

Top 10 Team Building Ideas

In a world where we're more virtually connected than ever it seems that our teams are more disconnected than ever. For example, in my work with sports teams I have found that far too many don't make the time to invest in relationships and team building. They work on their conditioning, skills and plays but too often fail to develop the chemistry and relationships that truly build winning teams.

United, high performing teams don't happen by accident. They are built and developed through great communication, shared experiences, positive interactions, common challenges, and vulnerable story telling that connect people at a deeper level. For these reasons I'm convinced you and your team must make time for team building to foster communication, connection and commitment. Talent and practice can make you a good team. But you must come together if you want to be great.

This applies to businesses, schools, hospitals and non-profits as well. In this spirit here are 10 team building ideas. (I'm a proponent of a weekly team building session but you can find what rhythm works best for you. For example, the Pittsburgh Pirates do a team building session before each new series.)

1. If You Really Knew Me. If you really knew me you would know this about me _____. I recently took a leadership team through this exercise and at first they shared very shallow comments like "you would know that I'm very generous and wonderful." But after challenging them to go deeper and sharing something vulnerable about myself they started sharing meaningful stories and feelings that connected the team in a deep and powerful way. Thanks to author Mike Robbins for the idea.

2. Share a Defining Moment - When a leader and each team member share a defining moment in their life you learn things you never knew before. Immediately you know your team members a whole lot better and feel more connected to them. I like to have each person in the room simply stand up and share a defining moment in their life. It's amazing how simple and powerful this exercise is.

3. The Safe Seat - I recently wrote about how Dabo Swinney, the head coach of the Clemson University Football team, put a "safe seat" in the middle of the team meeting room and had each team member sit on the seat and answer questions about his life. It's called a safe seat because what is shared in the room stays in the room. This makes it safe for each person to be vulnerable and transparent. [You can read the full story here.](#)

4. Hero, Highlight, Hardship - I learned this one from Cori Close, the UCLA women's basketball coach, who told me this idea when I spoke to her team a few weeks ago. With this exercise each person talks about one of their heroes and why they are their hero. Then they share a positive highlight as well as a hardship from their past.

5. The Hard Hat - As a team, discuss and identify the characteristics of a great team member. What does it mean to be a great team member? Write all the characteristics on the board/wall. Have each person choose the one that resonates most with them. Visit HardHat21.com for 21 ways to be a great teammate.

6. Get on the Bus Together - A lot of leaders have their teams read [The Energy Bus](#) to create unity and a common dialogue but Rhonda Revella, the University of Nebraska Softball coach, took it one step further. She paired up her team and had each pair present to the rest of the team 1 of the 10 rules of *The Energy Bus* in a fun and creative way. Some made a video, others sang a song, some gave a speech, some made a painting, etc.. Rhonda told me the team took on a whole new life and energy after these teammates brought the rules to life for each other. She said this energy propelled them to the College World Series that year.

7. One Word - Have each team member choose one word that will help drive them to be their best and bring out the best in others. You may choose a word such as: connect, commit, serve, give, help, care, love, tough, relentless, excellence, selfless, and so on. Each person should choose a word that is the right fit for them. Once you choose your words you can make a team poster, sign or image that features all the words of the team. Visit Getoneword.com for more ideas.

8. Fuel up the Tanks - The Brown University Women's Lacrosse team gave each player a manila envelope with a picture of a bus and their name on it. The envelopes represented their energy bus tanks and were placed on a table in the locker-room. Players were also given index cards where they could write something positive about a teammate and place the card (positive fuel) in their teammates manila envelope (energy bus tank). After practices and games players were encouraged to write positive comments and fill their teammate's energy bus tanks with positive energy. The exercise created more positive interactions and generated appreciation and encouragement that fueled the team throughout the year.

9. Leave a Legacy - Have each team member create and share a legacy statement that includes the kind of impact they want to have on their team. How do you want to be remembered? What do you want others to say about you year later? Knowing how you want to be remembered helps you decide how to live today.

10. 20 Questions - Make up a list of 20 questions. During each team building session pair up with a different team member and ask/answer the questions about each other. This will help you get to know your team members and become more connected. It's a great exercise for sports teams to do when they are on the bus or plane.

What are some of your favorite team building exercises? I would love to hear them. Post your comments [on Facebook here](#) or [send me a Tweet](#).

- Jon