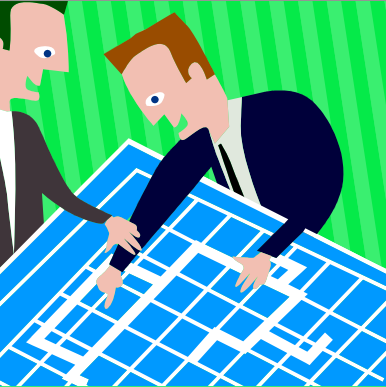


Finding good players is easy. Getting them to play as a team is another story.

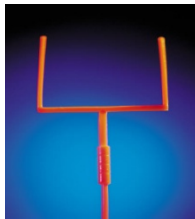
Casey Stengel



Module Ten: Formatting a Team Building Plan

Like any other key initiative, team building needs a plan. Take the time to format a solid team building plan so that you know where you're going. This helps you keep your team abreast of what's happening, what they can expect, and what they need to do. Create your team building plan with input from your team, as well as your own research. Create a plan that is manageable and realistic, yet diverse and fun.

Define the Goal



The most important step is to define the goal of your team building plan. Just saying you want to “build a team” isn't enough. What needs to change or improve on your team? This will help you focus your team building efforts. Also take into account the circumstances of your team. Are you spread out over many office locations? How large is your team? What special considerations are there, such as remote employees or heavy travel schedules? Some common goals for team building include:

- Improved interpersonal communication
- Improved collaboration
- Higher morale
- Greater camaraderie
- Integration of new team members into an existing team
- Motivating the team

Based on your goal or goals, choose activities that best support what you are trying to achieve. Be sure to evaluate your plan regularly in case your goals change.

In addition to an overall goal for your team building plan, it is key to define a goal for each team building activity and clearly articulate it.

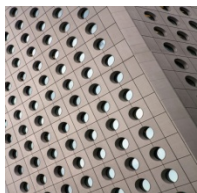
Consult Team Members



Your team members are your best source of information when you plan team building activities. There is no sense in scheduling social gatherings, for example, that no one comes to! Take the time to ask your team what kind of activities they'd like to engage in and what they would like to do. Also ask them what they think could be improved about your team and how you might go about making those improvements occur.

Taking time to consult your team shows that you want to create a team building plan that works for them, and that you are invested in what they care about and have to say. Check in with your team often about different activities. Also encourage your team to come to you when they have new ideas for team building activities.

Research and Create Structure



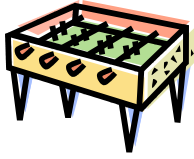
After you've consulted your team, research their suggestions. Look at what industry leaders and your colleagues are doing in terms of team building. Spend some time surfing the Internet, which is a wealth of team building ideas, as well as looking at books of team building activities and games. Figure out what types of activities are possible and practical for you to do. This may include creating a budget, contacting outside vendors and consultants, and otherwise examining the logistics of various activities. Then create a structure. Decide in what order you will do activities or what goals you will address first. Determine whether you'll have monthly, bimonthly, or more/less frequent team building activities. If possible, start putting these on a calendar. Then communicate with your team what this schedule will be like. Let them know what to expect. Having a structure in place helps make it easier to consistently implement your team building activities and plans.

Keep It Fun



Perhaps the most important thing when creating a team building plan is to keep it fun! If team building is a drudgery, your team is not likely to benefit from it. Find ways to keep even meetings and trainings infused with a sense of fun. Balance more task-oriented sessions with fun activities. Have a sense of play. Make note as you research of ideas for infusing team building with levity and fun. This will help ensure that your team gets the greatest benefit from your plan. And don't be afraid to revise your plan if you start to implement it and realize that no one's having any fun!

Case Study



Sylvia was beginning to create her team building plan for next year. She asked her team what kind of things they wanted to do. “I’d like us to have more meals together,” Dixie said. Garth offered, “Laser tag was fun. Could we do that again?”

Others mentioned wanting to have more fun competitions, especially during the winter when the weather brought everyone down. Sylvia took their ideas back to her office and did some research about indoor venues for games like laser tag. She read up on some silly in office games that are good for keeping spirits up. Her goals for the team were to increase camaraderie and continue improving their interpersonal relationships. She instituted a monthly themed potluck, and scheduled some fun in office activities, then sent the calendar to her team.