

A LEADERSHIP-TOOLS.COM PUBLICATION



Team Building Activities

Leader's Guide

12 activities that strengthen team relationships and improve how people work together. Discover how to build and schedule your own team building activities.

BY

Richard Gorham

Guide Contents

Twelve activities, the worksheets that go with them, and the planning pages at the back.

SECTION	WHAT COMES WITH IT	PAGE
Getting Started		
Welcome and How to Use This Guide		3
Choose the Right Activity	<i>The activity picker</i>	4
Facilitation Essentials		5
The 12 Activities		
The Way I Work	<i>Working With Me worksheet</i>	6
Who Knew?	<i>Question bank</i>	10
Lost in Translation	<i>Drawing cards</i>	13
The Missing Piece	<i>Evidence cards</i>	16
What Went Wrong?	<i>Team worksheet</i>	20
Crazy Enough to Work?	<i>Idea sheet</i>	23
Who's All-In?	<i>Team Habits Self-Check</i>	26
Start, Stop, Continue	<i>Team worksheet</i>	29
Team Battle Cry	<i>Team worksheet</i>	32
The Ripple Effect	<i>Team worksheet</i>	35
The Difference You Make	<i>Recognition notes</i>	38
What Great Looks Like	<i>Team worksheet</i>	41
Build Your Own		
Build Your Team Building Activity	<i>The five steps</i>	44
A Few Tips from Experience	<i>Pre-flight checklist</i>	45
Build Your Own Team Activity	<i>Planning worksheet</i>	46
Plan to Lead the Experience	<i>Facilitator worksheet</i>	47
Putting It on the Calendar		
Team Building Activity Scheduler	<i>Six-month schedule</i>	48
Sample Six-Month Team Building Schedule	<i>A worked example</i>	49
Start Building a Stronger Team	<i>The closing word</i>	50
Appendix		
Fun Meeting Game Kit	<i>Seven printable game sheets</i>	51

Team Building Activities Leader's Guide

Here you will find a practical collection of enjoyable activities that strengthen team relationships and improve how people work together.

Welcome and How to Use This Guide

Strong teams develop through shared experiences, honest conversations, and learning to work better together.

You don't need a full-day event to make that happen. Sometimes 25 or 30 minutes of meaningful interaction can make a real difference.

This guide offers 12 practical activities across six categories. Some invite laughter and connection. Others help teams communicate, solve problems, take responsibility, or recognize the contributions of others.

Each team building activity is designed to fit into everyday leadership situations.

Getting started

Choose activities that support what your team needs. Use the activity picker on the following page. You can lead the activities in any order.

Make time for the experience. Consider one activity a month to include in a regular team meeting or schedule a meeting specifically for team building. Choose a rhythm that works for your team.

Read the activity first. Each includes a purpose, preparation, timed steps, facilitator notes, and supporting materials when needed. Preparation time is separate from activity time.

Let people discover the lesson. Explain the task without giving away its point. A little surprise, laughter, or an unexpected insight can make the experience fun and memorable.

Keep follow-up reasonable. Some exercises produce ideas worth acting on; others succeed simply because teammates connect or gain a fresh perspective. Not every activity needs an action plan.

The goal is not to add more work. It is to create meaningful moments that help people work better together.

Choose the Right Activity

Choose an exercise based on your team's needs, the time available, and the experience you want to create. Activities can be completed in any order.

Team need	Activity and purpose	Time / prep	Group size
Connection & Trust	Who Knew? <i>Discover unexpected connections</i>	25 / 5 min	Whole team
	The Way I Work <i>Understand working preferences</i>	25 / 5 to 10 min*	Pairs
Communication & Collaboration	Lost in Translation <i>Explore misunderstood instructions</i>	25 / 5 min	Pairs
	The Missing Piece <i>Improve decisions through shared information</i>	30 / 10 min	Groups of 4 to 6
Problem Solving & Creativity	What Went Wrong? <i>Anticipate project risks</i>	25 / 5 to 10 min	Whole team
	Crazy Enough to Work? <i>Find value in unusual ideas</i>	25 / 5 min	Whole team
Accountability & Execution	Who's All-In? <i>Recognize strengths and choose a way to grow</i>	25 / 5 min	Whole team
	Start, Stop, Continue <i>Agree on manageable improvements</i>	30 / 5 min	Whole team
Team Alignment & Purpose	Team Battle Cry <i>Put shared values into words</i>	30 / 5 min	Whole team
	The Ripple Effect <i>Understand our impact on other groups</i>	30 / 5 min	Whole team, then small groups
Recognition & Team Culture	The Difference You Make <i>Express genuine appreciation</i>	25 / 5 min	Pairs
	What Great Looks Like <i>Define observable great work</i>	25 / 5 min	Groups of 2 or 3

* The Way I Work also asks participants to complete part of a worksheet before the meeting.

Whole team activities work best with up to about 15 people. If your team is larger, break into smaller groups so more people can contribute. Pairs and small-group activities work with a team of any size, and every activity includes a virtual version. For a new team, try *Who Knew?*; for communication challenges, try *Lost in Translation*; for appreciation, try *The Difference You Make*.

Facilitation Essentials

You don't need to be a professional facilitator. A little preparation, a positive tone, and thoughtful questions go a long way.

1. Make participation comfortable

Invite contributions without requiring personal stories, public ratings, or detailed explanations. Respect what participants choose to keep private. Encourage, but don't force engagement.

2. Assume positive intent

When differences or frustrations arise, stay curious. Focus on actions and work practices, not personal blame.

3. Make room for different voices

Some teammates speak readily; others need a moment to think. Use quiet reflection, pairs, or small groups to broaden participation.

4. Protect the discovery

Explain what participants need to do, but don't announce the lesson before they have experienced it.

5. Keep it enjoyable

Allow laughter and surprises without forcing enthusiasm. A useful moment of connection doesn't need to become an action item.

6. Ask questions people can answer

Discuss what was discovered in the activity and how it relates to work. Avoid obvious questions or hypothetical details participants never experienced.

7. Follow through thoughtfully

Act on manageable improvements. When an issue calls for more investigation or coordination, commit to exploring it and reporting back, not to a quick fix you cannot guarantee.

These are opportunities to learn together. Team building activities should not be tests, competitions, or used for performance reviews. The most useful outcome from team building activities is what teammates carry forward into their everyday work.

The Way I Work

Connection & Trust • Communication & Collaboration

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 to 10 minutes

Discover the differences that help a team work better together

Why this activity matters

People can work side by side for years and still misunderstand how their colleagues prefer to communicate, decide, or respond under pressure. One person asks questions to understand; another hears resistance. One person wants to talk immediately; another needs time to think. This activity replaces uncertainty with conversations and turns those conversations into practical ways to collaborate.

The outcome

Each participant creates a one-page “Working With Me” profile they control and can update. Together, the team identifies one practical way to make collaboration easier. No personality labels, scoring, or required personal disclosures.

Before the meeting | 5 to 10 minutes of preparation

Share the “Working With Me” worksheet ahead of time. Invite participants to complete only the first six prompts, ending with “A strength teammates can count on me for is...” The final three prompts are completed during or after the partner conversation. Prepare your own example, choose the deadline scenario below, and arrange pairs (or one trio for odd numbers). Sharing is voluntary; work-related answers are enough.

1. Set the stage | 5 minutes

Say: “We all have ways of working that feel natural to us. But what feels helpful to one person may feel frustrating to someone else. Today we’re going to test how well we understand one another, then find a few ways to make teamwork easier.”

Share one example from your own profile. Keep it brief and concrete. Avoid suggesting there is a right working style.

2. The assumption challenge | 5 minutes

Give everyone this scenario: “A deadline moves forward by two days. Would you rather (A) talk through the changes together right away or (B) read a short summary first and then meet?” Each person privately chooses A, B, or “it depends,” and writes why. In pairs, partners predict each other’s choice before revealing their own. Invite a few quick reactions: What did you assume? What did you learn?

Leader cue: The point is not who guessed correctly. It is that a preference can have a sensible reason that others cannot see.

3. Compare profiles | 10 minutes

Since participants have completed their first six prompts in advance, pair them for a focused discussion. Ask partners to share the answers they choose, identify one similarity, one difference, and one useful adjustment. Invite each pair to share one work-related discovery with the group, with both partners' agreement.

4. Turn insights into action | 5 minutes

Building on the discoveries just shared, ask: *"Where might different preferences create friction?"* and *"What could we do differently?"* Invite each participant to name one small adjustment they could make. No formal commitments or tracking are required.

Close by saying: *"We don't have to work alike to work well together. We do have to understand what helps each other do our best."* Thank participants for what they chose to share.

Facilitator Notes

Leader's insight

Strong teamwork doesn't require identical personalities or preferences. A colleague who asks detailed questions may be seeking clarity, not resisting. A quieter teammate may be processing, not disengaged. The leader's job is to make room for these differences and help the team build reliable ways of working together.

What to watch for

Listen for assumptions stated as facts ("She never wants to collaborate") and invite a more useful question ("What helps her contribute?"). Keep the focus on observable work habits. If a participant doesn't want to share a particular answer, move on without explanation.

If the discussion stalls

Ask: *"Think about your last handoff or meeting. What information would have made it easier?"* Or offer your own harmless example of a mismatch. Don't turn the exercise into a discussion of who is difficult.

Virtual adaptation

Use a private document for individual profiles, breakout rooms for pairs, and a shared document only for team-wide commitments. Don't require anyone to post their full profile publicly.

Optional follow-up

At a future team meeting, briefly ask whether anyone has used something they learned about a colleague's working preferences. Invite examples if people wish to share. No written updates or formal review are needed.

Success looks like

Participants can describe at least one working preference they understand better and identify one practical adjustment that could make collaboration easier. A useful discovery and a good conversation are worthwhile outcomes, even without a formal action plan.

Illustrative example

Jordan likes to brainstorm aloud. Priya prefers to read the problem before discussing it. Jordan initially interprets Priya's silence as disinterest; Priya experiences unexpected brainstorming meetings as rushed. They agree that Jordan will send a short problem statement before complex discussions, and Priya will signal when she is ready to explore options.

Working With Me

Participant worksheet • Complete the first six prompts before the meeting if possible. Complete the final three during or after the partner discussion. Share only what you are comfortable sharing.

I do my best work when...

A helpful way to communicate with me is...

When making a decision, I usually prefer...

When a deadline changes unexpectedly, what helps me is...

Something people sometimes misunderstand about my work style is...

A strength teammates can count on me for is...

DURING OR AFTER THE PARTNER CONVERSATION

One small thing that would help us collaborate better is...

A discovery from my partner conversation

One adjustment I am willing to try

Who Knew?

Connection & Trust

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

Unexpected discoveries that bring teammates closer together

Why this activity matters

People can work together every day and still know surprisingly little about the experiences, interests, and strengths their colleagues bring to the team. This lighthearted activity uncovers unexpected connections, gives everyone a chance to be heard, and reminds us that the person behind a job title has even more to offer.

The outcome

Team members learn something new about one another and identify a connection they can build on. No scoring, personal disclosures, or required follow-up. The experience should feel like a conversation, not an interview.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Review the question bank at the end of this activity and choose six to eight questions that suit your team. Share the list of questions with everyone. Participants may pass on any question without explaining why. In a virtual meeting, use the chat to display questions.

1. Set the stage | 5 minutes

Say: *"We spend a lot of time working alongside people without discovering the interesting things that make them who they are. Today we are going to change that a little. You might be surprised by what we have in common."*

Invite participants to choose one question they would enjoy answering. Add a few to your prepared questions. Steer away from questions about family circumstances, beliefs, health, or anything too personal.

2. Pick a question, share a story | 10 minutes

Choose a question and answer it yourself briefly. Next, invite a teammate to answer the same question. That person can choose to answer the same question or choose a different question to answer. Now that person chooses the next, preferably someone who hasn't spoken yet. Keep answers to about 30 to 45 seconds so everyone has a chance. A participant may choose a different question or pass. Continue until each person has had an opportunity to speak.

Leader cue: If someone mentions an unexpected talent or experience, allow a little laughter or curiosity before moving on. The stories are the activity. Don't rush through them like a timed quiz.

3. Connect the dots | 5 minutes

Ask: *“Who heard something they did not know before?”* and *“Did anyone discover an interest, experience, or strength they share with someone else?”* Invite a few quick responses. Don’t insist that every person reveal a surprise.

4. Bring it back to teamwork | 5 minutes

Ask: *“What might we miss when we only know our teammates by their roles?”* and *“How could knowing one another better help us work together?”* Close by inviting everyone to remember one thing they learned about a teammate. No written commitment is needed.

Facilitator Notes

Leader’s insight

Trust often grows through small, ordinary moments of connection. Knowing that a teammate has repaired cars, taught a class, learned a new language, or enjoys the same hobby can change how we see that person. Those discoveries may reveal resources within the team, but they don’t need to be “useful” to justify the conversation. Feeling seen and included matters, too.

What to watch for

Make space for quieter teammates without putting them on the spot. Don’t turn an interesting personal detail into an assignment or assume that a hobby means someone wants to become the office expert. Model brief, comfortable answers and respect anyone who chooses to pass.

If the discussion stalls

Choose an easy question and answer first, such as *“What was your first paid job?”* Give people a moment to think. If a prompt lands awkwardly, skip it. The aim is curiosity and connection, not completing a predetermined list of questions.

Virtual adaptation

Post one question at a time in the meeting chat. Invite participants by name only after asking who would like to go next, or use volunteers. No physical object is required. For larger virtual teams, use breakout groups of four to six and share a few discoveries afterward.

Optional follow-up

In a future conversation, refer naturally to something a teammate shared, if they were comfortable sharing it. No tracking form or scheduled review is necessary.

Success looks like

People laugh or lean into the conversation, everyone has a comfortable opportunity to participate, and at least a few teammates leave knowing something they did not know before. A useful connection is a bonus, not a requirement.

Illustrative example

During the activity, Erin mentions that she once coached a youth robotics team. Malik says he has been trying to learn more about robotics with his niece. They swap ideas after the meeting. Their manager doesn't assign them anything; the connection develops on its own.

Who Knew? Question Bank

Facilitator reference • Choose six to eight questions before the activity. Participants may suggest their own, choose a different question, or pass.

Easy starters

- What was your first paid job, and what did it teach you?
- What is something you can do that teammates might not guess?
- What would you enjoy learning if you had a free afternoon?
- What is a hobby or interest you could talk about for five minutes if you had to? (You don't have to, but you could if you had to.)

Stories and discoveries

- What is an unexpectedly useful skill you learned outside work?
- What is an accomplishment you are proud of, small or large?
- What is a place you visited that surprised you, positively or negatively?
- What is a piece of advice you received that has stayed with you?

Connections to work

- What is something about your work that you wish teammates knew more about?
- What is one thing a colleague taught you that made work easier?
- What type of problem do you secretly enjoy solving?
- What is something you would be happy to show or teach a teammate?

Lost in Translation

Communication & Collaboration

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

A drawing challenge that reveals what gets lost between instructions and understanding

Why this activity matters

A message can sound perfectly clear to the person giving it and mean something different to the person receiving it. This activity makes those gaps visible through two quick drawing challenges. The mismatches bring some laughter, and the second round shows why asking questions with clarity and confirming understanding matter at work.

The outcome

Participants experience the difference between one-way instructions and two-way communication. Each person leaves with a practical reminder for their next handoff or conversation. No artistic ability, scoring, or follow-up is required.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Print or share the two drawing cards at the end of this activity. Keep the cards hidden from the person who will be drawing. Provide blank paper and pens. Pair participants, or use a trio with one observer if needed. Plan how partners will sit back to back or use separate screens.

1. Set the stage | 5 minutes

Say: *“Have you ever given instructions that seemed completely clear, only to discover the result was nothing like what you pictured? Today we are going to see how easily that happens, and what makes it better.”*

Pair everyone up. Explain that the goal is not artistic talent. Each pair will attempt two drawings, and neither partner may look at the other person’s page until the round ends.

2. Round one: No questions allowed | 5 minutes

Give Partner A the Shape Challenge card and Partner B a blank page. Partner A has two minutes to describe the picture using only words. Partner B draws what they hear but cannot ask questions, gesture, or see the card. Call time, reveal the original, and invite everyone to compare the two drawings.

Leader cue: Let the room enjoy the differences. Don’t award points or identify the “best” artist. Ask briefly: *“What did your partner say that you interpreted differently than they intended?”*

3. Round two: Questions welcome | 10 minutes

Switch roles. Give the new describer the Work Handoff card. This time the drawer may ask as many clarifying questions as needed, and the describer can check understanding, but the card must remain hidden. Allow four minutes to draw, then compare results. Ask pairs what changed when questions were allowed.

Keep the debrief practical: *“What changed when you were allowed to ask questions and clarify instructions?”*

4. Bring it back to work | 5 minutes

Ask: *“Where do we give one-way instructions without realizing it?”* and *“What is one question we could ask more often to make expectations clearer?”* Invite a few examples from everyday teamwork.

Close by saying: *“Clear communication is not just what we say. It is what the other person understands.”*

Facilitator Notes

Leader’s insight

An instruction may feel clear to the person giving it while the listener fills in missing details. Invite questions, confirm what success looks like, and ask people to explain the intended outcome in their own words. Clarity is a shared responsibility.

What to watch for

Don’t blame the drawer. Notice vague words such as “above” or “near.” In round two, notice whether partners actively invite questions or merely allow them.

If the discussion stalls

Ask: *“What did you picture when you heard ‘beside’?”* Share a harmless example of a time your own directions were unclear.

Virtual adaptation

Use breakout pairs. Send each describer the image privately. The drawer uses paper or a digital whiteboard and shares only when the round ends.

Success looks like

Participants enjoy the reveal, notice how assumptions distort instructions, and identify a question that could improve their next handoff.

Illustrative example

Ana asks Ben to draw a square above a circle. Ben puts the two shapes touching, while Ana pictured a gap. Both followed what they thought were clear instructions. In round two, Ben asks whether the shapes touch and catches the difference before drawing.

Lost in Translation: Drawing Cards

Facilitator materials • Share each card privately with the describer. Keep the drawing hidden from the partner who is drawing.

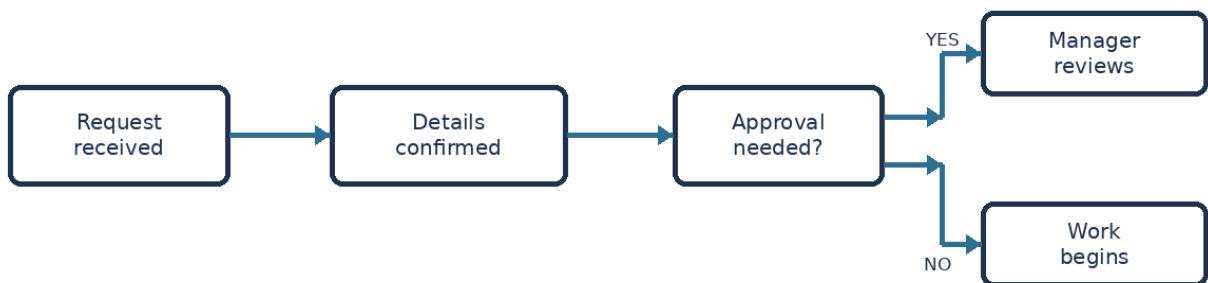
ROUND ONE | SHAPE CHALLENGE

The describer explains the shapes. The drawer cannot ask questions.



ROUND TWO | WORK HANDOFF

Switch roles. The drawer may ask questions and confirm details.



The Missing Piece

Communication & Collaboration • Team Decision-Making

ACTIVITY TIME | 30 minutes PREPARATION | 10 minutes

A quick decision challenge that reveals the value of different perspectives

Why this activity matters

A group can reach a confident decision while overlooking information held by someone in the room. This activity creates a familiar workplace dilemma, adds a few surprises, and shows how better decisions often depend on asking, listening, and making room for different perspectives.

The outcome

Participants make an initial choice, discover information that changes the picture, and work together to recommend a practical solution. The goal is to experience how an open discussion can improve a decision.

Before the meeting | 10 minutes of preparation

Print one set of six Evidence Cards for every group of four to six, then cut the cards apart. Keep the cards face down until Step 3. Prepare to display the scenario and three options below. For virtual teams, send each card privately when prompted. No specialized knowledge is needed.

1. Set the stage | 5 minutes

Say: *"We make decisions every day with the information we have. But what if a teammate knows something important that no one thinks to ask about? Today you will choose a course of action and determine what changes as a result."*

Read the scenario: *"Your team is spending too much time correcting incomplete work after it has been passed from one employee or team to another. Your manager has asked you to choose ONE improvement to test next month. You can try (A) refresher training, (B) a daily ten-minute huddle, or (C) a standard email to the team with the key information needed to complete the work."*

2. Make your first call | 5 minutes

Have everyone choose A, B, or C privately and write down one reason. In groups of four to six, invite quick opinions, but don't try to reach consensus yet. Ask for a show of hands to see which option is most popular. Keep the first choices visible.

Leader cue: Resist explaining the options or guiding the choice. There is no trick answer to guess. The point is to notice what people assume when information is limited.

3. Reveal the missing pieces | 10 minutes

Explain that each participant will receive information the others may not have. Give everyone one Evidence Card. In small groups some people may get two cards. Allow a minute to read silently.

Have participants share their information with the group. Encourage questions and discussion about how these new facts might affect their original decision.

Leader cue: Remind the group that the goal is not to defend their first choice, but to make the best decision with the information now available.

4. Make the better decision | 10 minutes

Ask each group to reconsider the three options and agree on a final recommendation. They should explain what they chose, what information influenced their decision, and what they would still need to confirm before acting.

Invite each group to briefly share its recommendation.

Ask: *“What information changed your thinking?”* and *“Did anyone raise something the group might otherwise have overlooked?”*

Close by saying: *“The best decisions come after the facts are on the table and somebody has challenged the first assumption, which matters more than how quickly everyone agrees.”*

Facilitator Notes

Leader’s insight

The best contribution in a meeting may come from someone who knows a detail others missed. Good leadership is not simply collecting votes or pushing for agreement. It is making sure important information reaches the table, asking what evidence is missing, and allowing the team to challenge its first conclusion.

What to watch for

Notice whether the group hears every card before deciding, whether someone changes their mind, and whether confident voices dominate the conversation. Different facts may favor different options. Don’t imply that a unanimous answer is necessarily the best answer.

If the discussion stalls

Ask: *“Which fact surprised you?”* or *“What would make one of these options fail?”* If the group divides, ask what each side is trying to protect. A thoughtful disagreement is useful evidence that people are examining the tradeoffs.

Virtual adaptation

Use breakout rooms of four to six. Post the scenario and options for everyone, then send Evidence Cards in private messages or separate documents. Have each group report its recommendation and one piece of information that affected it.

Optional follow-up

Before a real team decision, ask: *“What information might someone else have that we have not heard yet?”* Schedule an additional meeting if needed.

Success looks like

People notice that their first choice rested on incomplete information, invite viewpoints they initially overlooked, and can explain why their final recommendation is better informed. Teams may reach different defensible conclusions.

Illustrative example

Four colleagues initially vote for daily huddles because the problem sounds like poor communication. After hearing that shifts rarely overlap, one teammate asks how a huddle would reach the whole team. They choose a standard handoff email instead, while recognizing that they still need to test whether it solves the problem.

The Missing Piece: Evidence Cards

Facilitator materials • Give each participant one or two cards during Step 3. Don't distribute all the facts before the first decision.

THE SIX PIECES OF EVIDENCE

<p>CARD 1 WHERE ERRORS HAPPEN</p> <p>Most corrections involve assignments handed from one shift to another, not work completed within the same shift.</p>	<p>CARD 2 PROCESS KNOWLEDGE</p> <p>In a recent check-in, most team members could accurately explain the handoff process. A few steps were still interpreted differently.</p>
<p>CARD 3 MISSING DETAILS</p> <p>Many incomplete handoffs are missing the person responsible, the requested deadline, or which task matters most.</p>	<p>CARD 4 SCHEDULE REALITY</p> <p>Only about four in ten employees are available at the same time. The rest work different hours or work remotely.</p>
<p>CARD 5 AN OLD CHECKLIST</p> <p>The team tried a two-page checklist last year. People stopped using it because it took too long and included details they rarely needed.</p>	<p>CARD 6 RECENT CHANGES</p> <p>Priorities have been changing midweek. Teammates often know an assignment changed, but the next person in the handoff does not.</p>

Facilitator reminder: There is no official answer key. Each option has benefits and limitations. Listen for how the group uses evidence, not whether it chooses a particular letter.

What Went Wrong?

Problem Solving & Creativity

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 to 10 minutes

Imagine the failure, then discover how to prevent it

Why this activity matters

Teams are usually encouraged to be positive and embrace tough challenges with a “can do” spirit, so people sometimes hesitate to raise concerns about a new plan. This activity turns that hesitation into a creative challenge: imagine that a project has already gone wrong, then uncover what the team can do now to improve its chances of success.

The outcome

Participants identify overlooked risks and choose one or two practical ways to prevent them. The exercise makes it easier to discuss concerns without blaming people or predicting that failure is inevitable.

Before the meeting | 5 to 10 minutes of preparation

Choose an upcoming project, event, or change the team knows enough about to discuss. Keep it specific, such as launching a new service, reorganizing a work process, or hosting a customer event. Prepare a whiteboard or shared document for ideas. A printable worksheet is included at the end, but is optional.

1. Deliver the bad news | 5 minutes

Regarding the upcoming project, announce dramatically: *“I have some terrible news. We have jumped six months into the future, and our project was a complete disaster!”* Pause for reactions, then ask: *“What happened?”* Let the group sit with the imaginary headlines before moving to the next step.

2. Invent the disaster | 5 minutes

Give everyone two minutes to privately list possible reasons for the project failing. Encourage realistic problems, unforeseen barriers, and a few outrageous ones to get ideas flowing. Then invite quick examples from around the room. Record the reasons without debating or assigning blame.

3. Look for the warning signs | 10 minutes

Group similar reasons. Ask: *“Which of these issues could really happen?”* and *“What warning sign might appear first?”* Circle the top two or three risks. Focus on problems, not people.

4. Rewrite the ending | 5 minutes

For the top risks, ask: *“What could we do now to make this less likely?”* Identify one or two realistic precautions the team can use. Close with: *“We cannot predict every problem, but we can spot some early enough to change the ending.”* No formal tracking exercise is required.

Facilitator Notes

Leader's insight

This exercise adapts the pre-mortem technique popularized by psychologist Gary Klein. Imagining failure gives people permission to voice concerns without appearing negative about the plan. Strong leaders welcome those concerns early, when the team can still act on them. Credit: Gary Klein, "Performing a Project Premortem," Harvard Business Review (2007).

What to watch for

Invite quieter participants to offer ideas without requiring anyone to speak. Avoid dismissing an unlikely suggestion too quickly; it may point to a real weakness. Keep the humor focused on the imaginary situation, never on a coworker.

If the discussion stalls

Offer a playful prompt such as "*The customer event had five guests instead of fifty. What went wrong?*" Then broaden the conversation to communication, resources, timing, customer expectations, or decisions the team did not make.

Virtual adaptation

Let everyone write their imaginary failure reasons privately first. Collect them in the meeting chat or a shared document. Group similar suggestions on screen before choosing the risks to address.

Optional follow-up

If one of the identified risks becomes relevant later, remind the team of the precaution they suggested. Otherwise, there is no separate assignment or required review.

Success looks like

People have fun imagining what could go wrong, share concerns that might not surface in an ordinary planning meeting, and leave with at least one useful preventive idea.

What Went Wrong? | Team Worksheet

Optional participant or team worksheet • Type into the fields or print a copy. Use one sheet per group.

Our project or event

Our imaginary failure headline

What might have caused it?

Which warning signs should we watch for?

One or two ways we could prevent the problem

Crazy Enough to Work?

Problem Solving & Creativity

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

Find a practical idea hiding inside an outrageous one

Why this activity matters

Teams often return to familiar solutions because unusual ideas get dismissed before anyone explores them. This playful challenge gives people permission to think beyond the obvious, then discover what a seemingly ridiculous suggestion might teach them about a real problem.

The outcome

The team uncovers fresh possibilities for a familiar challenge and identifies one practical idea worth considering. The goal is creative thinking, not promising to implement a new project.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Choose one specific, manageable workplace challenge, such as reducing unnecessary meetings, shortening customer wait times, or improving a repetitive process. Write it where everyone can see it. Bring paper or use a whiteboard. No special props are needed.

1. Start with the obvious | 5 minutes

Present the challenge and ask: *“What are the usual ways we would solve this?”* Capture three or four familiar ideas. Keep the discussion brief; this round is simply a starting point.

2. Get a little ridiculous | 5 minutes

Announce: *“Those are sensible ideas. Now let’s come up with ideas nobody would normally suggest.”* For three minutes, invite outrageous, funny, or wildly impractical solutions. Imagine unlimited time, money, or technology, but keep suggestions respectful and safe. Don’t critique or explain away an idea yet.

Leader cue: Offer the first silly suggestion if the room hesitates. Laugh with the group, never at the person who suggested an idea.

3. Find the useful part | 10 minutes

Pick two or three unusual ideas and ask: *“What problem is this idea really trying to solve?”* and *“Is there a smaller, realistic version of it?”* Let teammates build on one another’s suggestions. Capture any practical possibilities next to the original ideas.

4. Bring it back to work | 5 minutes

Ask the group which practical idea deserves a closer look and why. If one stands out, note it for future consideration. If not, acknowledge the creative thinking that came from approaching the problem differently.

Ask: *“Which unusual idea surprised you by revealing a practical solution?”*

Close by saying: *“Not every idea has to be practical to be valuable. Sometimes thinking a little outside the box helps us discover solutions we might otherwise overlook.”*

Facilitator Notes

Leader’s insight

When a leader dismisses an unusual suggestion too quickly, people learn to keep their thinking to themselves and the group may overlook opportunities for creative solutions. Give ideas room to develop, then apply good judgment about what is realistic. Both creativity and discipline matter.

What to watch for

Avoid letting the loudest or funniest person dominate. Invite quieter people to contribute an idea or build on someone else’s, without putting anyone on the spot. Don’t allow humor aimed at customers or coworkers.

If the discussion stalls

Try a playful question: *“How would we solve this if we had a million dollars?”* or *“What would a ten-year-old suggest?”* Then ask what useful principle sits underneath the answer.

Virtual adaptation

Use a shared screen or meeting chat for both rounds. Invite a minute of silent idea generation before asking volunteers to share. Keep the unusual ideas visible while the group searches for realistic versions.

Optional follow-up

If an idea seems worth testing, raise it during ordinary planning or improvement discussions. No additional assignment or formal review is required.

Success looks like

People laugh, offer ideas they might normally withhold, and discover at least one new way to think about the challenge. Finding a feasible improvement is a bonus, not a requirement.

Crazy Enough to Work? | Idea Sheet

Optional group worksheet • Type into the fields or print a copy. One sheet per group is enough.

Our workplace challenge

Our usual solutions

Our most outrageous ideas

The useful insight hiding inside one idea

One realistic possibility worth considering

Who's All-In?

Accountability & Execution

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

Recognize the strengths around you and choose one way to grow

Why this activity matters

Strong teams notice the everyday contributions that make working together easier. This activity gives teammates a chance to recognize those strengths while each person privately considers one habit to improve.

The outcome

Teammates hear specific appreciation for what they bring to the team. Each person identifies one behavior to strengthen, with no pressure to share a private rating or commitment.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Give everyone a copy of the Team Habits Self-Check page. Review the statements and prepare a genuine example of a strength you appreciate in a teammate. Participants keep their worksheets.

1. Take a private look | 5 minutes

Say: *"We all contribute to the team in ways that are easy to overlook. Today we'll recognize some of those contributions and think about where we can each improve."* Have everyone privately rate the twelve statements from 1 (rarely) to 5 (consistently). Ask them to mark one strength and one behavior they want to improve. Scores stay private.

2. Recognize the strengths around you | 10 minutes

Invite people to recognize one or two teammates for a behavior on the list, using a real example when possible. Model it first: *"I appreciate how Jordan follows through. When Jordan agrees to help, I know I can count on it."* Keep comments positive and specific. Participants may pass; there is no need to go around the room in order.

3. Take ownership | 5 minutes

Ask everyone to return to the behavior they marked for improvement and write down one small, specific way to practice it. Go first with a genuine example of your own. Invite others to share if they want, but make it clear that their choice may remain private.

Leader cue: Don't ask for ratings or explanations. A simple, realistic improvement matters more than a public promise.

4. Bring it together | 5 minutes

Ask: *"What strengths did you hear about today that make this team better?"* Then ask: *"How can noticing those strengths help us work better together?"* Invite a few brief responses, without requiring everyone to speak.

Close by saying: *"Strong teams recognize what people do well, and strong teammates take responsibility for continually working to improve. Both matter."*

Facilitator Notes

Leader's insight

Recognition makes good teamwork visible. People may not realize how much their reliability, willingness to help, or positive attitude matters until someone names it. Pair that appreciation with a private, specific commitment to improve, and accountability becomes personal rather than imposed.

What to watch for

Keep recognition sincere and distributed, not competitive. Prepare examples so you can acknowledge someone who might otherwise be overlooked, without making it awkward. Never ask people to reveal their scores or improvements. This is not a performance review or a chance to give unsolicited criticism.

If recognition stays general

Ask: *"What did that person do that helped?"* Encourage one concrete example instead of a string of compliments. If the group is large, use groups of four or five so more people can contribute.

Virtual adaptation

Send the worksheet in advance or at the meeting. Invite brief recognition aloud or in meeting chat. Use examples rather than rating scores; keep the self-improvement portion private unless someone volunteers.

Who's All-In? | Team Habits Self-Check

Private worksheet • Rate each statement: 1 = rarely, 5 = consistently. Your scores are yours to keep.

Team behavior	My rating
I fully take part in team meetings.	1 2 3 4 5
I bring a constructive attitude to work.	1 2 3 4 5
When I have an issue with someone, I speak to that person rather than a third party.	1 2 3 4 5
I listen to a new idea before judging it.	1 2 3 4 5
I celebrate other people's wins.	1 2 3 4 5
I follow through on what I agree to do.	1 2 3 4 5
I represent the team well to people outside it.	1 2 3 4 5
I willingly share the load.	1 2 3 4 5
When something is unclear, I check rather than assume.	1 2 3 4 5
I look for ways to help teammates succeed.	1 2 3 4 5
I meet my deadlines or communicate early when one is at risk.	1 2 3 4 5
I take initiative when something needs to be done.	1 2 3 4 5

A strength I bring to the team:

One behavior I want to improve:

One small action I can take to improve:

Start, Stop, Continue

Accountability & Execution

ACTIVITY TIME | 30 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

Make one useful change to how your team works together

Why this activity matters

Teams get used to routines, even when some are no longer contributing as originally intended. This activity gives everyone a simple way to name what should begin, what should end, and what is worth keeping. The goal is to identify a few changes the team can follow through on.

The outcome

The team agrees on one action in each category: **Start**, **Stop**, and **Continue**. Each action is specific enough that people will recognize when it happens.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Bring a copy of the three-column worksheet for each person and a shared page or board for the team's ideas. Think of a genuine example of something you could improve in your own leadership, but save it until the group has spoken.

1. Think for yourself | 5 minutes

Say: *"Think about how we work together, not about who is doing a good or bad job. What should we start doing, stop doing, or keep doing because it works?"* Give everyone a few quiet minutes to write at least one idea in each of the three columns. Their individual notes stay private.

2. Hear the ideas | 10 minutes

Invite each person to offer one idea from each column. If they can't think of one, let them pass and move on to the next team member. Write each suggestion where everyone can see it, without debating or defending current practices. You go last, and contribute an honest example about something you can do differently as the leader.

Leader cue: If an idea names or blames a person, ask: *"What team habit could we change instead?"*

3. Choose what matters | 10 minutes

Review the three columns together. Ask which suggestions would make the biggest difference with the least added work. Combine similar ideas and clarify vague ones. Choose one Start, one Stop, and one Continue that the team can realistically act on.

Ask: *"What would we see people doing differently?"* For Start and Stop, identify who will help make the change happen and when it begins. For Continue, describe the behavior worth protecting.

4. Make it count | 5 minutes

Read the three choices aloud. Ask: *“Are these specific enough for us to know whether we followed through?”* Adjust them if needed. Confirm where the decisions will be kept so the team can revisit them briefly at an ordinary meeting.

Close by saying: *“Improvement doesn’t always mean adding more. Sometimes it means letting go of what gets in the way and keeping what already works.”*

Facilitator Notes

Leader’s insight

The value is in making thoughtful choices and following through. A leader who listens without defensiveness gives people permission to name routines that no longer serve the team.

What to watch for

Keep comments focused on practices, not personalities. Avoid allowing a long complaint session or promising to change things outside the team’s control. If a suggestion needs approval or budget, choose a simpler action for this exercise.

If the group goes quiet

Offer a concrete prompt: *“Where do we lose time?” “What helps us hand work to one another?”* or *“What do we already do that we should protect?”* Ask for a small example rather than a grand initiative.

When suggestions compete

Don’t force a vote on every idea. Look for overlap, ask what could be tested immediately, and choose what is achievable. Unchosen ideas aren’t failures; they simply don’t all need to become assignments.

Virtual adaptation

Use a shared document or whiteboard with three columns. Give everyone private thinking time before collecting suggestions. Make the final three choices visible to all.

Optional follow-up

At the next regular team meeting, spend two minutes asking: *“Did we start it? Did we stop it? Are we continuing what works?”* Adjust if necessary. No separate tracking meeting is needed.

Success looks like

People contribute candidly without attacking one another, and the team leaves with three clear, manageable choices rather than a long list that disappears after the meeting.

Start, Stop, Continue | Team Worksheet

Personal reflection • Keep this sheet private. Share only what you choose.

Think about the way your team works together. Write a few words in each column before the group discussion.

START	STOP	CONTINUE
What would help us work better?	What gets in our way?	What already works well?

Team decisions • Record these together after discussion.

Our choice	What we will do
START	
STOP	
CONTINUE	

Who will help make the Start or Stop change happen, and when?

--

Team Battle Cry

Team Alignment & Purpose

ACTIVITY TIME | 30 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

Create a short team promise that means something in everyday work

Why this activity matters

A team can know its goals without agreeing on what it stands for. Here, teammates find words that express what others can count on from them, then connect those words to real behavior. The team battle cry becomes a point of pride for the team, something they take ownership of and continually work to deliver on.

The outcome

The team creates a memorable phrase (ideally in five words or fewer) and identifies one behavior that would bring those words to life.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Bring a board and a worksheet for each person. Choose a familiar slogan as an example. Let the team create its own words during the activity.

1. Start with the promise | 5 minutes

Share a familiar slogan and ask: *“What does this promise?”* Then ask: *“If someone worked with our team for a month, what would we want them to say about us?”* Invite a few answers without trying to settle on a phrase yet.

2. Find the words | 5 minutes

Have everyone privately write three words or short phrases they want the team known for. Invite people to share their ideas. Record them and circle any recurring themes.

3. Build the battle cry | 15 minutes

Use the strongest themes to develop two or three phrases of five words or fewer. Read each aloud and ask which feels true to the team. Agree on a favorite, or keep two candidates if neither feels right.

Leader cue: You aren’t looking for a clever slogan. Clear words the team believes in are more valuable.

4. Make the words real | 5 minutes

Ask: *“What would someone see us doing if we lived up to these words?”* Agree on one observable behavior. Close by saying: *“Our words only matter when people can see them in how we work.”*

Facilitator Notes

Leader's insight

A shared phrase matters when it is chosen by the team and reflected in its actions. The conversation about what teammates value may be more useful than the final wording. Listen for behaviors people already admire and those they wish were more consistent.

What to watch for

Avoid turning this into a marketing exercise. A catchy phrase is not the goal. Don't pressure people to agree just to finish on time. If there is no convincing phrase, save the strongest two candidates and revisit them briefly later.

If the group gets stuck

Ask: *"When have we been proud of how we worked together?"* or *"What do people thank our team for?"* Use the stories to find words that feel genuine.

Illustrative example

One leadership team chose *"Our Winning Way, Everyone Every Day."* Its strength was not the rhyme. It was the expectation that everyone contributed consistently. Use this as an illustration, not a phrase for others to copy.

Virtual adaptation

Collect words in a shared document, then discuss short phrases together. Keep the final behavior visible beside the chosen words.

Optional follow-up

Use the phrase naturally during a future team meeting. If the team finds it unhelpful, revise it.

Success looks like

The team can describe what its phrase means and name one behavior that demonstrates it.

Team Battle Cry | Team Worksheet

Participant worksheet • Write your own ideas first. The team will choose its phrase together.

What do I want our team to be known for?

What words or phrases did I hear that resonated with the team?

Our team's battle cry (approximately five words or fewer)

One behavior that will bring our words to life

The Ripple Effect

Team Alignment & Purpose

ACTIVITY TIME | 30 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

See how our team affects others, and take responsibility for making work easier

Why this activity matters

We notice quickly when another team's actions make our work harder. We may be less aware of how our own habits affect the people who depend on us. This activity helps teammates consider both sides with the assumption that everyone has good intentions.

The outcome

The team identifies one practical improvement within its control. The leader also takes responsibility for thoughtfully following up on concerns involving other departments.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Bring a whiteboard or shared screen and a worksheet for each participant. Think of a few departments or groups your team regularly works with. No advance fact-finding is needed.

1. Start with positive intent | 5 minutes

Say: *"Let's assume everyone is doing their best and has good intentions. Even so, one team's way of working can unintentionally make another team's job harder. If you could snap your fingers and change one or two things about how work reaches us from other groups within or outside the organization, what would make our jobs easier?"*

Invite a few specific examples and write them on the board. Focus on work practices and effects, not personalities or blame. Don't try to solve the issues yet.

2. Turn the mirror around | 10 minutes

Say: *"If those other teams were having this same conversation about us, what might they write on their whiteboard?"* Divide into small groups. Ask each group to identify two or three ways our work might unintentionally create extra effort, confusion, or delays for others. Encourage concrete examples.

Leader cue: Assume good intentions on both sides. If the discussion starts talking about a person, ask what happens in the work process instead.

3. Own our part | 10 minutes

Have groups share their examples. Ask: *"What could we do differently to make another team's job easier?"* Agree on one specific behavior the team can improve, and how members will know they are doing it consistently.

Return briefly to the opening whiteboard. Explain that you will review the concerns, speak with relevant peers where appropriate, and report back on what you learn. Don't promise a change another team may not be able to make.

4. Bring it full circle | 5 minutes

Ask: *"Are we giving other teams the same clarity, timeliness, and support we hope to receive?"* Invite one final observation. Close by saying: *"We all depend on other people's work. Strong teams look beyond their own responsibilities and make it easier for everyone to succeed."*

Facilitator Notes

Leader's insight

Good intentions don't prevent unintended consequences. Teamwork extends beyond department boundaries, and leaders have a responsibility in both directions: help their own team improve, and raise legitimate obstacles constructively with their peers.

What to watch for

The first discussion is a perspective-setting exercise, not a complaint session. Keep the examples specific and respectful. Avoid naming individuals, debating whether another team is wrong, or committing to fixes before understanding the full picture.

Following up as a leader

Review the concerns, then approach relevant peers with curiosity about what might help both teams. Share what you learn, even when a requested change is not possible.

Optional follow-up

Briefly revisit the team's chosen behavior in a future meeting. The leader can also share any useful updates from conversations with peer departments. Keep the follow-up proportionate to the issues raised.

The Ripple Effect | Team Worksheet

Participant worksheet • Capture ideas to support your group discussion. No names or ratings needed.

What other teams do that unintentionally makes our work harder

How our work may unintentionally make another team's job harder

One behavior our team could improve

What our leader should understand or explore with other teams

The Difference You Make

Recognition & Team Culture

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

Help teammates see the difference their everyday contributions make

Why this activity matters

We often appreciate what colleagues do without taking a moment to tell them. A sincere, specific note of appreciation can help someone see that an everyday contribution matters and remind the rest of us to speak up more often.

The outcome

Participants identify people whose contributions they genuinely appreciate, take time to express that appreciation, and reflect on how giving recognition makes them feel and how to make meaningful recognition a more natural part of working together.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Print one The Difference You Make | Recognition Notes worksheet per participant. No advance assignments are necessary. Participants will recognize people on their team, within the organization, or an external business partner.

1. Set the stage | 5 minutes

Say: *"Most of us notice good things our teammates do, but we don't always say anything. Today we're going to take a few minutes to identify people specifically for how they make a positive difference."* Ask attendees to pair up. Explain that they can work together to identify recognition opportunities. Recognition should be based on something genuine, not a compliment for the sake of this exercise.

2. Write what you noticed | 10 minutes

Invite each pair to think of two people in the room whose actions make a positive difference. Write them down in the first two notes. Use the third note to identify someone outside the group. It can be someone from another department, or an external business partner whose contributions often go unnoticed. Describe something the person did recently, or perhaps they do it on a regular basis, and explain why it matters. If two genuine examples don't come to mind, strive for at least one.

Leader cue: If someone needs an idea, suggest thinking about a time the colleague helped, followed through, shared information, or made someone's work easier. Praise should always be authentic.

3. Deliver the appreciation | 5 minutes

Ask pairs to volunteer to share recognition of team members who are in the room from the first two notes. Don't force people to share. Allow time for genuine recognition without pressuring anyone to participate.

Next, ask for examples of recognition opportunities for people not in the room, people from other departments or business partners. Encourage team members to deliver those compliments to those individuals.

4. Make it a habit | 5 minutes

Once recognition is completed, ask recipients of the praise: *“What was it like to hear that something you did mattered?”* Writing the responses on a whiteboard is optional. Then ask the individuals who gave praise, *“How did giving that recognition make you feel?”* The point being, *“If appreciation feels good to give and receive, why don’t we express it more often?”* Invite brief reflections, then ask how the team might express genuine appreciation more often without making it feel forced.

Close by saying: *“We often appreciate people more than we tell them. When someone makes a difference, let them know. Be genuine, be specific, and tell them why what they do matters.”*

Facilitator Notes

Leader’s insight

Specific recognition shows people how their contributions matter. Reflecting on giving and receiving appreciation encourages teammates to express it more often, without making it an obligation.

What to watch for

Keep sharing voluntary and recognition sincere. Don’t pressure pairs to invent compliments, compare praise, or require public reactions. Send recognition to people outside the room afterward.

If the group needs a prompt

Try *“It helped when you...”* or *“I appreciate how you...”* Ask for an actual contribution and why it mattered. If a pair lacks a genuine example, let them choose someone else.

Virtual adaptation

Use breakout pairs to write recognition for colleagues, including someone outside the meeting. Invite voluntary sharing or private messages, then reflect briefly together.

Optional follow-up

Encourage genuine appreciation for colleagues and external partners whenever it is deserved. Keep it specific, voluntary, and untracked; recognition loses meaning when it becomes a quota.

The Difference You Make | Recognition Notes

Participant worksheet • Write sincere, specific recognition for two colleagues in the room and someone outside the group. Keep your notes and share your appreciation with those individuals during or after the activity.

NOTE 1 | To: _____ From: _____

What I noticed you do

Why that mattered

NOTE 2 | To: _____ From: _____

What I noticed you do

Why that mattered

NOTE 3 | To: _____ From: _____

What I noticed you do

Why that mattered

What Great Looks Like

Recognition & Team Culture

ACTIVITY TIME | 25 minutes PREPARATION | 5 minutes

Discover the everyday behaviors that turn finished work into great work

Why this activity matters

Teams may agree that quality matters without ever discussing what great work looks like. This exercise helps people identify the small, observable actions that make a meaningful difference to coworkers and those they serve.

The outcome

The team identifies two or three behaviors that distinguish great work from work simply completed, and chooses a behavior to pay closer attention to.

Before the meeting | 5 minutes of preparation

Bring a whiteboard and one What Great Looks Like | Team Worksheet per person. Choose a familiar type of work your team does regularly.

1. Start with a comparison | 5 minutes

Ask: *“Think of a task we do regularly. What is the difference between getting it done and doing it really well?”*
Invite a few quick examples. Capture the specific actions people describe, not general words like *“excellence”* or *“professionalism.”*

2. Find the hidden difference | 5 minutes

Ask each person to think of a time someone made work noticeably easier for the next person, another department, or a customer. What did that person do differently? Have participants jot down the action and its impact. No names are needed.

3. Compare what great looks like | 10 minutes

In groups of two or three, have participants share their examples and choose two behaviors that make the biggest difference. Invite groups to report back. As a team, combine similar ideas and identify two or three clear behaviors people could observe.

Leader cue: Push past words like *“care”* or *“communicate.”* Ask: *“What would I see or hear someone doing?”*
A useful example describes an action, not a personality trait.

4. Make it our standard | 5 minutes

Ask: *“Which of these behaviors would most improve the experience of someone who depends on our work?”*
Choose one to emphasize. Ask what it would look like on an ordinary busy day, not just when everything goes smoothly.

Close by saying: *“Great work is often the result of small choices made consistently. When we know what great looks like, we have a better chance of delivering it together on a more consistent basis.”*

Facilitator Notes

Leader’s insight

People are more likely to meet a standard when they can picture the behavior behind it. Naming real actions makes quality easier to teach, notice, and reinforce without turning the conversation into an evaluation of individuals.

What to watch for

Don’t let the discussion become a critique of who falls short. Focus on examples of effective work and actions within the team’s control. Avoid vague expectations or promises of perfection.

If the group gets stuck

Ask: *“What does someone downstream appreciate receiving from us?”* or *“What extra step saves someone else time later?”* A small, concrete example is enough.

Illustrative example

A team initially says *“good communication.”* Then they make it observable: *“When we pass along a request to another team, we include details such as what’s most important to the customer, a requested deadline, and any missing information we couldn’t find.”*

Virtual adaptation

Use breakout pairs to identify examples, then capture short descriptions of observable behaviors in a shared document. Keep the final list visible during the discussion.

Optional follow-up

At a future meeting, ask for one real example of the chosen behavior making work easier. Keep the check-in brief and appreciative.

Success looks like

The team can name at least two specific behaviors that improve its work and explain why one deserves consistent attention.

What Great Looks Like | Team Worksheet

Participant worksheet • Reflect on a real example, then compare ideas with your group.

What is the difference between done and done really well?

An action I have seen make a positive difference

Two behaviors our group believes matter most

One behavior our team will pay closer attention to

Build Your Team Building Activity

Create an experience that helps your team connect, discover, and grow.

Sometimes the best activity begins with something your team is experiencing right now: a communication challenge, a new project, or simply the chance to have some fun together. You don't need special training or elaborate materials. Start with one purpose, give people something meaningful to experience, and help them discover what it means for their work.

1. Set the stage

Choose one thing you want your team to experience or discover. A familiar workplace situation can be a useful starting point. Give the activity an inviting name and introduce the challenge without revealing the lesson too soon.

2. Create the experience

Give participants something to solve, build, compare, discover, or try together. A surprise, playful challenge, or unexpected change in perspective can make it memorable. Keep instructions simple and participation comfortable. The experience should be more than a discussion disguised as an activity.

3. Reveal the lesson

After the experience, ask what people noticed. Useful questions include: *"What surprised you?"* *"What changed your thinking?"* and *"What would you do differently?"* Ask about what participants experienced. Let their discoveries come before you reveal the lesson participants can take away from the exercise.

4. Connect it to work

Ask where the same behaviors or challenges appear in the team's daily work. These are team building activities so make certain the focus remains on how the team can build stronger relationships and improve the quality of team dynamics and results.

5. Make it stick

Not every activity needs an action plan. Sometimes laughter, connection, or a new perspective is enough. When the group identifies a practical improvement, choose one small action and follow through without creating unnecessary paperwork.

A Few Tips from Experience

Make it fun

Small touches can help people relax. Individually wrapped treats can create a welcoming atmosphere or help get the conversation started. Use your judgment, account for dietary needs, and don't make participation feel like a condition for receiving a treat.

Get a second opinion

Ask someone you trust to review your activity before you lead it. A fresh perspective can reveal confusing directions, uncomfortable moments, unrealistic timing, or questions that may not land as intended.

Develop future leaders

Invite one or two employees who are interested in growing their leadership skills to design a team building activity. Give them room to be creative. Review and approve the finished plan and consider letting them facilitate it.

Designing and leading a team building activity is a valuable leadership development opportunity.

Before you lead the activity

- ☐ Is the purpose clear and relevant to this team?
- ☐ Will people experience something rather than simply listen?
- ☐ Are the directions and timing realistic?
- ☐ Can participants contribute without feeling pressured?
- ☐ Do the discussion questions reflect what participants experience?
- ☐ Have I asked someone to check for possible pitfalls?
- ☐ Does the ending reinforce the stated goal without forcing follow-up?

A good team building activity should bring people together for an experience that is fun and meaningful.

Build Your Own Team Activity

Complete the following fields to create your team building activity.

Activity name

Team need or purpose

What I want participants to take away from this team building activity

What participants will actually do

Materials and preparation needed

Who will review and approve the activity before it is used?

Plan to Lead the Experience

Complete the following fields to provide guidance to the facilitator. Use these steps to keep the activity practical and the lesson discoverable.

Steps and estimated timing

Questions that help participants discover the lesson

How the experience connects to everyday work

Closing message

Optional follow-up, if useful

Team Building Activity Scheduler

Make time for the activities that strengthen your team. Get it on the calendar to ensure it happens.

Nothing is real until it's scheduled.

Choose activities based on what your team needs, then put them on the calendar. Monthly activities are a reasonable cadence, but monthly is not a requirement. Adjust the schedule to fit your team and existing meeting schedule.

Fill in the top row before the activity. Fill in the outcome strip within a day of running it, with what came out of it and anything you'd do differently next time.

MONTH	ACTIVITY	TEAM NEED OR PURPOSE	SCHEDULED DATE	WHO'S BRINGING WHAT
Month 1				
OUTCOME				
Month 2				
OUTCOME				
Month 3				
OUTCOME				
Month 4				
OUTCOME				
Month 5				
OUTCOME				
Month 6				
OUTCOME				

Leader reminder: Plan the next activity before the current one slips off your radar. Keep follow-up limited to actions that currently need attention.

Sample Six-Month Team Building Schedule

Marcus Hale runs an eight-person claims team. Two people joined in January and the team had been missing details on files handed between adjusters. This is the six months he scheduled, written down a row at a time. The sequence is optional. Change the order whenever a different need arises.

MONTH	ACTIVITY	TEAM NEED OR PURPOSE	SCHEDULED DATE	WHO'S BRINGING WHAT
January	Who Knew?	Two people joined and nobody knows them beyond their job title	Tue, Jan 13	Question list in the chat. Marcus, the Friday before
OUTCOME	Nina rebuilt a motorcycle engine and Theo taught English in Chile. The room was still talking about it at lunch.			
February	Lost in Translation	Files handed between adjusters keep coming back for missing detail	Tue, Feb 10	Drawing cards and blank paper. Priya, Feb 9
OUTCOME	Round two took half the time. The team agreed to ask one question back before starting any transferred file.			
March	Crazy Enough to Work?	The Friday backlog has been stuck for a year	Tue, Mar 10	Whiteboard. Marcus, day of
OUTCOME	The daft idea about working Sunday turned into moving two people's hours. Started April 6.			
April	Who's All-In?	Good work going unnoticed, and nobody owning their own habits	Tue, Apr 14	Self-check printed for each person. Marcus, Apr 13
OUTCOME	Four people were recognized for things nobody had said out loud before. Scores stayed private, as promised.			
May	The Ripple Effect	Friction with intake over what arrives incomplete	Tue, May 12	Whiteboard and worksheets. Theo, May 11
OUTCOME	The team changed how it flags urgent files. Marcus took three concerns to the intake manager and reported back May 26.			
June	The Difference You Make	Six months of effort worth saying out loud	Tue, Jun 9	Recognition notes for each person. Nina, Jun 8
OUTCOME	Everybody wrote three. The one that landed hardest went to a scheduler in another building who had never heard it.			

Keep It Simple

Schedule one activity at a time or map out several months. A good mix includes relationship-building, collaboration, creative thinking, accountability, and recognition. Revisit the schedule when team needs change.

The purpose is to make team building part of how you lead, not to create another reporting process.

Start Building a Stronger Team

Building a stronger team starts with a leader who makes time to bring people together, create meaningful experiences, and encourages them to learn from one another.

You now have twelve activities to choose from, along with the tools to create your own. Some will get people laughing and discovering things they never knew about their teammates. Others will challenge assumptions or help people recognize opportunities to work better together.

Not every activity will produce an action plan, nor should it. Sometimes the greatest value is a shared experience, meaningful conversation, or a new appreciation for the people we work with every day.

As you gain experience, consider inviting others to design and lead an activity. Giving teammates that opportunity can strengthen their confidence, develop their leadership skills, and create a greater sense of ownership in the team.

The important thing is to begin. Choose an activity that fits what your team needs today. Make it enjoyable, let people discover something worthwhile, and build on those experiences over time.

Strong teams are built through the things we do consistently, not just the things we talk about doing.

BEFORE YOU CLOSE THIS GUIDE

Pick the activity you'll run this month and put it on the calendar.

Fun Meeting Game Kit

These sheets go with the six games on the Fun Team Building Activities page at Leadership-Tools.com, where you'll find the full steps, timing and a virtual version for each one. Print what you need a few days before the meeting, since most of the games ask your team for a little information ahead of time.

SHEET	USE IT FOR	PAGE
Who Matches Who? Questionnaire	Collecting fun facts a few days ahead	52
Who Matches Who? Match Sheet	Playing the game in the meeting	53
Pet Match Answer Sheet	Collecting photos and recording guesses	54
Team Feud Survey	Gathering your team's answers a week ahead	55
Team Feud Tally Sheet	Counting answers and keeping score	56
Manual Relay Question Cards	Racing through the manual in teams	57
Drawing Slips	Entries for an occasional drawing	58

Prizes that cost little or nothing

- A \$5 coffee card for each person on the winning team
- Picking the spot for the next team lunch
- A reserved parking spot for a week or a month
- Leaving two hours early on a day of their choosing

Check any time-off prize with HR before you announce it, so it adheres to your company's policies.

KEEP IT FUN

Know your team, and if you're unsure how a game will land, ask two or three people before the meeting. Let people skip any question, and play in teams so nobody is put on the spot.

Who Matches Who? | Questionnaire

Send this out a few days before the meeting • Skip any question you'd rather not answer

Name: _____

Answer in a few words. Your answers become a matching game at our next team meeting, so pick things your teammates might not guess.

A hobby or interest you enjoy

A hidden talent or skill

A favorite vacation spot, or one you'd love to visit

The first concert you went to

Something you've done that might surprise the team

Return to: _____ **By:** _____

Who Matches Who? | Match Sheet

Leader prep • List one answer per person in mixed order, then make a copy for everyone

Write the name of the teammate you think matches each answer. One point for each correct match.

#	ANSWER	WHO IS IT?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

My score: _____ out of _____

Example: Marcus Hale's claims team

#	ANSWER	WHO IS IT?
1	Taught English in Chile for a year	Theo
2	Rebuilt a motorcycle engine	Nina
3	First concert was a symphony at age seven	Priya

Pet Match | Answer Sheet

Leader prep • Send the note below a few days ahead, then number the photos on one slide or page

NOTE TO SEND THE TEAM

We're planning a fun team building activity. Please send me one photo of your pet by the end of the week, with just the pet in the picture. No pet? Tell me what you'd have if you had one, and I'll find a picture of it. We'll try to match pets to owners at our next team meeting.

Name: _____

Write the name of the teammate you think each pet belongs to. One point for each correct match.

#	WHOSE PET?	#	WHOSE PET?
1		9	
2		10	
3		11	
4		12	
5		13	
6		14	
7		15	
8			

My score: _____ out of _____

Team Feud | Survey

Send this out a week before the meeting • Answers are combined and nobody's name goes on the board

Give your top three answers to each question. Short answers work best.

Question 1: Name the top three things customers ask about most.

1	
2	
3	

Question 2: Name the three forms people forget most often.

1	
2	
3	

Question 3: _____

1	
2	
3	

Question 4: _____

1	
2	
3	

Return to: _____ By: _____

Team Feud | Tally Sheet

Leader prep • Combine answers that mean the same thing, then list the top answers for each question

Each answer is worth one point for every person who gave it. Cover the answers on your flip chart or slide, and uncover each one as a team guesses it.

Example: Marcus Hale's claims team, eight people surveyed

NAME THE TOP THREE THINGS CUSTOMERS ASK ABOUT MOST	POINTS
When will I get my check?	6
Is this covered?	5
Who's my adjuster?	4
Do I need an estimate?	3
How do I send photos?	2

Question 2: _____

ANSWER	POINTS

Question 3: _____

ANSWER	POINTS

Score

	TEAM A	TEAM B
Question 1		
Question 2		
Question 3		

Total		
-------	--	--

Manual Relay | Question Cards

Leader prep • Write the same five questions on both cards, then cut along the dashed line

Team: _____

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	PAGE OR SECTION
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Pass the card to the next teammate after each answer. No search function.

Team: _____

#	QUESTION	ANSWER	PAGE OR SECTION
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Pass the card to the next teammate after each answer. No search function.

Drawing Slips

Everyone who attends gets one slip • Hand out extra slips for joining in or answering correctly

DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____
DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____	DRAWING ENTRY Name: _____