

*The speed of the boss is the speed of the team.*

*Lee Iacoca*

## Module Seven: More Team Building Activities



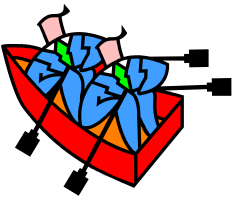
Activities go a long way toward building a strong, cohesive team. Activities are chances to build and practice skills, strengthen relationships, and interact on a deeper level. Team activities give members shared experiences, which they draw on in creating a team identity. Activities can also be used to motivate your team, improve team work, strengthen communication and conflict resolution, and generally create a greater sense of unity.

### Activities to Motivate



Activities can serve as a great motivation. One way to use activities to motivate is to use them as a reward, though this is not the only way. Engaging in shared activities in which they learn new skills, contribute to the organization or community, and otherwise stretch themselves and their abilities can be a powerful motivating force for a team. You can also use activities to help team members – and the team as a whole – discover their motivators. Getting clear on what motivates your people and your team makes it easier to offer appropriate rewards and motivators. Almost any activity can be used to generate motivation.

### Activities to Improve Working Together



Activities are an excellent tool for improving cooperation, collaboration, and other aspects of working together. Activities such as building challenges or cooperative games and sports are ideal for focusing on the way a team works together. When a team has to create a product, navigate an obstacle, or complete a puzzle as a group, they employ skills in communication, collaboration, negotiation, and more. Working together in an activity also adds a level of fun and take some of the pressure off as well. When teams can polish their skills in working together in a fun, supportive, low-stakes environment such as a group activity, they are better able to see what they do well and what needs work. They can then take this and apply it to real work situations.

## Activities to Build Communication



Activities also offer a chance for team members to build communications. Games and formal training scenarios can help communication, but may feel artificial. Engaging in group activities, whether it's a team sport or organizing a charity drive, requires that team members communicate. Because activities are generally lower risk than work deliverables, they give the team a chance to experiment with new communication strategies. Team members may also work with colleagues in activities that they don't interact with regularly in their work duties, so activities offer chances to communicate with a variety of different people. Activities may also offer a chance to communicate in different ways than team member's everyday tasks require, which gives them a chance to try out new skills.

## Activities for Conflict Resolution



Activities offer a great setting for conflict resolution and negotiation. This is true of activities specifically designed to simulate workplace conflicts and allow team members to work on conflict skills. However, it is also true of activities in which people must work together more generally. Conflicts and the need for negotiation arise when people must communicate and cooperate. Team activities offer an environment where team members can try out conflict resolution and negotiation skills. And because activities take place in an environment which is supportive and collegial, people may feel safer trying out negotiation and conflict resolution skills here than they would in conflicts that arise on the job. Studies show that one of the benefits of team activities, whether sports or theater or any other group activity, for children is improved ability to negotiate and resolve conflict. This holds true for the adults on your team, too! Activities allow people a chance to work things out on their own, try out different ways of negotiating and solving conflict, and experiencing how others do these things as well.

## Case Study



Ever since the sales team from another office had merged with hers, Claudia couldn't help but notice things weren't getting done. The new team members had their own ways of doing things, and they didn't mesh very well with the existing teams. There seemed to be a lot of confusion about who was going to do what now that they were merging into one team, and it led to a lot of squabbling over details and delegation. It was really impacting everyone and making it less fun to come to work. On the advice of her friend Juana, Claudia signed her team up for a charity Build a Bike event. They would have to work together to build three bikes, which would be donated to charity. She divided her team into three bike-building teams, making sure that there was a mix of new and existing team members in each. The day of the event started off tense, with a lot of snapping and arguing over who should do what. As the day wore on and the bikes took shape, however, she noticed that people were beginning to find their rhythm. At the end of the day, as they surveyed their finished bikes, Marina, one of the new team members, said, "Wow. We really pulled together today. I wish we could do this back at the office." The next morning Claudia had everyone come in to discuss the bike building event and how they could take what they learned into their everyday jobs.