

**Team building exercises to boost relationships and communication skills
among college students and employees.**

Dr. James, T. A.

Dr. Pilla's College of Education and Research,
New Panvel

Abstract

Researchers have documented the benefits of regular team building and physical activity for a healthy life. Regular physical activity reduces the risk of hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Engaging in regular team building exercises and physical activity improves psychosocial health and decreases stress. This is particularly important for college freshman, who are at increased risk of developing unhealthy behaviors with the transition into a new environment. Common stressors that create unhealthy behaviors and physical inactivity for college students include chronic illnesses, academic load, social life, campus residence, and family events. College students between the ages of 18 and 25 have the lowest amount of regular physical team activity compared with other adults. On average, they engage in less than the recommended daily 30 min of moderate to vigorous exercise. One study that evaluated changes in the team building physical activity of female freshman found that in the transition from home to college, team building activity levels decreased. This is alarming particularly because research has shown that students develop their health behaviors in college. These health behaviors then become well established and are extended for long periods after graduation. Freshmen college students who live on campus are often negatively affected by their new independence. They are left to make their own team building physical activity choices and their practice of regular exercise may be circumvented by the distractions of college life. Communication and team building Physical activity is also affected by many other factors, including race and ethnicity. Research has shown that race and ethnicity are highly correlated with communication and team building activity intentions.

Introduction

Communication is a two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning. In general, communication is a means of connecting people or places. In business, it is a key function of management. An organization cannot operate without communication between levels, departments and employees.

Communication is giving, receiving or exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate media, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions.

In this study, I have looked at various team events that can help your people communicate better. You can use them to get a new group off to a great start, or with an existing team to resolve issues that might be holding it back. Personal and organisational success depends on the quality of employee relationships, trust and respect. Therefore, healthy relationships are necessary for effective teamwork in organisations, colleges and other educational establishments, but relationships will not develop without trust and respect. If employees and students find it difficult to work and study together harmoniously and they cannot build strong relationships, or if there is a lack of trust and respect, academic performance and productivity in organisations and colleges will be hampered (Handler, 1991; Edmondson, 1999). On the other hand, when relationships, trust and respect in a study centre are improved, students and employees feel compelled to focus on their similarities instead of their differences.

Once the relationships, trust and respect among students have improved, the competence in the educational institution and organisation should become enhanced because it is unified to work towards mutual goals (Wilson, 1995). Once the goals and efforts of the institution and organisation are in alignment, the institutions can move forward through strong leadership and supportive systems.

Every individual is different and has some qualities. One can always benefit something or the other from his team members which would help him in the long run. Everyone is hungry for recognitions and praises. One feels motivated to work hard in a team and to live up to the expectations of the other members. Each member is a critic of the other and can correct him whenever the other person is wrong. One always has someone to fall back on at the time of crisis.

Objectives :

1. To discuss the process of building up relationship among students and employees.
2. To recognize and understand the need for improving ones communication skills.
3. To discuss how team work will improve communication skills.
4. To discuss the need for team work in order to have better relationship.

Rules for Effective Communication

Communicating effectively is the keystone to any relationship. Use the tips in this list to make sure your message gets across and to help you listen to what you're being told.

- **Be clear on the objective of the conversation:** Before you open your mouth, make sure that you know why you're doing so. No communication is effective unless you know what you're hoping to achieve by it.
- **Choose your timing:** Make sure that you're both as relaxed as possible, have plenty of time and can't be interrupted.
- **Stick to the matter in hand:** Don't try to get everything of your chest at once. Keep focused on the issue you need to deal with.
- **Avoid starting sentences with 'You . . .':** Don't start out with an accusation or by sounding as though you're making one.
- **Never say never or always:** Categorical statements are provocative and unlikely to be true. Cut them out.
- **Watch your shoulds and shouldn'ts:** Unless you honestly believe that you have the right to take the moral high ground and preach to your partner, don't do it
- **Don't interrupt:** Even if you're 100 per cent sure that your partner's got nothing else worth saying, keep shtum and let him finish. If you want your partner to become a better talker, then first you must become a better listener.
- **Stay calm or postpone the conversation:** When people get angry, reason tends to disappear. Relax or take a time out.
- **Avoid sarcasm, monologues or mind reading:** Don't try to manipulate the situation to your advantage. If you speak to your partner or act in a way that you'd never dream of doing with your boss, then ask yourself why.
- **Express your feelings as well as your opinions:** Saying that you feel unvalued when he's late explains not just what the problem is, but the effect that the problem is having on you.

Commit to Building Relationships

Each person is responsible for the success of our own communications. By committing to building strong, respectful communications with peers in the workplace they're one step closer to making it happen.

Seek First to Understand

Motivational author Stephen Covey said it best--"Seek first to understand." Many people jump to conclusions about the motivations of their coworkers, often attributing negative intent when none was intended. Effective peer-to-peer communications can benefit from taking time to first fully understand the other person's point-of-view by asking open-ended questions and listening--really listening--to the answers.

Avoid Defensiveness

It is not uncommon to react defensively when a coworker criticizes or disagrees with others. But, effective communicators learn to monitor their reactions and avoid defensiveness. Doing this can be difficult and requires a commitment to taking responsibility for communication. A good practice is to ask questions before responding.

Make It Social

While much interaction with coworkers will take place in the work setting, taking advantage of opportunities to interact on a more personal level can help improve relationships. Companies often sponsor activities and events to help employees bond and connect.

Welcome Diverse Viewpoints

One of the benefits of interacting with others, especially those with different opinions or backgrounds, is the ability to broaden perspectives as they begin to understand other viewpoints. Effective peer-to-peer interactions can benefit when employees are open-minded and take time to listen, consider and respond appropriately to opinions that are different from their own.

Be Honest And Direct

Relationships can be damaged when employees avoid direct communication and talk about others "behind their backs." Make a commitment to interact directly and honestly with peers even with those interactions may be difficult and stressful.

The 5 Best Team-Building Activities

David W. Ballard states that there are five best team building activities:

- 1. Volunteering.** The best activities are those that the entire team feels proud to participate in. Research even suggests that helping others makes you feel like you have more time on your hands.
- 2. Physical activities.** Sports make for superb outings that allow employees to work together and get physical exercise. Also, pick your sport carefully: Activities that could result in injury (e.g., football) aren't as effective as milder, non-contact options (e.g., bowling, ice skating).
- 3. Field trips.** Simple, casual trips such as visiting a park or museum or going to a baseball game can work wonders for your team. Companies like Green Mountain Coffee Roasters offer a more extreme example here: They sent employees to Guatemala to learn more about the coffee-making process!
- 4. Professional development activities.** Quality workshops give teams the opportunity to stay up to date with education and develop professional relationships in new settings all without the stigma of going it alone or the awkwardness of trying to network solo.
- 5. Shared meals.** Eating regularly with your team allows for casual conversation in a comfortable environment, letting team members get to know each other outside of work.

The Importance of Team Building

Team building requires a sequence of planned activities aimed at improving teamwork to increase group cohesion and effectiveness. Team building works to build better relationships, increase understanding of group goals and improve communications among members. Many underestimate the importance of team building and think that group cohesion and teamwork occur naturally in groups. Unfortunately, quite the opposite is true; those things must be continuously supported and nurtured by all group members. Just think about a sports team. At the beginning of a season, the coach has to spend time blending a variety of personalities, talents and attitudes together.

How Team Building Works

The objective of team building is improving teamwork to increase group cohesion and effectiveness. There are many different approaches to team building that can be used to meet this objective depending on the difficulties that a particular group is facing. Three of the most common types of team building include personality-based team building, activity-based team building and skills-based team building.

Personality-Based Team Building

Personality-based team building is used to increase the understanding of who each group member is and how to better communicate with one another. Typically group members will take a personality assessment that helps them not only learn about their own personalities but also learn about the personalities of their fellow group members. The assessment results become a learning tool that groups can use to facilitate various developmental activities.

Activity-Based Team Building

Activity-based team building is used to provide a group with challenging tasks aimed at problem-solving, risk-taking, trust-building and paradigm-breaking. These activities may have little to do with what the group does in the real world but serve as an important example for how to apply these skills in their group work.

Exercises to Build Communication Skills

Your team communicates in many different ways: face-to-face, by Skype, by instant message, and by email. But does it do so effectively? Use the exercises below to improve essential communication skills like listening, empathy and verbalisation. Some of these will also strengthen team members' problem-solving, creative-thinking and leadership skills.

Exercise 1: The Blindfold Game

In this activity, blindfolded participants must rely on their partners to navigate an "assault course" successfully.

Uses

This helps to improve communication and listening skills, and to build trust between partners.

People and Materials

- Any size group works well in this exercise.
- Enough blindfolds for half of the participants.
- A large, private room.
- Furniture and other items that you can use as obstacles

Time :

Around 15-20 minutes.

Instructions

1. Scatter furniture and objects around the room before the activity begins. Your course should be challenging, but still safe to navigate around.
2. Put team members into pairs and ask them to stand at one end of the room.
3. One person from each pair should put on the blindfold.
4. The sighted people must guide their partners across the room and give instructions to help them avoid the obstacles.
5. When each team reaches the other side of the room, partners should switch roles and then repeat the exercise.

Advice for the Facilitator

Talk with your group after the exercise. Consider these questions:

- How did participants have to communicate differently to guide their partners?
- How did their listening skills change and adapt when they were blindfolded?

Exercise 2: Card Pieces

In this activity, team members trade pieces of playing cards to put together complete cards.

People and Materials

- Enough people for at least three teams of two.
- Playing cards use between four and six for each person.
- A private room.

Time

- 15 minutes.

Instructions

1. Cut each playing card into half diagonally, then in half diagonally again, so you have four triangular pieces for each card.
2. Mix all the pieces together and put equal numbers of cards into as many envelopes as you have teams.

3. Divide people up into teams of three or four. You need at least three teams. If you're short of people, teams of two will work just as well.
4. Give each team an envelope of playing card pieces.
5. Each team has three minutes to sort its pieces, determine which ones it needs to make complete cards, and develop a bargaining strategy.
6. After three minutes, allow the teams to start bartering for pieces. People can barter on their own or collectively with their team. Give the teams eight minutes to barter.
7. When the time is up, count each team's completed cards. Whichever team has the most wins the round.

Follow-Up

After the activity, ask your team members to think about the strategies they used. Consider these questions:

- Which negotiation strategies worked? Which didn't?
- What could they have done better?

Conclusion

Human beings are naturally social creatures and we crave friendship and positive interactions, just as we do food and water. So it makes sense that the better our relationships are at work, the happier and more productive we're going to be. An effective communicator can be vibrant in the group and make things happen. Team work will improve better relationship among the college students. This team work attitude will help them to achieve laurels for their institutions and for themselves as well.

Good working relationships give us several other benefits: our work is more enjoyable when we have good relationships with those around us. Also, people are more likely to go along with changes that we want to implement, and we're more innovative and creative. When you respect the people that you work with, you value their input and ideas, and they value yours. Working together, you can develop solutions based on your collective insight, wisdom and creativity.

This means taking responsibility for your words and actions. Those who are mindful are careful and attend to what they say, and they don't let their own negative emotions impact the people around them. The better and more effectively you communicate with those around you, the richer your relationships will be. All good relationships depend very much on open, honest communication and this open honest relationship and communication will lead to a strong bond of team work.

References

- Beashel, P. & Taylor, J. (1996) *Advanced Studies in Physical Education and Sport*. UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd.
- Beashel, P. & Taylor, J. (1997) *The World of Sport Examined*. UK: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd.
- BIZLEY, K. (1994) *Examining Physical Education*. Oxford; Heinemann Educational Publishers
- Davis, B. et al. (2000) *Physical Education and the Study of Sport*. UK: Harcourt Publishers Ltd.
- Galligan, F. et al. (2000) *Advanced PE for Edexcel*. Oxford; Heinemann Educational Publishers
- McARDLE, W. et al. (2000) *Essentials of Exercise Physiology*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins
- Crisfield, P. et al. (1999) *The Successful Coach*. 2nd ed. UK; The National Coach Foundation
- Hagger, M. (1999) *Coaching Young Performers*. UK; The National Coach Foundation
- McQuade, S. & Weare, N. (2005) *Assessing in Sport*. UK; Coachwise Business Solutions
- Rogers, J. (2000) *USA Track and Field Coaching Manual*. USA; Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc.
- Elmhorst, J. M. (1999) *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Business and the Professions* McGraw Hill, Singapore
- Spitzberg, B.H. (1994) *The Dark Side of Incompetence* in Adler, R. B. & Elmhorst, J. M. (1999) *Communicating at Work*:
- Stewart, J. and Logan, C. (1998) *Together: Communicating Interpersonally* in Hargie, O., Dickson, D., Tourish, D. (2004)
- Tourish, D. and Hargie, O. (Eds) (2004) *Key Issues in Organisational Communication*. Routledge. London
- Rasberry, R.W., & Lemoine, L.F. (1986) *Effective Managerial Communication* Boston MA Kent.
- Nichols, R. G. and Stevens, L.A. (1990) *Listening to People* Harvard Business Review 68 pp95-102 in Adler, R. B. & Elmhorst, J. M. (1999) *Communicating at Work: Principles and Practices for Business and the Professions* McGraw Hill Singapore
- Rhoda A., Aspi H. (2009) "Principles and Practice of Business Communication" Mumbai Sheth Publishing House. 20th Edition, Mumbai.