

Team Engagement Activity

Infusing key skills throughout the Enterprise

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Clear Communication

When our leaders use clear communication with their teams, the team becomes more aligned and effective. The first of two activities show how even simple tasks can become nearly impossible without clear direction. In the second activity, participants will try and make sense of an overwhelming number of acronyms with a fun game. Wrapping up with a story and leader-led discussion on clear communication best practices for leaders.

Activity Info

Facilitated by:
Managers and above

Estimated time:
In about 30 minutes

Target group size:
For 4 to 12

Target Audience:
Supervisors and above

Before the Session

Prerequisite topic(s):
(None)

Facilitator preparation:
Story about communication for Closing

Participant materials:
Pens and blank sheets of paper
Line Drawings (print)
Mad Libs book (print, cut, and staple)

1 Introduction

3 minutes

1. Welcome participants to the session
 - Trainer introductions
 - Share basic information about yourself, like name, department, and years of service (even if you're well-known by the group)
2. Communicating effectively is important:
 - Communication with customers ensures they understand and meet their service expectations
 - Communication with vendors helps to make sure our business needs are met
 - Communication internally allows us to coordinate with each other
 - And leaders communicate to direct, develop, and connect with their team members
 - All these benefits also apply to our personal lives

Ask participants:

- Who has a story of when you were working on something, thinking you were doing everything right, but after you finished learned that you were doing it wrong the whole time?
 - What was the project and what happened?
 - How did you feel? How did the stakeholder feel?
 - In what ways was there a communication gap? Where?
 - Could the situation have been avoided? How?

3. For that reason, it's important that when we give direction to our team members, vendors, and peers, they have the right information; they're informed and can meet expectations
4. In this session, there will be two activities that show why communicating clearly is important
 - The first activity demonstrates the importance of giving clear directions for others to be successful
 - The second activity will demonstrate how the words we use affect how we work and build relationships with others

Continue to the next section "Directed Drawings"

2.1 Directed Drawings

10 minutes

1. The first activity will demonstrate the importance of clear communication when leaders work with their team members
2. Have participants form into pairs
3. Within each pair, have them choose someone to be the “Leader” and the other as the “Team Member”
 - In the case of an odd number of participants, one group of 3 is fine; the two “Team Members” report to the same leader
 - If pairs take too long to decide, decide for them
4. Have groups get into position:
 - Team Members should sit at a table so it’s easy for them to draw
 - Leaders should stand behind their Team Member(s) in a way so they can give them directions but **not** see their drawing
5. Provide materials to the pairs once they’re all settled
 - Provide each Team Member a blank piece of paper and a pen
 - Hand each Leader a Line Drawing sheet
 - **Recommendation:** Use only two different drawings per session, save some for future sessions
 - Some of the drawings are intended to be especially challenging to draw (letters G through J)
6. Give Leaders a moment to look over their drawing
7. The Leader is going to give as *clear directions* as possible so their Team Member(s) can replicate the line drawing 100% *perfectly*
8. Leaders must follow the rules on the top of the sheet (this is just for fun, follow the rules, no cheating), but the Team Members won’t know them
 - Leaders can’t show the picture to the team, but they can say what it is
 - Leaders can’t look at the progress of their Team Member’s drawing
 - Leaders can’t answer questions from their Team Members, you must deflect them or not give real answers
 - Leaders can’t ask their Team Member questions or “check-in” on progress
9. Answer questions before setting a 3-minute timer for the activity
10. After 3 minutes, have team members share their drawings with their leader, then take turns having pairs share their drawings with everyone
11. Continue with the discussion below

The line drawings included are:

- A. DPS K9 (“Dog”)
- B. Palm Tree
- C. Cards
- D. Drink
- E. Parking Shuttle
- F. Front Desk
- G. Hamburger*
- H. Hummingbird*
- I. Poolside*
- J. Slot Machine*

*Difficult drawing

2.2 Using Clear Language with Abbreviation “Mad Libs”

10 minutes

1. Clear Communication is more than giving good directions, it’s important that we use simple language that others can understand, too

Share Key Point:

- When communicating with others, choose words that are easy to hear and understand. Why is that important?
 - Some team members may not use certain words
 - Not all team members are native English speakers
 - Some team members might be hard of hearing, but also...
 - Work areas outside of offices are usually loud, which make it especially difficult to hear others
 - Yaamava’ lingo isn’t something people know when they’re hired—this includes the many abbreviations and acronyms we use

2. Give one or both examples to show how abbreviations or acronyms can be confusing
 - “FWIW, I think we need the AML training ASAP”
 - “Did you get the BIA report ready?”
3. Ask for volunteers that think they know what *all* those abbreviations mean to raise their hand and share (answer key below)
 - FWIW: Internet slang meaning “For What It’s Worth”
 - AML: Financial and legal term for “Anti-Money Laundering”
 - ASAP: General business abbreviation for “As Soon As Possible”
 - BIA: Multiple meanings depending on context. “Business Impact Analysis”, “Bureau of Indian Affairs”, “Broadband Internet Access”, etc.—which can be confusing
4. Have the group reflect on the number of people that didn’t raise their hands or guessed the acronym wrong—those were all the people that are missing *at least one* key part of what was said!

Ask Key Questions to participants:

- If they were asked to do something—like something urgent for a guest—are you confident it would get done correctly knowing that they were missing critical information?
- What happens when someone doesn’t hear or understand something? Do they always ask for clarification?

5. The next activity will push this type of misunderstanding to the extreme to show how abbreviations can make for frustrating but sometimes comical situations

3.1 Discussion

5 minutes

1. Recap that you led two activities that had different lessons about communication:
 - The first one put us in a situation where our goal was to provide clear directions to team members despite limitations
 - The second one made fun of situations where a team member could misunderstand a critical part of a message

Lead a Discussion:

- Let's bring it all together and brainstorm 3 best practices we can take away from these activities to make communication with our team members more clear
- I want us to think of specific things we, as leaders, can do to make sure these types of issues and misunderstandings don't happen to us
- There's space to write down these best practices as notes on the back of the Mad Libs booklet
- Examples to share if the participants are having a hard time thinking of their own:
 - Don't wait for a team member to ask you a question, you can ask them questions first to check for their understanding
 - Share an overview of the task—what you're asking for—before you get into the details
 - Define team abbreviations, jargon, and buzzwords for new hires before you use those words around them
 - Choosing less complex, easy to hear, easy to understand words will reduce the chance of misunderstandings for everyone

Facilitator's note: Save a copy of the group's best practices, as you might want to reference them for Reinforcement or in future team meetings to hold your team accountable

Continue to the next section "Closing"