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## EASY & EFFECTIVE TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

*YOU CAN DO RIGHT IN YOUR OWN OFFICE*



# TEAM BUILDING:



## IT'S A TOOL FOR HELPING A TEAM OF INDIVIDUALS WORK BETTER TOGETHER.

**F**or instance, team building activities can help individuals **learn different ways of communicating** and help **develop more positive perspectives on change**. Or, if you prefer a “glass half empty” perspective, it’s a way to work on team issues such as poor communication, lack of trust or unrealistic expectations.

The reality is that many people talk about working together as a team, but few people really know how to develop an effective team.

Working as a team is a journey and certainly isn’t achieved through one meeting, but a corporate team building event could be just the thing your team needs to kick start their development.

A well-organized team building activity can provide a fun context for developing practical experiences that your team will remember forever.

The Small Group Research journal paper “Does Team Building Work?” analyzed data from 103 studies conducted between 1950 and 2007 and provides strong evidence that team building can have measurable, positive effects on team performance. Positive effects such as:

**Building Relationships** – Employees interact more freely allowing for closer relationships to be built.

**Increasing Creativity** – Thinking outside of the box is necessary for creativity.

**Learning To Work Together** – Working with different personalities while overcoming obstacles is essential for a team to run smoothly & efficiently.

**Education** – Take the opportunity to train employees in a relaxed, fun environment.

# BUILDING VS BONDING:

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TEAM BUILDING & TEAM BONDING:

**T**he key difference between team building and team bonding is that team building is based on the theory that the group, or team, has specific dynamics in the workplace that can be improved upon by “building up” specific individual and team skills.

**Team bonding** activities are centered on improving the chemistry between group members. In short, it’s fun. Bonds between group members can absolutely be strengthened with group activities.

**There are 3 core types of team building/bonding events:**

- ➔ Off-site retreats or day events
- ➔ Charity events
- ➔ In-office activities

**T**his guide will go in to detail helping you better know and understand in-office activities for team building and bonding.

In-office activities are something that you can do on your own, in the office, without having to hire a facilitator or schedule an off-site event.

**The in-office activities that we will be covering fall into these five categories:**

### **Team Building:**

- ➔ Communication
- ➔ Creative Thinking
- ➔ Company/Education

### **Team Bonding:**

- ➔ Getting to Know Each Other
- ➔ Fun for The Whole Team

**I**f you’re still having trouble deciding if your team would benefit more from a team building or team bonding emphasis, don’t be afraid to provide a blend of both types of activities until you best diagnose your team’s needs.

# TEAM BUILDING: COMMUNICATION

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## **Blind Drawing:**

Divide your team into groups of two each. Have each person sit with their back to the other. One person will have a picture. The other person will have a blank sheet of paper and a pen.

The team member with the picture must not show the other person the image. Instead, they are to describe the image without using words that give it away, while the other team member is to draw what is being described.

*For example, the picture might be of an elephant standing on a ball. The description cannot be "draw an elephant on the ball" but instead must use other adjectives and directions. After a set time limit, the drawing time ends and both team members view the original picture and the drawing.*

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## **2. Salt and Pepper:**

Come up with a list of well-known pairs (think peanut butter and jelly, Mario and Luigi or salt and pepper). Write one half of each pair on the sheets of paper (Mario on one piece, Luigi on another, and so on).

Tape one paper to each person's back, then have everyone mingle and try to figure out the word on their back. The rule: they can only ask each other yes or no questions.

Once they figure out their word, they need to find the other half of their pair. When they find each other, have them sit down and find three things they have in common while the rest of the team continues.

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## **3. Minefield:**

Use boxes, office chairs, water bottles, etc. to create an obstacle course of "mines" within your empty space. Divide the group into pairs, where one partner is blindfolded. The other must guide that person from one end of the course to another without setting off any mines. The person guiding their partner cannot enter the course and must only use verbal instructions to get their partner through.

Depending on the number of people you have and how difficult you want this activity to be, you can vary the number of pairs trying to complete the course at the same time so that pairs have to work harder to listen to each other and communicate clearly.

# TEAM BUILDING: CREATIVE THINKING

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## **What's On Your Desk:**

Have each team member bring one item from their desk to the exercise. Then, tell them that this item is going to be their new product, and that they must come up with a name, logo, slogan, and marketing plan for it.

This works best with a set amount of time and could be done individually, or in small groups if desired. Once the time is up, allow each person to present the item and give a two minute presentation on their "product" as if they were selling it. Discuss, as a group, which products were successfully sold and why.

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## **Classify This:**

Collect a variety of objects and put them in the center of a table. The broader the variety, the better (*e.g. office supplies, dinnerware, jewelry, toys, game pieces, etc.*). Aim for at least 20 different objects. The goal is to collect items that, at first glance, have no apparent connection.

Break the team into groups, giving each group a sheet of paper and pen. Make sure they have a clear view of all the objects. Instruct them to classify the objects into four groups, writing down the groupings on their sheet of paper.

They should not let the team groups hear what they are doing. When the time is up, have a spokesperson for each group reveal how they classified the objects, and why. Reasons might vary, from the function of the object to how it looks, or the material it is made of.

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## **Plane Crash:**

Imagine this... the plane carrying your team has crashed on a desert island. Teams must choose only 12 items from around the office that they think would be most useful in their survival, ranking each item in order of importance. Alternatively, have individuals make their selections first and then have the group discuss and come to a consensus.



# TEAM BUILDING: COMPANY/EDUCATION

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## Office Trivia:

Create 20-25 trivia questions about your workplace. Such as: "What color are the kitchen tiles?" "How many people are in the IT department?" "How many windows are there in the entire office?" "What brand are the computer monitors?" "What month of the year is most common for birthdays among our employees?"

Come up with a series of questions specific to your workplace and test your team's knowledge. Allow them to pair in teams to go find answers or come up with answers together.



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## Company Coat of Arms:

Have teams create your company coat of arms. In the first space, draw something that represents a recent achievement. In the second space, draw something that reflects your company values. In the third space, draw something that represents where you see the company going in the future. Post the finished coat of arms in your office.



# TEAM BUILDING: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

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## **Beach Ball Toss:**

All you need for this activity is a beach ball that's been divided with random questions written on it. (Only you, as the manager should know what questions are on the ball).

Questions can be simple or more complex, i.e. what's your favorite dessert? what are your weekly goals? if conflict were to arise within your department, how would you go about handling that? - Have the participants stand in a circle and begin tossing the ball around.

Whoever catches the ball needs to introduce themselves and answer the question closest to their pinky finger.

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## **Three Truths & A Lie:**

Give each team member four identical slips of paper. Instruct them to write down three truths and one lie. The lie should be believable to some extent (i.e. not "I've been to Mars"), and the tenor of the truths and lie should not be offensive or crude.

Go around the group, one at a time, and have them read the truths and lie in random order. When they are finished, the team should discuss which they think are the truths and which are the lies.

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## **You Get One Question:**

Come up with several scenarios in which a person would be chosen to do something. For example, it might be a new job hire, marriage, leading an organization, or commanding an army.

Ask each team member to come up with the "perfect" question — but only one! — that should be asked of a person that would determine if they were the perfect fit for the scenario. Have each team member write their question down.

When all scenarios have been covered, discuss the questions as a group and see what each team member thinks would be the perfect question. The perfect question that each team member comes up with will reflect their motives and what they think matters the most.

# TEAM BUILDING: FUN FOR THE WHOLE TEAM

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## **Battle of the Air-bands:**

Ever seen one of Jimmy Fallon's famous lip sync battles? Expand the idea to a full battle of the air-bands. Split your group up into teams of 3-4 people and let them decide who will be the singers, guitarists, drummers, etc.

Give them some time to choose, rehearse, and perform a lip synced version of whatever work-friendly song they like. If they have a few days, teams can dress up or bring props.

After the performances, teams can vote on the winner (with the caveat that no one can vote for their own band). Or, let a neighboring department in on the fun and have them choose the winner.

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## **Telephone, On Sticky Notes:**

Give each team member a sticky note and have them draw something simple on the paper, without talking to anyone else. Each person then passes the paper to the right, and is given a new sticky note. Each team member looks at the drawing they now have, places the new blank sticky note on top to hide it and writes what they think the picture is of.

Both papers are passed to the right again and a new sticky note is passed to all participants. Each person should read the description on the top sticky note, making sure to not view the picture below it. Then placing their new sticky note on top, carefully hiding the description, they should draw a picture of what they read. This continues, where each pass alternates between drawing what is described and determining what was drawn, until the paper is back to the original owner. Lastly, have each member reveal what was written and drawn.

# CONCLUSION

## TEAMS NEED ORGANIZED OPPORTUNITIES TO BOND & GROW

**S**ure, fun activities outside of work help foster good team work but don't forget that many teambuilding activities can be held in your office and without the use of an outside facilitator.

**We want to make sure to give recognition to some of our favorite resources on team building.** You may find many of these activities and more by visiting their webpages and blog posts. They always have a fresh idea for facilitators and team leaders.

➔ [wheniwork.com](https://wheniwork.com)

➔ [wrike.com](https://wrike.com)

➔ [refreshleadership.com](https://refreshleadership.com)

➔ [innovativeteambuilding.co.uk](https://innovativeteambuilding.co.uk)

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Refreshing Mountain** is a year-round retreat and adventure center providing family friendly fun and refreshment for over 30 years in Lancaster County, PA. Their experienced facilitators work with event planners to organize team building events that are perfect for corporate events, school field trips and other large group events. They also provide facilities and services for overnight retreats. The center is built on 80 acres of beautiful Pennsylvania woodland and is conveniently located just 25 minutes north of Lancaster, 30 minutes east of Hershey and 90 minutes west of Philadelphia.

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