clapping and allowing the team to eat the candy!

Debrief and Summarize

After the teams have successfully constructed the bridges, debrief the activity:

- ◆ What did you like most about this activity?
- ◆ What made the team successful?
- ◆ What process, if any, did you use to “design” the bridge?
- ◆ Who emerged as the group leader(s)? What characteristics did the leader(s) display?
- ◆ Did everyone participate? If not, why not?
- ◆ Describe the group dynamic.
- ◆ How did individual team members help each other?
- ◆ How did you make decisions?
- ◆ What would you have done differently?
- ◆ What did you learn from this activity?
- ◆ How might you apply these lessons to our team’s work?

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