

THE EFFECTIVE *Trainer*



**A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO
PLANNING, DELIVERING, AND
EVALUATING SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOPS**



Venture Team Building

The Effective Trainer

**A Step-By-Step Guide to Planning, Delivering,
and Evaluating Successful Workshops**



www.ventureteambuilding.co.uk

Produced for: Venture Team Building

Email: web@ventureteambuilding.co.uk
Website: www.ventureteambuilding.co.uk

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So You Want to be an Effective Trainer?

Thank you for purchasing “The Effective Trainer”!

Whether you’re just starting your career in the training industry, or have some experience under your belt, we hope to equip you with the skills, techniques and insight to make you a more effective trainer.

Yes, there are many books and resources out there that promise to “train the trainer”. With this book, we aim to break it down into an easy, practical, step-by-step guide that will give you the tools and confidence to deliver your own training sessions.

We encourage you to read through our guide, test out the ideas, and make each team building and training workshop truly your own.

We hope you find this eBook informative and practical, and we wish you every success in teaching your next workshop. If you are unsure about anything in this book or you require further clarification, feel free to email us at web@ventureteambuilding.co.uk.

CHAPTER ONE

The Basics

"Success is neither magical nor mysterious.
Success is the natural consequence of
consistently applying the basic fundamentals."

Jim Rohn

What is a Trainer?

At some point in your life, you've interacted with a trainer. Whether at summer camp, a course you've taken in your free time, or a training session in your corporate life, trainers have been a part of your learning process.

Now that you are stepping onto the other side, it's important to start with a clear idea of what being a trainer entails.

Roles & Responsibilities of a Trainer

A trainer is a person who trains, instructs or teaches and has specific content that needs to be learned by participants. The learning is done through presentation and practice.

An effective trainer prepares objectives, exercises and activities that first introduce, and then reinforce the content. He also tests what was learned; typically this is accomplished through participation and in some cases discussion. The trainer pays attention to the learning process using activities that are carefully selected and paced.

Training is usually delivered through a short session (introductory) or a training plan (on-going skill progression/knowledge). It is important to note that once a fundamental skill has been learned, the trainer then continues to coach learners before introducing a new skill.

Qualities of an Effective Trainer

If you think back to the most memorable training sessions you've participated in, the key description would likely be "fun". The deeper question to ask yourself is: did you *learn something* from the training session?

That's the essence of an effective trainer: someone who not only manages the energy of the participants, but also manages to achieve the desired learning outcomes at the end of it.

An effective trainer is:

1. Passionate about teaching others/helping others learn
2. A clear communicator
3. An engaging public speaker, who is able to hold his audience's attention
4. An excellent listener
5. Able to manage groups of people
6. Able to foster openness and trust with the group
7. Able to draw out participation and responses from all members of the group, whether extroverted or introverted
8. Able to guide participants to understand the learning objectives
9. Flexible and able to improvise, if necessary
10. Constantly learning from one's mistakes in order to improve

The list could go on and on, but these are the 10 key qualities that all effective trainers display.

With that in mind, here's our recommendation: find your own style! The path to becoming an effective trainer is rooted in your own personal style of communicating and connecting with others.

Find a "voice" that works for you. If you're usually a more quiet, introverted person, putting on a loud, always-excited "trainer persona" all the time might not be a good idea. Your audience will be able to sense you're putting on a persona, and instead of engaging, you may alienate them.

Be yourself, be authentic, and be open to leveraging on the particular strengths of your personality to have a positive impact as a trainer.

Trainer vs. Facilitator

You may have noticed that training providers have a tendency to use the terms "trainer" and "facilitator" interchangeably on their websites, without explanation of the difference.

Here we hope to give you a better understanding of the difference between the two terms and how they should be used correctly.

The difference between training and facilitation revolves around the relationship between content and process.

A facilitator does not need to have thorough content knowledge of the problems the group is discussing nor possess expert knowledge (as long as someone in the group does).

Instead, the facilitator must know the decision-making process, problem solving methods, when to intervene and how to guide the team in the right direction. There are occasions when the facilitator will don the trainer's hat to educate the group or team members on certain skills. When this happens though, they will announce the shift so the team understands and accepts this change.

The facilitator must understand group process, how to prepare and monitor agendas, and how to help the group or team achieve its goals. The dictionary states that to 'facilitate' means to make something easier. Therefore, a facilitator does whatever is necessary to make things easier for team members so that they can complete their work and get the most from the workshop.

This may involve using questions, activities, reflective practice and other methods to help teams move towards their goal (or learning) through self-discovery.

They ease a group through the process of setting goals, stating expectations, agreeing on procedures, solving problems and making decisions. The facilitator remains neutral while playing this role, remaining impartial throughout the process and only intervenes when necessary to move the process forward.

CHAPTER TWO

How To Plan A Training Session

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree
and I will spend the first four
sharpening the axe."

Abraham Lincoln

Fail to Plan, Plan to Fail!

A large part of being an effective trainer is putting in the work *before* delivering the training session. Preparing for something can often be a boring or tedious prospect, but it is absolutely essential.

A lot of behind-the-scenes work goes into making a training session successful. It can be daunting to think about all the moving pieces that goes into planning a training session, so we've broken down the preparation work into two broad categories:

- Objectives & Outcomes
- Logistics

Planning and designing a training plan will help alleviate any nervousness you may feel about the training session. Having a plan means that you are prepared for the flow of activity during the session and will be better able to adapt to any changes you may have to make on the day itself.

Having a training plan also ensures that the session is not a waste of time or effort, but that the activities and discussions are tailored to meet the training objectives.

Planning: Objectives & Outcomes

It is crucial to know your subject and understand your training objectives!

The overall objectives of the training workshop should state what you expect the programme to achieve in terms of the final outcomes. The objectives can be broken down into smaller chunks, and relevant activities and training exercises should be selected to help achieve these objectives.

The first step is working out the learning aims for the workshop that are both specific and measurable. Decide what content you want to cover and what your learners should know by the end of the training workshop.

When deciding your objectives, be as precise as possible.

Here's an example from a recent workshop:

- Delegates will be made aware of the company's health and safety policy. They will be able to analyse risk in the workplace and write a simple risk assessment.

The more you understand the training objectives, the easier it will be for you to facilitate learning. Workshop objectives will also provide a sense of direction and help keep both you and your learners on track. By reviewing your objectives during your workshop, you will be able to tell whether something is working or not, and whether you need to adapt your plan.

Once you know what you're hoping to achieve, write a training plan consisting of activities to help you achieve those objectives.

Activities may consist of presentations, practical activities, role-plays, case studies and group discussions. Choose what works best for your group and plan accordingly. Plan your timings, resources required and be sure to add regular breaks to your plan.

You should also decide on the list of participants. Unless the topic or training objective is specific to employees at a certain level, we recommend adding employees of all levels in one group. This allows for them to get to know colleagues whom they may not otherwise interact with in the course of their work. It also provides them with the chance to learn about the work done by different departments or divisions within the organisation.

We'll cover more details on how to write a training plan later in the chapter.

Planning: Logistics

Venue and Facilities Selection

When selecting a suitable venue for your training workshop, it's essential that it is easily accessible for delegates and large enough to run your activities. The venue should also have all the resources that you require such as comfortable tables and chairs, natural light from windows, ventilation and temperature control.

When selecting an appropriate venue make sure that the following criteria is met:

- The venue is accessible to everyone and within easy travelling distance.
- You have adequate resources made available to you such as chairs and tables. You might also want to request extra training resources from the venue, such as flip charts, pens, paper, projector, interactive whiteboard etc.
- The venue is large enough for your workshop, clean and well-ventilated with natural light. You might also want to consider working outside on a sunny day.
- There are clean toilets available and suitable areas for rest breaks.

It is important that after the selection of a training venue you make the necessary arrangements and get confirmation of your booking. It is no good organising a training workshop but then to turn up and not have access to your training room!

Book your venue in advance, confirm this a couple of days before your workshop and be there at least thirty minutes before the start of your training workshop to prepare and setup. Remember, first impressions last!

The Learning Environment

The setup of your training room (or learning environment) can have a huge impact on your group and their level of concentration and ability to retain information.

Here are some suggestions on how to optimize your learning environment:

- When laying out the classroom, organise chairs in a circle or horseshoe, as this allows learners to see each other and easily interact.
- Use visual aids that link to the theme of the workshop. This could be posters, quotes or flipchart work completed by the group during the workshop. Also create a question board and ask the group to write on post-it notes anything they want answered by the end of the training session.

- When teaching a workshop, it is important that your learning space should be comfortable, with plenty of natural light and air circulation and the room temperature is set at a comfortable level.
- The workshop space should be set up to encourage participation. If possible, consider clearing all tables away as this creates less of a boardroom or classroom atmosphere. It is also more practical for breaking your group into smaller learning groups for group discussion and brainstorming.
- Background Music: Use background music during group discussions or reflective moments as this creates a more relaxed learning environment and changes the mood and tone of the room. Use music based on the mood you are trying to convey. For example: the Rocky theme gets learners excited while soft piano relaxes.
- Pictures and Posters: Find pictures and posters that have relevancy to the subject you are teaching. These are powerful memory aids and will prompt learners to think about the subject. Place them around your learning space.

Scheduling the Session

When scheduling your workshop, add breaks for your learners. We suggest aiming for a 20-minute break every 90 minutes. Also do ensure they have tea and coffee available. During the workshop, have water or juice available for your group – this prevents dehydration, which can affect learner's focus and mood.

The most difficult time for teaching is usually the session straight after the lunch break. Plan such that the first half is fun, practical and reinforces your learning outcomes. Take the learning outside the classroom and maybe try some team challenges to break up the training and re-engage the group.

Using Different Learning Methods Effectively

We learn best when we are challenged, comfortable in our surroundings and having fun. Try to make your workshops as practical as possible and engage your learners. Stay away from 'chalk and talk' and 'death by PowerPoint' methods of teaching.

Use questions to engage your group and try to draw learning points from them through group discussions, group work and debates. Try to facilitate knowledge-based learning through self-discovery and experiential activities.

If you are going to be using PowerPoint, use it to recap key learning points only and then move on. Try to keep the information on the slides to a minimum. The slideshow is there to prompt the trainer and not to teach the group (you are!). Stick to three to four bits of information (enough for our short term memory) and try to use images instead of words.

Try varying your teaching methods to include: brainstorming, group discussion, reflection, note taking, reading, presentations, role plays, debates, subject-specific exercises etc. The more teaching methods you use, the more engaging your workshop will be and you'll be able to connect to different types of learners.

Other Tips to Make Your Session Great

Introduce group work

Research shows that over 90% of the information that enters our brain is visual. Our eyes can register 36,000 visual messages per hour. Provide flipchart paper when doing any group work (brainstorms, group discussions) and ask them to note down what they come up with. Once they have finished, stick the finished work to the wall to reaffirm learning and help your group remember the learning journey.

Use colours

Research shows that when information is presented using different colour codes, it is more likely to be remembered.

Provide question boards

Provide an area where learners can put post-it notes with any questions, ideas, worries they have at the start of the workshop or during breaks. We suggest you frame your workshop by asking learners one thing they want to learn about the subject and sticking these to the question board. Then at the end of the workshop, recap the questions and ensure they've been answered (normally the questions are covered during the actual training workshop).

Have a reflection board

This is similar to the question board, but learners use post-it notes to identify what they've learnt from the session instead. This gives them thinking time to reflect on the subject and what has been covered during the workshop.

How To Design A Training Plan

Once you have nailed down the details of your training objectives & outcomes as well as the logistics, it's time to write a training plan.

By preparing a training plan before your workshop, you can make sure that you are covering a realistic amount in the available time, and that you only include activities that will help learners get the most from the experience and link to your training content.

When designing your programme, you should include the following:

- Workshop/Training objectives
- Venue and facilities selection
- Duration (both for individual activities and complete programme)
- Activities and learning strategies
- Any resources/materials needed

Workshop/Training Objectives

By this point, you should already have the training objectives for your workshop clearly outlined. Take the opportunity to look through them and revise them, if necessary.

Venue & Facilities Selection

You should also have decided on a suitable venue for the training session. If you have any special requirements for any particular activity, we advise checking with the venue to ensure that they are able to accommodate.

Duration

As a trainer, time is not your friend. Often, trainers struggle with getting the timings for the various activities and segments of the workshop right.

Our advice: try and be realistic about how much you can cover in the time you have available to you. It is always a good thing to over-plan but be aware that the majority of the time, any activities planned generally take longer than expected.

When identifying timings for each activity, remember to allow extra time as a precaution. For example, the activity might be a group discussion for fifteen minutes, but you probably need to add an extra five minutes to introduce the exercise and organise participants into discussion groups (not to forget a wider group discussion and review).

Try to be flexible in approach, and be prepared to change your timings and maybe even cut out an activity if necessary. Before you begin, work out which activities are less important, or which ones cover the same content and are easiest to skip if you run out of time. You should also plan for some extra activities as backup in case you speed through the content or you have a problem with your resources (better to be safe than sorry).

Activities and Learning Strategies

Next you need to either select the right activities or develop your own exercises to help you achieve your learning aims. When deciding on activities, try to think about the flow and pacing of your workshop, and how each activity works together to create a whole.

Ensure that each activity has a purpose (so delegates understand the 'why') and links to the content. If an activity doesn't fit your aims, scrap it and save it for another time.

Think of your workshop like a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. Each activity should help the group identify a key learning outcome that moves them on to the next activity and towards the main objective of the workshop.

The beginning is where you introduce the workshop, discuss the structure of the day, identify learning objectives and discuss previous experiences. Try to make this as fun and interactive as possible – use questions and team activities to engage your group, relax them, break down barriers to learning and mentally prepare them for the workshop.

At this point, we suggest using ice breakers to help your learners feel as comfortable as possible in the learning environment. Using an ice breaker will get participants talking and breaking down barriers from the get go. It can be quite intimidating meeting people for the first time and many learners refrain from giving their opinion or asking questions out of fear of judgement – strive to eliminate this fear from the start.

The middle is the most important part of your workshop: this is where the learning takes place and content is covered. During the journey stage of the workshop, delegates will work together and reflect and hopefully learn through self-discovery and experience. Try to use as many different teaching methods as possible to cater to all learning styles.

The end is where delegates take time to reflect on the activity or training workshop and review as a group the content covered and what they have learned. This is the part of the programme where they connect the dots and think about how the learning can be applied in the workplace or in life.

The activities and training methods specified in your workshop plan should be flexible and easily adaptable to suit all learners. As mentioned before, you may have to adapt your plan during the workshop so it is good to have plenty of options available to you.

Any Resources/Materials Needed

After you've confirmed the list of activities and discussions for your training session, make a list of all the resources and/or materials needed. Ensure that you have extras too, just in case! You may wish to check if the venue can assist with providing some of the items; if not, make the arrangements to purchase them in advance.

Inviting and Informing Participants

Now that you've designed your training plan, the next step is to invite and inform participants about the training session.

It is important to give participants advance notice of the course, especially if they have to clear their schedule for it. We also recommend giving them pre-course information such as:

- Name of the course
- Name of the trainer
- Event details
- Training objectives
- What they need to bring with them, if anything

Providing them with this information will give them an idea of what to expect at the training session. This means they'll arrive mentally prepared for what they will learn, which makes your job a little easier!

CHAPTER THREE

How To Deliver A Training Session

"For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them."

Aristotle

Basic Training Session Model

Before we delve into the nitty-gritty details of how to deliver a training session, let us first introduce the basic model of a training session:

I – Introduction

D – Demonstration

E – Explanation

A – Activity

S – Summary

The 'IDEAS' model is an easy way to remember how to structure the different segments of your training session. When starting a new activity, always remember to introduce, demonstrate and explain it before the group begins. Then once the group has completed the task, do a quick review to summarise their findings and key learning outcomes.

How To Deliver A Training Session

1. First impressions count!

Arrive early and setup your classroom, checking that you have all the required equipment. Check to make sure your presentation screen/projector is working correctly and you have all the learning tools you need such as flipchart paper, pens and any information handouts. If you are running a practical workshop then make sure you have enough equipment for all participants and that it is safe for use.

Read through your training notes before the first person arrives and get comfortable with the content.

The first ten minutes of your workshop are the most important, as they set the tone for the rest of the day. When your workshop begins, there is some basic information you'll need to cover which will help make your learners comfortable:

- Introduce yourself and anyone else who will be assisting you during the training.
- Discuss the aims of the workshop and what you will cover. Map the session by giving them a brief overview of the content and timings for the day. Link the content to the company objectives and help them understand why they are there.
- Agree on some basic rules for the training. What you expect from them and what they expect from you. These usually include: switching off cell phones, being on time following a break, not interrupting each other etc.

2. Make it fun!

The more fun someone is having, the more likely they are to learn. Use a variety of activity types and change your delivery style to suit the group. If the group isn't enjoying a particular learning session/activity, cut it short and move on to the next one – just be sure to recap the key points. Keep adapting to suit your learners and how they learn. If you're unsure, find out what they like doing by asking them and adapt your training plan accordingly.

3. Communicate effectively

Many people don't realise but there is a difference between communication and *effective* communication. Effective communication means what is being said is understood. Your aim is to make sure you effectively communicate with your group and they internalize the most important points from the workshop.

Think about changing the pace, tone and volume of your voice to make your presentation more engaging. Try not to speak too fast and don't be afraid to use pauses for effect. Use simple words rather than complex ones. Use words relevant to your subject and your learners.

Use questions regularly to help keep your group focused and to check understanding. Be sure to listen to responses and build on them.

4. Keep things clear

Try to keep what you are teaching as simple as possible and stay away from using jargon unless it is necessary. If you do use jargon, then explain the word or ask the group whether they understand what it means.

Make the group fully aware of what is going on and how long they will be doing each activity. Try to not provide more than 3-4 bits of information at once, otherwise the group will switch off.

5. Monitor energy levels

Make sure you schedule breaks throughout your workshop to keep the level of concentration high. One way to do this is to ask the group at the start of the workshop to make you aware when they need a break. The fresh air and the change of environment will do them some good and hopefully improve their focus for when they return.

If you notice energy levels are getting low, or participants are not joining in on discussions, then plan some active challenges to shake things up and get them re-energised. Most of the time, changing the classroom dynamic, switching activities or getting them to move is all that is needed.

6. Keep everyone engaged

Try to use a variety of teaching methods to keep everyone engaged in the workshop. Use a mixture of discussion and active exercises. If you notice something isn't working, change to another exercise and come back to it later on. The more engaged someone is, the more they will be focused and open to learning.

Use questions to keep learners engaged and lead them to the answers. Set up activities so participants discover the information rather than being told. If you use a 'chalk and talk' method of teaching, you will lose your audience and they will likely switch off.

Everyone learns differently! Your job as a trainer is to plan effectively so they get the most from the workshop. Some people do better by reading, others through watching videos and some by discussing it with others. Plan a variety of activities to suit all learning styles.

7. Remain flexible

As you might have noticed in some of the points above, being flexible and adapting to change is one of the key qualities of an effective trainer. Sometimes things don't go as planned!

Remain flexible in your approach and do not worry. A plan isn't set in stone; a plan is simply there to guide you in the right direction and help you achieve your learning outcomes. If you spent too much time on an activity, don't worry about it – just adjust your plan and timings accordingly.

The most important thing is to respond to your group and help them learn the information. It doesn't matter how you achieve your training objectives as long you meet them.

Remember, nobody knows what you're going to teach except you (that's why you're there). No one will know you missed some information unless you make it obvious and panic. Just relax and know that even the most experienced trainers still make mistakes. Think about how you want to handle it and just come back to it later on if need be.

If you find yourself struggling or stumbling through key points and losing track, again, *don't panic*. Relax and just ask the group a question related to the subject and get them to discuss it with the person next to them. Refer to your notes, breathe and start back up again.

8. Recap frequently

At the end of each activity or discussion, take time to recap the key learning points. This can be done in several ways: a question and answer, by splitting the group into smaller sub-groups and having them reflect, or a larger group discussion. This helps to clarify learning and understanding.

A quick and easy review to use at the end of a training workshop is: *what, so what* and *now what*.

<i>What:</i>	What did you learn?
<i>So what:</i>	Why was it important?
<i>Now what:</i>	How are you going to use this information and apply it?

If you will be working with the same group for more than a day, we recommend organising participants into smaller reflection groups of 3-4 at the start of the training workshop. At the end of the day, ask each group to reflect on the whole day and discuss what they enjoyed, didn't enjoy, what they learned and how it can be applied.

We share more tips and techniques on reviewing in the next chapter.

How to Build Rapport With Your Audience

One of the things that can make or break your training session is the rapport (or lack thereof) between you and your audience. If you have the audience on your side, everything will go much more smoothly and a good session becomes a *great* one. If your audience isn't engaged, isn't participating, and has a 'can't-be-bothered' attitude, it will be an uphill battle to get through the day and achieve your training objectives.

What exactly is "rapport"? It's building a connection with someone, based on them feeling positive about you. It sounds simple, but we often think of building rapport as an innate quality or something that only charismatic people can do. That's not true at all! Rapport is all about being likeable, and it's easy enough to do that.

Here are some tips on how to build rapport with your participants:

- *Smile* – Such a simple action, but if you're nervous and not smiling, you could project unfriendliness. This creates a distance between you and the participants. Smiling indicates warmth and welcome, and when navigating the murky waters of team building and training, such feelings can go a long way in making it easier to communicate with your audience.
- *Address each person by their name* – When you address a participant by their name, it instantly creates a connection between you and them. It shows that you're noting their presence and their participation valued. If you need help with this, at the start of the session, ask each participant to write their name on a placard and place it in front of them.
- *Make eye contact, especially if addressing a particular person* – Making eye contact increases the quality of your interaction with your audience. It makes you seem more confident, knowledgeable, warm and sincere. Making eye contact also signals that you are giving your audience or the person attention and helps you better connect with them. When addressing the entire group, we recommend making eye contact with specific (random) individuals around the room while speaking. Remember: always be looking at someone when you're talking!
- *Share personal insights and experiences with the group* – This is a great way to become more relatable to your audience. If someone shares an experience that you've also personally had, take the chance to share how you overcame it or dealt with the issue. This reassures them that they're not the only one who has faced that issue or problem, and the empathy that you show will draw them closer to you.

- *Display your sense of humour* – This doesn't mean preparing jokes or one-liners to spice up your presentation. Sometimes, something as simple as responding humorously to a comment or being able to laugh at yourself is enough to make you seem more relatable. Of course, if humour does come naturally to you, make use of it! Just be sure to still maintain your professionalism and not take it too far.

How To Manage Difficult Situations

When you're managing a group of people, difficult situations will always arise. Here are some common challenges, and tips on how to deal with them.

If participants arrive late or leave early...

It may be unavoidable that some participants arrive late. One solution is to bring attention to it as a misuse of time. Get the group to agree that punctuality is one of the rules for the session, and that if everyone adheres to the schedule, the session will end on time instead of running over. As the trainer, you should also set a good example by being early.

Sometimes participants will leave a training session early. It could be because they have to take an important phone call, have a scheduled meeting, or they get called back to the office.

In other cases, it could be because they feel they're not learning anything important. To avoid this, it's important that you share the 'why' (learning objectives) of the session so that participants can see the value of spending their time in training. We also recommend maintaining activity throughout the session and making sure that the breaks between activities aren't too long to avoid any 'dead spots' where participants feel it's okay to just leave.

If participants are not responding to you...

If the lack of response occurs at the beginning of the day, you may just need a good ice breaker that gets the group moving and interacting. You might also need to take the time to get to know the participants and build rapport with them.

If participants are reluctant to do the activity/discussion...

There are a few reasons this could happen. Sometimes it's because they don't really understand how the activity works. In this case, check with the group and go over the instructions for the activity again, if necessary.

It could also be that they have done a similar activity/discussion previously and thus are not excited to do it again. At this point, you can introduce a new activity (this is where your training plan comes in handy!). Or you could ask participants to share their past experience doing the activity and assess if there would be any value if they did it again. Sometimes, doing an activity for the second time can yield different learning outcomes.

If the energy level of the group drops...

There are drops in energy that can be expected and planned for (e.g. post-lunch lethargy). However, the group could also be tired from physical activity or an overdose of information. In both cases, it's your job as the trainer to read the signs and adapt accordingly.

A group that's mentally fatigued from too much information may need some physical activity to bring their energy up, whereas a group that's physically tired by a previous activity may need something a little more low-key while they recover.

If there is one participant who keeps disrupting the session...

There are many different types of participants who could derail your training session. It could be the experienced manager who always negatively questions the information that is being presented. It could be the 'class clown' who pipes up with loud and inappropriate comments or jokes. There could be a participant who loves sharing about his own experiences and could talk for hours without stopping for a breath.

Unfortunately, there are no simple solutions to deal with such participants. It takes patience, tact and objectivity. Stay calm and do not get drawn into a negative interaction with them.

For the participant who always questions the trainer, instead of debating your stance you can open the discussion up to the whole group ("What does everyone think about this question/statement?"). Avoid getting embroiled in a long debate. Instead if there is a real difference of opinion, acknowledge it and move on.

To deal with the 'class clown', it is best not to encourage his inappropriate comments or jokes. Instead, try to draw him into a serious discussion from time to time and thank him when he has constructive comments to share.

For the over-sharer, be polite when telling him that the group needs to hear from different people throughout the session. Thank him for his comments, but also be firm when you need to stop him and seek input from others.

CHAPTER FOUR

How To Conduct Post-Training Review

"Learning without reflection is a waste."

Confucius

End Your Training Right With Reviewing

Reviewing is an important part of any team building or training programme. It is a point in the session where you can connect the dots, confirm the learning with the group and consolidate any information they may have taken on board during the learning process.

If you hurry your review, it can hinder the quality of learning and the outcomes for the session. However, even if you have just a few minutes to spare – you still have enough time and can get reasonably good results. There is always time for a quick review (even if you only have a minute!).

If you have enough time, it can be beneficial to do a variety of reviews, delivered in differing styles and pace to ensure the your learners are fully engaged. Try to use resources such as ropes, question cards and posters (for example blob trees) to make it fun and interesting for learners.

Reviews don't only fit in at the end of sessions. There can be many positive results from reviewing an activity throughout, including highlighting any learning points for the group to take on board for the remainder of the session and setting progressive goals for the group.

The review is about the group, so try to listen more than speak if you can help it. The activity is about the participants and their achievements – your job is to facilitate the learning (make learning easy) and guide them in the right direction.

Why Is It Important To Review?

To energise the learning experience

The more fun someone is having, the more they will learn from it! Reviews allow participants to holistically look back on the experience and offer a dynamic approach to learning, whereby learning can be made obvious through fun and stimulating methods.

To enrich the experience

Reviewing can encourage people to notice more about themselves, others and their surroundings. When learners value their experiences more, they gain confidence and build a better rapport with others. By knowing a review is coming up, participants may also start anticipating the review and think about the challenge/activity and any other potential review material.

To make sense of the experience

Reviewing takes participants beyond their normal responses and helps make sense of their experiences. It may also introduce a fresh perspective, or provide the opportunity for people to talk things through and be listened to. During the programme, participants may experience various emotions - fear, anxiety, exhaustion, boredom, peacefulness, solitude, camaraderie, pain, anger, alienation, sadness, frustration and joy. Each individual in a group may encounter a very different experience from each other or at different times during one activity or challenge. It is important that reviews can support these ranges.

To make connections

Reviewing helps learners make the connections between the experience and everyday life (transfer of learning). It encourages people to think about the wider significance of the programme. By comparing experiences with others, they can reflect back in ways that enhance the programme and what can be learned from it. It makes learning obvious and helps them understand the purpose of the session (especially in training that's specific to job role).

To develop learning skills

Reviewing enhances the ability to learn from individual or group experiences. Therefore, learners take more responsibility for their own learning and development.

To set goals

Sometimes it is important to set goals to help transfer or apply what has been learned to future application (for example, time management and how this can be applied to workplace schedules). The outcome of reviews may be goals for the task, session or the workplace. This can provide focus and a starting point for future reviews.

The Art of Asking Questions

Asking great questions can elevate the learning outcomes from training. Socrates says in Plato's *Protagoras*, "My way toward the truth is to ask the right questions."

Questioning is a technique used by many facilitators during team building workshops and experiential learning programmes. It's an excellent alternative to presenting information and answers.

It's about asking the individual or group you're working with a question, or series of questions, to enable them to find their own solutions to the challenges they face or as Socrates put it, "toward the truth".

Using questions has (at least) two clear benefits:

1. Interaction: Asking questions throws the spotlight back onto the group. It allows them to think through the answers for themselves and helps increase the level of understanding. Creating more interaction can lead to a higher quality of discussion. Interaction has the added benefits of keeping your participants more engaged, energised and it suits different learning styles.

2. Depth of learning: By working out the answers for themselves, participants learn more deeply. A series of well-chosen questions enhances learning and encourages a depth of thinking that can rarely be achieved through other teaching methods. It provides an opportunity for people to reflect and see value in the experience.

For example:

- How did you plan for the challenge?
- What helped you or stopped you from achieving the outcomes?
- If you had to do it again, what changes would you make to the way you approached the task?
- What evidence supports that conclusion?

You could even try some reflective practice questions such as:

- Thinking on your own for a moment, I want you to reflect about your own performance and what you would do different next time.

Using Questions Effectively

Questions, questions, questions! The ability to ask and answer questions is central to training and development.

Questioning style and content varies from trainer to trainer. All you need is to understand the fundamentals of asking questions and how to use them effectively.

Here are the five most common types of questions used and some useful hints and tips for getting the most out of your workshop.

1. Open Question (also known as an Overhead Question)

Open questions allow the trainer to check understanding, help participants identify what has been learned and can also stimulate discussion.

An open question can be directed to either an individual or the entire group. This type of question is a safer option if posed to the group, as it doesn't put anyone 'on the spot' and participants only answer if they feel comfortable to do so.

Open Question Examples:

Can anyone share what they learned today?

How can you use the skills you've learned in the workplace?

The opposite of an open question is a closed question. Closed questions are structured for either a 'yes' or 'no' answer or a brief explanation. When using closed questions, it can be harder to know whether participants have learned the content. Typically, when using a closed question, it should be immediately followed by an open question to expand on their understanding and knowledge.

Closed Question Examples:

Closed: Did you learn anything today? (Answer: Yes/No)

Open: Okay great, so what did you learn and how can you use this information in the workplace?

Closed: Has anyone done a similar exercise before? (Answer: Yes/No)

Open: Can you share with the rest of the group how you found the experience? What did you take away?

2. Post-Pause-Pick (the 3 P's)

This is a question used to get participants to reflect on a question before answering.

Here's how it works: ask a question, pause for a few seconds, and then call on someone by name to answer it. Adding a pause gives the participants time to think about their answer.

If someone can't answer the question, just reflect it (open it up) to the rest of the group. Ask "how about anyone else?"

If you are using this question, pick someone who you know will be confident enough to share their answer with the rest of the group.

Post-Pause-Pick Example

Post: I want you to think for a moment about a time when you have encountered a problem.

Pause

Pick: <name> can you share with the rest of the group your problem example.

3. Relay Questions

Similar to the 3 P's, except instead of picking one person to answer the question, everyone in the group shares their answer instead. Direct a question to the group, allow a moment for participants to think of a response. Then start at one side of the room and ask each person to answer the question in turn.

Relay Question Example:

Post: I want you to name one thing you couldn't live without?

Pause

Relay: Ask each person to share their answer, in turn.

4. Reverse Questions

Reverse questions are questions that are used as a response to a direct question from a participant or the group. Instead of answering the question, you reverse it back to the person who asked it.

These questions can help participants gain further clarification of the original question. They help to establish whether the participant already knows the answer or has his own thoughts on the subject or topic of discussion.

This question should be used with caution as it might put the participant 'on the spot'. If they still can't answer the question or don't want to, then you can either answer the question or use a reflection question (see below).

Reverse Question Example:

Participant: "Why is it important that we assess the risk of the training room before using it?"

Trainer: "Great question! Why do you think it's important?"

5. Reflection Question

This is another type of question which is used as a response to a direct question from a participant. When asked a question, you reflect the question and open it up to the rest of the group to answer.

This is an excellent way to get other participants actively engaged in the discussion and to share their thoughts on the question.

Reflection Question Example:

Participant: "What are the benefits of organising a project team meeting?"

Trainer: "Good question! Would someone like to share their experience of working as part of a project group?"

Remember that good questions should be:

- Focused (asked to achieve a specific aim or purpose)
- Clear and concise (participants understand what they mean)
- Stimulate thought (they should be thought-provoking and initiate response)
- Brief (stated in as few words as possible)
- Adapted to the level of the group (tailored to suit your groups learning objectives and knowledge)

Final Tips for Using Questions

Plan questions that provide meaning and direction to the subject you are teaching.

Include as many participants as possible in the discussion.

Use questions to guide them in the right direction and let them discover knowledge and key points on their own.

Follow up and build on participants' responses.

Don't be afraid of silence: allow at least thirty seconds for participants to respond.

If someone is struggling to answer a question, provide them with clues and hints, rephrase the question or break the question down into smaller questions.

Periodically summarise and recap key points that have been discussed during the workshop.

Check out our master list of Debrief Questions in *Annex A* for questions you can use when debriefing at the end of the session.

Things To Avoid When Reviewing

Not allocating enough time

This happens often, especially when delivering an activity experience. Due to poor planning, and too much time spent on the introduction and demonstration, the trainer rushes through the rest of the session including the review.

We recommend allocating at least 10% of the session time to reviewing (this might go up to 20% depending on the learning outcomes). Adequate time should be allocated to allow for reflection, exploration, discussion and transfer of learning.

Talking too much

Some trainers tell the group what they have learned rather than the group telling them. For learning to take place, participants must go through a processing stage. The more active this is, the better chance there is for self-discovery.

The more responsibility participants have to reflect, discuss and draw conclusions about their experience, the more they will take away from the session. Remember that in most cases the activity is used as a vehicle for learning and your role is to help people learn from their experience. Try to be engaging, interactive, and use questions to draw out the key learning points.

Sometimes, all you have to do is ask the question “What did you learn from today’s session?” and lead on from there.

Poor questioning technique

As a reviewer, you should care whether participants know how to answer the question, rather than what the answer actually is. When someone answers the question, ask them how they came to that conclusion. The most important thing is to keep building on each answer to try and create new learning opportunities.

The most common question is the open question, which is designed to give participants a lot of latitude when they respond. The problem is they don’t know that. Many people believe that all questions have a correct answer and since they don’t know the correct answer, they must not understand the question.

Allow your participants to direct the flow of discussion and use questions to guide them towards the learning opportunities.

Failing to review learning objectives

If you are provided with training objectives or learning outcomes, it is important that you include these when reviewing. For each objective, select an appropriate activity that will help you achieve that outcome and follow up after the activity by getting participants to look back on the experience and identify that learning outcome.

It is sometimes difficult for new trainers to use connections and effective links between the activity and learning outcomes. Sufficient planning and facilitation is required to ensure your participants get the most from the experience. Facilitation means ‘to make something easy’, so be sure to select activities that will make the ‘learning easy’ for participants and follow up with a review to help clarify, measure and celebrate objectives.

Failing to establish relevance

People learn best when they understand the ‘why’ and the relevance of the content in relationship to their own interests and career goals. To motivate participants, you should briefly begin each session/activity by describing how the content relates to them.

At the end of the activity and once any new learning has been identified, do the same again. Get them to think about how and when these new skills can be applied (this is also known as the transfer of learning).

If there are no connections, then why is the activity being used? Are there any other activities that you can use instead that are more learner-centred and help you better achieve your objectives?

Lacking flexibility

The lack of ability to change the flow and structure of the session to suit the group can have a negative effect. The whole point of structuring your workshop a certain way is so the group can learn and take away as much as possible from the experience.

Having a session plan is essential but don’t be afraid to go against that plan and go in a different direction. If the group isn’t responding or you spot a new learning opportunity, mix it up and change what you’re doing. As long as you get back on track later, it doesn’t really matter.

When it comes to workshop progression, it doesn’t matter how you get to that learning objective, as long as you get there in the end. Respond to your participants and don’t be a slave to your plan.

Who says you have to go from A to B to C to D and so on to Z? Be flexible enough to read your audience! If need be, jump from A to D then back to B then C and so on.

Not allowing for reflection

Giving participants the opportunity to self-reflect is one of the best tools to jump-start group discussions about team performance and help them identify what they have learned during the session.

Reflective practice helps participants use analytical and problem solving skills to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, and key learning outcomes. Allow enough time for participants to find a space, relax and spend some time looking back on the activity.

When You're Short On Time: Quick Review Techniques

Even when time is your enemy, we recommend not skipping the review section of your training session. Reviews are crucial to reinforce learning points and ensure that your participants are getting the most of the training.

Here, we share some review techniques whether you have two, five or ten minutes for reviewing.

Two Minute Reviews

If you only have two minutes, say very little, keep things simple and focus on positives.

Post Cards and Photos

Have a selection of postcards or photos with different images. Get each participant to choose one to describe how they feel about the experience they have had. Allow each person in the group to share.

Share a Movement or Sound

Each person does a movement, makes a sound, or a combination of both that matches their mood. The group then copies it.

Someone Who?

Ask a question that will relate to a person (e.g. who made a valuable contribution?). Each member of the group must place their hand on a person they feel answers the question. Ask questions that make people think a little. Take the opportunity to identify positive contributions from individuals that the group may not have picked up on. Explore why certain people have been picked by using questions to lead the group.

Mood Colour

Chose a colour that matches your mood and explain to group why you chose this colour.

Freeze Frame

Take snapshots or short video clips of moments that participants would want to remember (e.g. fun, success, improvements, surprises, discoveries, insights). If these are caught on camera and you can provide instant replays – go ahead. But this works equally well if the group re-enacts memorable moments from the activity.

Five Minute Reviews

If you have five minutes to spare at the end of the session, it's enough time for everybody to have some form of input in the reviewing process.

You may also want to add a few open questions to the mix but beware that with a group of ten, this still only allows only for 30 seconds per person.

Landscape/Environment Metaphors

Ask the group to choose an object from the landscape/environment that can be used to describe how they felt. This can focus on a specific element of the activity or the activity as a whole. In turn, each member of the group is to share their metaphor.

Pass the Rope

Tie two ends of a rope together to make a circle. Stand in a circle and pass the rope through everyone's hands. The group decides when the rope stops. If you have the knot in your hands when the rope stops then you have to say something about the activity. You can also stipulate what kind of things they need to say (e.g. one thing that they learned, the funniest moment, someone who stood out, etc.). Try to encourage participants not to say the same thing as others.

The Talking Knot

Use a small length of rope and tie a simple knot (or use a ball, beanbag, whatever is to hand) as the talking tool – people are only allowed to talk if they are holding the knot. Ask open questions to encourage participants to discuss things about the session (what they learned, how they felt, their favourite moment, etc). Everyone must have the knot at least once. *Nobody* can speak unless they have the knot – the knot must come back to you so that you can ask a question.

Objective Line

Each participant is given a length of rope (three meters), and lays it on the ground. The near end represents their starting point (now) and the far end represents their goal (e.g. for the next activity, for the programme or for the transfer of learning).

Ask each person to walk slowly along their line into the future towards their goal, pausing for thought in a few places along the way. Ask them to think about what would be happening at each point and how they would be feeling. Once everyone has completed their journey to their goal on their own, ask them to find a partner and talk through their anticipated journey as they walk along the line.

Comfort Zones

Lay out ropes/webbing in the shape of the comfort zone model and ask participants to place a unique object in the model to show how they felt during the challenge. This should focus on individual elements, for example:

- How did you feel when you arrived at the challenge?
- How did you feel during the challenge?
- How did you feel at the end?

Fish Bowl

Make a rope circle on the ground. Divide the group in two. One half sits inside the circle and may talk. One half sits outside the circle and may only observe and listen. People in the inner circle review the previous exercise. After a few minutes, the half groups change places and the new inner group continue with the review or comment on the review process they have just been observing.

Traffic Lights

Hand cards out to the group and then ask a series of questions about how the group felt at key points during the activity. Participants can respond to the questions using the traffic light system and you should draw on individuals with significant response. Use red, amber and green cards.

Red means it was hard/dangerous/made you want to stop

Amber means it was difficult but manageable

Green means it was safe and easy

Using Playing Cards

Cards Review 1

Distribute one or two cards to each member of the group. The suit on each card will correspond to the following:

Diamond – Someone who has been a diamond and has shone during the activity

Heart – Something that you loved about the activity

Club – A time when the group had to work together

Spade – A time when the group had to dig deep

In turn each person is to read out their response in relation to the cards they were dealt. Others in the group can contribute to the comment to provide more of a discussion format.

Cards Review 2

As before, hand out 1 or 2 cards to each member of the group. Suits of the cards relate to the following:

Diamonds – Facts (What happened? What appeared to be going on? What did you notice? What did you not notice?)

Hearts – Feelings (What feelings were experienced during/after the activity? How did the group feel?)

Spades – Findings (What did you find out? What does this mean?)

Clubs – Future (What do you want to take forward? Are there any future opportunities for improvement?)

Ten Minute Reviews

Ten minute reviews may allow time to explore issues, but the key is to ensure that there is enough time for everyone to have their say and to end on a positive note. Extend or combine some of the shorter reviews or try one of the longer reviews listed below.

Parts of a Bus

The aim is for the group to build a human bus. Ask participants to think in relation to their contribution and role in the team, which part of a bus would they be and why?

For example:

“I was a passenger because I just went along with the plan”

“I was a window wiper because I helped the group to see more clearly when things were getting challenging”

“I was the engine because I kept the whole thing going”

Once they have thought of this, get the group to get into the positions they would be as the bus.

Where do you stand?

Each person shows their position on an issue by where they stand on a curved line. Discuss the issue with neighbours, then in the whole group. End by checking if positions have moved.

Blob Trees

Blob trees are a fabulous way of opening up discussions about feelings and developing the understanding of emotions, empathy and self-awareness. The different trees show different scenarios that individuals or groups may experience personally.

Some of the questions you could use include:

Which Blob do you feel like?

How did you feel when starting the activity?

What about when the exercise became difficult?

Which blob did you feel like at the end? Why?

The Blobs can also be used in a less personal way if you ask which blob is happy, why do you think he is happy, and discussion can evolve that way indirectly. These can be used for both individual learners or groups.

You can visit blobtree.com to purchase a huge selection of themed blobs for reviewing.

For more short review ideas, we highly recommend Dr. Roger Greenway's Guide of Active Reviewing which can be found at <http://www.reviewing.co.uk>.

CHAPTER FIVE

How To Plan A Team Building Retreat

"Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."

Henry Ford

When A One-Day Session Is Not Enough...

Team building retreats can be an incredibly powerful way to increase your workforce's camaraderie, develop more productive relationships and improve levels of communication and cooperation.

However, to ensure your team building retreat is effective, it's essential to plan it carefully – otherwise it can quickly turn into an unproductive offsite meeting. And we all know how much fun unwanted meetings are...

Here we'll explain exactly why and how to plan a successful team building retreat for your business.

What Is A Team Building Retreat?

A team building retreat is essentially where your business organises an out-of-office gathering of your company's employees. Quite often they're hosted in rural locations, providing an environment where your team can learn to really work together through a whole host of activities.

Most of the activities at the retreat are aimed at strengthening co-worker relationships, developing levels of communication and allowing you to monitor how your team works together in some challenging but fun situations.

Why You Should Plan A Team Building Retreat

Employees are the foundation of any successful business. It's therefore essential that your team is working effectively together. A team building retreat has many benefits, all of which can be powerful methods of enhancing your business' success and bringing your teams together:

Improve your team's weaknesses and build on their strengths

No matter how strong your team is, there are always certain elements you can improve. With a team building retreat you can specifically target areas for improvement, with a clear purpose, educational goals and specifically choosing certain team building activities that will develop these goals.

Be proactive

You might be able to see potential upcoming challenges within the team, in terms of relationships or communication. A team building retreat gives you the opportunity to shut down the laptops and phones, and tackle the issues you'd like to work out.

Bring your remote team together

Even if you have a team that's working remotely, a team building retreat can still be very effective. In fact, it's the perfect opportunity to bring your long-distance team together and help them bond as a team. When most of your team haven't met each other before, they can feel a little disconnected – an annual or quarterly event helps to address this issue.

Motivation and job satisfaction

Did you know that 64% of employees say that creating trust between staff and senior management influences job satisfaction? A retreat is an opportunity to develop that bond between colleagues, while allowing time out of the office for your teams to become familiar with each other.

Investing in your team

Most employees don't actually believe their organisations are working together as effectively as they could be. That's generally because most businesses aren't investing in the right type of training and resources that will develop their teams. Organising retreats allows your business to really focus on valuable team building exercises.

How To Plan A Successful Retreat

Creating a successful team building event requires careful planning and each stage of the process has a purpose. Here are some clear steps on how to plan and prepare a successful team building retreat.

1. Form a planning committee

First of all, assign a team to plan the event. In your planning committee, make sure there's a crossover between the team planning the retreat and those who are participating.

If the delegates attending the event feel like they've influenced decisions in terms of the activities to be included, they're more likely to be engaged on the day of the event.

2. Be clear about the purpose of your event

One of the biggest reasons team building retreats are not quite as effective as they could be is the fact that there's no set agenda or goals for the outcome of the event.

Think about what you would like to achieve with the team building retreat and be very clear when communicating this to your team. Think about the reasons why you're bringing the team together.

This could include the following:

- To increase creativity and innovation
- Work on and develop a particular deficiency within the team
- Improve co-worker relationships
- Enhance communication within the team

3. Set educational goals

After defining the purpose of your retreat, you may want to drill down further into educational goals. Be as specific as possible, as the more detailed your goal, the easier it is to measure success.

4. Increase team engagement

To ensure your team building retreat is successful, it's important to gain support and participation from the top executives in your business. They're highly influential! Leading by example creates a stronger motivation for other employees to engage in the retreat.

A retreat where only the relatively junior colleagues participate will not feel as important and therefore the attendees may not take it as seriously. Having a couple of leadership-level employees within the group and participating like any other member creates a stronger sense of importance.

Choosing A Venue

With team building retreats becoming so popular, you have a vast range of options when it comes to choosing a venue. However, there are certain ways to optimise the event to ensure its success.

Here are some questions to ask when choosing a venue:

Does the venue specifically cater for team building retreats? Ideally, you should hire a venue that's specifically designed and experienced in hosting team building retreats. They'll therefore be able to assist you with organising the event, advising what activities and tasks are best suited to your company's specific requirements.

Where is the venue located? Quite often locations in remote, quiet surroundings are best. They allow your employees to focus and concentrate on the team building activities. However, if you're not supplying transport for the team, then ensure it's in a location that's reasonable to travel to, depending on where your staff live.

What facilities does the venue offer? Do they offer suitable accommodation? Are there places to eat and drink? What standard of accommodation should your business book for out-of-office events? These are some of the key venue questions that you should consider when searching for a location to host the retreat

What is your budget? Obviously some venues are more affordable than others. If you're a small business, it's important to be realistic about your budget. However, depending on the size of your team you might be able to negotiate with the venue for a more reasonable rate.

What activities do you want to include? As a core element of your retreat, you should find a venue that has a wide and relevant selection of activities suitable for your business. We discuss activities in the following section but as a general rule, each task should be fun, engaging and in line with your educational objectives for the retreat.

Types Of Activities That Work Well At Retreats

When it comes to choosing activities for the event, there are hundreds to pick from. From 'egg tossers' to 'scavenger hunts', there are some great icebreakers and team building activities for you to select.

We recommend choosing activities that are relevant to the goals you have set as these allow you to watch your team's behaviour and see how they perform.

Ice breakers

Ice breakers are a powerful way to remove the barriers that a formal business environment often creates. They work really well during the early stages of the retreat, to help people feel more relaxed and comfortable, while ensuring they're engaged with the event.

A few of our personal favourites are:

Desert Island – Prepare your team by telling them that they'll be flown off to a desert island and they're only allowed to pack three items with them. Each delegate will then present their three items to the rest of the group, along with reasons why they chose each one. Not only does this help your team members start to think pragmatically but it also offers a way to see their personality, how they think, and how they react to being 'put on the spot'.

Questions and Answers – This is quite a fun concept where team are provided with an answer and have to come up with as many relevant questions as possible. It's a really useful way to warm up your employees for the retreat, as they have to start thinking creatively to solve the task.

Getting positive – With your retreat delegates arranged in a circle so that they're easily able to communicate to each other, ask your team members to be open and share their current worries, concerns or thoughts. You can then support each delegate who's sharing their concerns by offering helpful questions. This ice breaker really helps to address any apprehensions your team may be feeling about the retreat or just in general, while creating a level of trust and mutual respect between each team member.

Games

Games are great for team building as you can organise activities that really bring people together with camaraderie. Try to organise games that are interactive, require teamwork and most likely haven't been played by anyone in the group.

Some top team building games include the following:

Foil Fun – With two sheets of foil, teams have to sculpt the tinfoil into a shape or object that you specify. This is a creative task that's perfect for the kinesthetic learners in your team who are engaged by practical activities.

Bridge Build – If your goals are to develop your team's problem solving, communication and creative thinking skills, the Bridge Build task ticks all the boxes. Splitting your delegates into two groups, both teams have to work together to build half a bridge on either side, without being able to see each other. It's also quite entertaining to watch!

Big Races – Big Races is a really fun game, involving wacky clothes, dressing up and plenty of hopping!

For more team building activities, please see our **Team Building Activity Books 1 & 2** which provide 60 easy-to-teach activities that you can use in your team retreat.

What To Do If You Are Struggling For Team Engagement

With any business event, formal or informal, people tend to worry that it's going to be a dry and slightly dull affair. That's why you should try to innovate with your team outing, avoiding the monotony of most generic retreats. Make the effort to stand out as an employer who truly cares about building a team. Not only does this make your retreat more enjoyable, it helps build the culture of an innovative and forward-thinking business.

With the tips below, ensure you have the foundations of your business retreat organised first – such as your goals, agenda, activities and schedule for the day. Then once you have the basics covered, think about how you can create a unique, unforgettable and truly rewarding retreat for your employees and your company.

Here are some creative suggestions:

- *Novelty* - serve food that people love and brings interest to the table (no pun intended!). For example, it could be exotic international cuisine or vegan food. You could even host a cooking class as part of your event, where people can work together as a team to cook a great dish!
- *Guest instructors* – hiring a guest instructor is a great way to test your team's ability to learn new things, while adding something new and exciting. Whether it's a teacher specialising in kayaking, tug of war or doubles table tennis, introducing a new person really helps to engage your team members.
- *Hire a motivational speaker* – hiring a passionate motivational speaker is a great way to engage and inspire your employees, while acting as a welcome break from the activities and group tasks that can become a little intense. Motivational speeches can add a burst of energy to a retreat and you could even theme your motivational speech around the importance of teamwork, collaboration and working together. If you're short on time, this doesn't need to be a long session – between 15-30 minutes is enough to create an impactful message.
- *Record videos and pictures from the retreat* – this makes the event more memorable and it's great for sharing via social media or on your company's internal network. This could include a video interview after the retreat with your team, action clips from the activities or just a few high quality pictures that highlight the fun side of your company's culture.

When NOT To Organise A Company Retreat

A business retreat isn't suitable for every organisation. Sometimes they're simply not relevant to your objectives as a business.

Here are some common scenarios where a team building event isn't relevant and some alternative solutions:

Tight deadlines

If you're running a seasonal business where clients are demanding and deadlines are likely to be tight, a team building retreat could be a little distracting. In this situation, it's simply a case of working around the timing.

Try to organise the retreat after peak season, when you can afford to be more proactive with team building. The retreat could even be positioned as a reward for your team performing well, highlighting the fact that you appreciate their hard work.

Very small teams

If you run a very small business, with just 2 or 3 people in the company, a team building event isn't really relevant. However, as an alternative you could organise a mini social event that requires less organisation such as a team meal, bowling or informal drinks. For more adventurous teams, you could arrange an exciting outdoor activity like skydiving or white water rafting.

Limited financial resources

When budgets are limited and you're struggling to keep afloat as a business, a team building retreat might be a relatively expensive luxury that your organisation can't afford. You could delay the retreat and wait for your company's financial performance to improve.

Another option is to consider less expensive team building events, such as an onsite team building day, which can still be fun and effective. You could also organise a team building day and run the activities on your own. Simply select a few activities from **The Team Building Activity Book** that fit your objectives, get the necessary resources and do it yourself!

What Not To Do When Planning A Team Building Retreat

There are some common pitfalls that many organisations repeatedly fall into. While some of the below mistakes might seem intuitive, we recommend avoiding them as they can really hinder the progress of your team building efforts:

- *Poor organisation* – try to stick to a fairly organised time schedule and create an agenda for the day. It's easy to stray off on a tangent with a team building retreat, which leads to you failing to achieve your retreat's goals. Assign a dedicated facilitator for the day who's in charge of managing the retreat.

- *Lack of engagement* – people naturally tend to get bored and distracted if a retreat isn't engaging enough. Make sure your activities are fun and challenging, and take regular food and beverage breaks to refresh your team's concentration levels. If you have members who are shy or slightly introverted, try to encourage them to be involved in the group activities so that they feel more comfortable and relaxed.
- *Not inviting relevant people* – a team building retreat should bring everyone relevant together. Failing to invite certain people in the organisation could have a negative impact on employee morale, which is the opposite of what you're trying to achieve. Ensure it's an inclusive event that brings your workforce together, rather than shutting particular employees out.
- *Failing to set goals* – if you don't set goals for the retreat, it's going to be difficult to measure the event's success. When financial resources are invested into the event, you should be able to prove the return on investment, even if this is a qualitative result. Goals are the foundation of any team building event, helping you to understand what activities you should select, how to organise the day and which specific skills you would like your team to develop.
- *Calling it a retreat* – yes, we do commonly refer to an offsite team building event as a business retreat! However, the word 'retreat' might have some negative connotations and imply that you're 'escaping' work. Seth Godin actually recommends calling the event an 'advance' for this reason. Whatever you decide to call your event, make it sound fun and appealing to the people you invite.
- *Not asking for feedback* – so many organisations fail to ask for feedback after holding their retreat. This is a great opportunity to find out how you can improve your next session, if you ask the right questions. Ask for feedback after the final activity before everyone leaves. That way, the experience will still be fresh in your attendee's minds and they'll be able to provide clearer suggestions. Preferably collect feedback right away (avoid collecting the forms at a later date) via an individual rather than a group contribution, as your delegates can be honest and won't have to worry what their colleagues think about their ideas.

Plan For Success

As you have learned, planning a team building retreat is a great team building technique that's fun and, more importantly, effective. From improving your team's weaknesses to increasing levels of communication, there's a whole host of powerful benefits that are useful for any team.

While it's important to be aware of common retreat planning mistakes, such as poor planning or not engaging your employees, with the above tips you should have the tools to overcome these challenges.

CHAPTER SIX

How To Facilitate

*"The facilitator's job is to support everyone
to do their best thinking."*

Sam Kaner

The Basics of Facilitation

If you're a trainer or manager who's been tasked with facilitating a workshop, it is a good idea to learn the basics of facilitation to help both you and your participants get the most from the experience. Here we provide you with some guidelines to help you understand the fundamentals of facilitating a workshop.

Want to know the difference between a trainer and facilitator? Flip back to page 9 to refresh your memory.

Here's what you need to know when you're facilitating a session:

1. The importance of beginning

Everything has a beginning, a middle and an end. Getting started is like setting out on a journey or laying the foundation of a house. Remember first impressions last and you need your group to become invested from the start.

Think about how you'd like to present the content. In the first 10 minutes, help the group identify why the workshop is relevant to them either as an individual, or as part of a team so that they can make the most of it.

2. Listen, be aware and take notes

As a facilitator, you should take care to listen to the whole group, and each person in it. Listening is one of the primary skills of facilitation and the quality of your listening will profoundly affect the group and the quality of your workshop. Listening should be active, focused and affirming.

Your most important asset as a facilitator is your awareness. You should take note of everything that is said or done, and choose to either intervene and offer a suggestion, or use the note as a discussion and learning point at the end of the workshop.

3. Use questions effectively

Questioning is a technique used by facilitators during workshops as an alternative method of presenting new information, or to help move the process along.

By asking a question, or series of questions, you guide participants in the right direction and put them in control of their own learning by helping them find solutions for themselves. Even if you know the answer or the solution is obvious, your job as facilitator is to guide the process, not be involved in the content. Instead lead them to the answer through effective questioning.

4. Intervene only when necessary

The only reason to use an intervention is to keep the group focused and to move the process along. If the group is struggling, then use some questions to guide them in the right direction. Only intervene in group discussion when it is necessary to interrupt negative behaviour which is obstructing progress.

5. Work with conflict

Disagreement happens as a result of different personalities, values and opinions and will sometimes escalate in heated discussions and debate. If a team is to develop and form, it will be need to work with conflict, rather than avoid it. Allow the group to go through the different stages of team development including storming.

You should be comfortable with conflict and encourage opinions to be expressed openly. Creative conflicts can be synergistic and lead to major breakthroughs and progress.

6. Monitor energy levels

Monitor the energy level of the group at all times. Energy is indicated by tone of voice, body language, eye contact and level of participation. The energy of the group will alter all the time.

You will see a big difference between a group at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day. You should aim to keep their level of energy consistent throughout the workshop by varying your delivery style, type of activities and taking regular breaks.

Short breaks or active challenges can help improve energy and the level of concentration for longer sessions. Plan for a few active team challenges to use when energy is low and to break up your workshop.

7. Improvise

Good facilitation is about staying flexible in your approach, experimenting and having the confidence to react and adjust to circumstances in the moment. Sometimes you may need to deviate from your session plan when there is more (or better) learning elsewhere.

Respond to the group and improvise when necessary. Don't get hung up on a set structure or doing things a certain way! Remember: we learn best through self-discovery and experience.

8. Use humour

A sense of humour is a great asset to a facilitator. Using humour not only helps build rapport and make the experience more enjoyable for everyone, but it can also be useful when you need to defuse some tense moments during group discussions.

9. Timing is everything

When you're new to running workshops, planning how long activities will take is often a guessing game. As mentioned, it is important to stay flexible in your approach. This includes timing. Keep checking the time and adapt when you need to.

If you happen to overrun on one activity, it can affect everything else in the programme. Learn to be aware of your timings! If you're going too quickly or too slowly, take a moment to review and then adapt your plan. If an activity is taking longer than you predicted, but is helping you meet your aims and providing useful learning, then it may be a good idea to either scrap another activity or move the programme around.

The most important thing to remember is that you are there to...

10. Get the job done

During the planning stage, make sure you fully understand the purpose and aims of the workshop. This will put you in the best possible position to select activities or methods of teaching that will help you achieve those aims.

It is also a good idea to allocate and spend some time with the group at the beginning of the workshop to understand their expectations and understand their 'why'. Get them started on the first activity as normal, and when you take a break, adjust your plan accordingly to ensure that not only do you meet the organisation's needs, but also the participants'.

How To Facilitate A Group Discussion

Group discussions are used by effective trainers to promote the exchange of ideas and encourage active learning. Two facilitation exercises that you can use are The Gallery Exercise and Station Discussions.

The Gallery Exercise

One way to facilitate a group discussion is known as the Gallery Exercise.

In the gallery group discussion exercise, participants work in smaller groups and discuss issues related to a certain topic or subject. The room is organised into separate areas with a different topic or subject to be discussed at each area.

Each area has some chairs and a table with a big board with a sheet of flipchart paper attached (aka the 'gallery'). Each group is allocated an area to begin. They then discuss the topic (this can be a question, an issue or a general theme linked to your training outcomes) and write down their conclusions on the flipchart paper before moving on to the other tables.

At the end of the exercise, groups present the information back and participants are given some time to tour the galleries to see what the other groups have contributed.

Resources:

Tables and chairs, flip chart paper, marker pens and topic cards

Space Required:

Medium. Training room or classroom

Group Size:

9-24 people (aim for between 3-6 people per sub-group)

Total time:

70-75 minutes

5 minutes to brief and set up

4 x 10 minutes working at each gallery (depending on the number of participants).

15 minutes for presentations (prepare and deliver)

5 minutes to tour the galleries

5-10 minutes to review and debrief

Setup:

Before your workshop, you should prepare a topic or question to be discussed at each gallery. This should be linked to your workshop and your training outcomes.

Here is an example for a risk management workshop:

- What is a risk?
- How do we overcome risk?
- Why is this important to me?

You can either write the topic on large sized paper or print these prior to the workshop. It might also be useful to laminate so you can use these again in future workshops.

Organise the room into four areas (this may be more or less depending on the number of galleries you have). Set up each area with a table, some chairs, a flipchart stand (or any board) and attach a blank piece of flipchart paper.

Training Instructions:

Divide participants into 3-4 groups (no more than 6 per group). Select a person from each group to document the discussion and conclusions on the flipchart paper. Give each group a different colour pen to help separate their contribution to each flipchart.

Begin the exercise and give each group ten minutes per gallery to discuss the topic. Towards the end of the ten minutes, the nominated scribe should begin writing down the main points discussed.

Next, move each group on to next gallery. Have them discuss the new topic and add their contribution. Continue this for each subsequent gallery.

Once all groups have contributed to each flipchart, get them to return to where they started. Allow time to review and discuss the contributions added by the other groups.

Each group will then present their gallery piece and their findings to the other groups.

At the end of the presentations, allow participants five minutes to walk around and look at the galleries on show.

Tips and Guidance:

The total number of galleries required is typically based on the number of groups you have. Aim for no more than six people per group – any more than this and group members will find it hard to share their ideas or opinions on the subject.

For example, if you have 4 groups, you'll have 4 galleries. Note that if you have too many groups, the exercise can become quite time-consuming.

If you are working with a large group and have no choice but to increase the number of groups, then you have three choices, you can:

- Split the group in half and run the activity as two separate groups at the same time. This can be quite interesting when reviewing as you can compare the two groups' conclusions during the presentations.
- Decrease the time allowance at each gallery to just 5 minutes.
- Run this activity as normal but all groups won't contribute to the galleries. The key points will still be summarised during the final presentations.

Review and debrief:

For reviewing ideas and instructions on how to review, refer back to Chapter 4.

Here are a few suggested questions to ask:

- Why did we do that exercise?
- Were you given an opportunity to contribute?
- What surprised you the most?
- Do you feel each topic was adequately explored?
- Did you find anything frustrating?
- What did you enjoy the most?
- What can you take away from the exercise? How can you use this knowledge?

Station Discussions

This excellent training technique is used to discuss a subject or topic in detail and help participants elaborate views and share ideas in smaller groups.

During this exercise, the topic is broken down into several sub-topics (for discussion at each station). Participants are split into smaller groups and move from one station to another discussing each sub-topic independently.

When coming up with ideas for discussion points, a good rule to follow is that any separate part should not be dependent on the discussion results of other parts. They should remain independent of each other.

For example, the SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of an issue are good sub-topics which allow for independent discussion.

Resources:

Flipchart paper, markers and pens

Space required:

Small/Medium. Indoors or outdoors.

Group size:

8 to 24 people (working in smaller sub-groups of 4-6 people).

Total time:

60-65 minutes

5 minutes to brief and set up

Round 1 – 25 minutes

Round 2 – 15 Minutes

Round 3 – 10 Minutes

5-10 minutes to review and debrief

Setup:

You should prepare several topics or questions linked to your training workshop or meeting before you begin. Write each topic on separate pieces of flipchart or large sized paper.

Organise the room into four areas/stations (this may be more depending on the number of groups or discussion points you have) and arrange some chairs in each area. There will be one topic of discussion per station.

Training Instructions:

Split your group into three or more smaller sub-groups. Introduce the exercise and explain that working in their groups they move between stations discussing the topic and writing down their ideas, thoughts and conclusions.

The exercise will consist of 3 rounds. Allocate each group a station to begin with.

Start the rounds and let the group begin discussing the topic at their allocated station. Using the markers provided, group members must write down their observations on the flipchart paper provided at the station.

Organise groups in the first round as follows:

Round 1

Group A will start at Station 1

Group B will start at Station 2

Group C will start at Station 3

Ask each group to discuss the topic and write down their conclusions on the flipchart paper. Groups are given 25 minutes for the first round. At the end of the round, ask them to proceed to the second round and their next station.

Organise groups in the second round as follows:

Round 2

Group A will move to Station 2

Group B will move to Station 3

Group C will move to Station 1

In the second round, give each group 15 minutes to reflect on the conclusions reached by the previous group and modify or add to the flipchart before moving on to the third and final round.

Organise groups in the third round as follows:

Round 3

Group A will finish at Station 3

Group B will finish at Station 1

Group C will finish at Station 2

For the final round, give the groups 10 minutes to either modify or add to the previous groups conclusions.

Once all rounds have been completed, ask all groups to return back to their original stations for a chance to review. Allow a couple of minutes for the groups to read through their flipchart paper and any new comments that have been added.

Variations:

If you are working with larger groups (more than 24 people) then you should split the group in half and run the same session simultaneously. There will be 2 stations per sub-topic and you will end up with 2 different flipcharts per sub-topic.

For example, if you have 36 people:

Side 1 – 18 people (3 sub-teams of 6) and 3 stations

Side 2 – 18 people (3 sub-teams of 6) and 3 stations

At the end of the workshop, get participants to note the differences between the conclusions drawn from the two sides.

Tips and Guidance:

To separate each group's comments, provide each group with a different colour marker for writing down their conclusions.

Group A – Blue marker

Group B – Green marker

Group C – Red marker

The number of groups is dependent on the number of sub-topics for discussion. If you divide the topic into three parts, then there needs to be three stations. If you divide the topic into four parts, then you will need to have four stations.

Reviewing and debrief

When reviewing the exercise, it is important to summarise the key points and share the input of all the groups. Get participants to think about why they did the station discussion and what they can take away from it.

For ideas and information on how to review, refer back to Chapter 4.

Here are some suggested questions to ask:

- What can we learn from the exercise?
- Did you find anything difficult?
- Did everyone have an opportunity to share their ideas and views?
- What was the most frustrating part of the exercise?
- Did anyone surprise you?
- What will you take away from the exercise?

How To Facilitate A Case Study Workshop

Case studies can be used as part of a training workshop to facilitate a learning point or as part of an assessment programme to gauge candidate's response and analysis of situations. A case study can be great for sharing experiences and reaffirming knowledge and understanding.

A case study session consists of a detailed description of events that is then used for discussion and learning. The events can be taken from a real life situation or can be completely fictional. The purpose of a case study is to take the group closer to the real context of a situation or problem, and identify its cause and solution.

A case study session can be very beneficial:

- Increases awareness of a problem and helps teams formulate possible solutions.
- Promotes the exchange of ideas and helps team members share past experiences.
- Helps to analyse a problem and reach a decision as a team.
- Reaffirms key learning points.

Resources:

Pre-printed scenario cards (optional)

Space Required:

Small. Classroom or training room

Group Size:

6 to 16 people

Total Time:

50 minutes

5 minutes to introduction and setup

10 minutes per case study for analysis and discussion (based on 4 case studies)

5 minutes for final review and case study debrief

Setup:

Select the topic or theme that you would like to focus on during the training exercise.

Prepare some possible scenarios or research articles related to the subject.

Case studies should be descriptions of events that really happened or fictional but based on reality. When leading the exercise, you can present the case study yourself. Provide it in written form or even use videos or audio clips.

We suggest printing the questions on a piece of A4 paper and laminating them for use during the workshop.

Instructions:

A case studies session can be delivered two different ways.

The first way is to simply provide the group with a scenario and let them discuss it together as one big group.

The alternative is to split the group into smaller sub-groups and provide each group with the scenario. Once all groups have an opportunity to analyse and discuss the scenario, ask each group to present their findings. This is a good way to get participants who are less likely to open up in bigger groups involved.

Look at your group and think about what will work best and give you the results you need.

When leading the case studies session, actively listen to the discussion and provide necessary assistance to facilitate (guide) the analysis and discussion in the proper direction. Make sure you lead the discussion towards the learning objectives of the training workshop.

If you have people with conflicting views, let them argue their points. If the discussion becomes too heated, stop them, summarise the discussion points and move on.

If everyone in the group agrees on something, the discussion becomes stagnant, try playing devil's advocate to get participants to look at the scenario from a different point of view.

When introducing the scenario, ask the group to think about the following 5 questions:

- What's the problem?
- What's the cause of the problem?
- How could the problem have been avoided?
- What are the solutions to the problem?
- What can you learn from this scenario?

Try to be flexible with your timings. If you need to stop a scenario early because the group becomes too heated or the group has explored the subject completely, stop them and summarise before moving on. If the scenario leads to valuable learning and you're running out of time, allow an extra five minutes and skip another scenario.

Tips and Guidance:

A good way to lead up to a case study is to present the scenario to the group at the end of the day and ask them to read up on the material and prepare in the evening. The first part of the following day's workshop should then be the case study.

Another way of leading a case study session is simply handing over the question cards and letting the group begin the discussion on their own. At the end of the discussion, you (the facilitator) should summarise the key points – help them identify why the case study was important to the learning and move on to the next one.

If you're discussing any sensitive subjects such as child protection etc, then it is important to inform the group at the beginning of the case study. Explain that anything discussed during the exercise must be kept confidential. Assure them that if anyone needs to leave for a couple of minutes, they are more than welcome to.

CHAPTER SEVEN

How To Evaluate Your Training Sessions

"All men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from their mistakes."

Winston Churchill

The End of Your Session Is Not The End

You've finished your last activity, the review has been completed, and you're ready to breathe a sigh of relief that you've successfully done it.

Well, not quite yet.

The real end of a training session is evaluating it. This can be done in two ways:

- Feedback from participants
- Self-assessment

Why Feedback Is Important

Before you dismiss the group, don't forget to ask them for feedback on the training session! This one last activity provides a platform for them to reflect on whether they have achieved their learning aims as well provide their evaluation and comments on how the training session was conducted.

If you'd like to increase your effectiveness as a trainer, feedback is invaluable. It's a useful, concrete way to measure your performance. Depending on how your feedback form is designed, you can find out what participants thought of your training style, methods and solicit comments on how to improve.

On the flip side, getting good feedback can be a great confidence-booster! Knowing what was well received and which methods worked the best means that you can work on incorporating those elements in future training sessions.

How To Get Feedback From Participants

We recommend making it mandatory for each participant to complete a feedback form before leaving at the end of the training session. This way, you can get a holistic picture of how everyone in your group perceived the effectiveness of the session.

Resist the urge to make the feedback form too long. A form that takes 5-10 minutes to complete is ideal, and often participants prefer multiple-choice answers or ranking questions which are easier to complete than open-ended questions and empty text boxes.

That said, do provide space for participants to include any extra comments or suggestions that they have. While most participants may not answer that question, the ones who do often provide good constructive comments that you can take on.

Why You Should Assess Your Own Performance

The other part of evaluating your training session is doing your own self-assessment.

Often we can be our own worst critic and the danger is that we can be overly harsh on ourselves. This is why it is important to get feedback from participants as well. These two methods work hand-in-hand to provide a more balanced view.

Here are some quick, *yes or no* questions to get you started on assessing your own performance as a trainer:

Basics

- Did you introduce yourself?
- Did you map the session and discuss the 'why'?
- Did you discuss previous experiences?
- Did you finish on time?
- Did you use questions?

Communication

- Were you clear and concise with instructions?
- How was the speed and tone of your speech?
- Did you use natural pauses or did you use filler words?

Language

- Did you use simple language? (No jargon!)
- Could someone without technical knowledge understand what you were talking about?
- Was the use of words appropriate to the group and audience?
- Did you explain any words that the trainees didn't understand?

Coaching

- Did you help the trainees?
- Did you use progressive goal setting or development?
- Were you providing constructive criticism?
- Did you encourage?
- How interactive was the session?

Structure

- Did the session structure make sense?
- Did you allow time to review and discuss learning lessons?
- Was there enough time allocated to the actual doing (time practising)?

This may seem like a daunting list of questions, but don't be intimidated! Self-discovery through reflecting on one's own performance is an excellent way to learn.

Together with the feedback received from participants, identify any key learning lessons and outline how you can do better in the next session. Don't be discouraged by any bad feedback! Remember that one of the key qualities of a successful trainer is the willingness to learn from one's mistakes and improve on them.

CHAPTER EIGHT

You Can Do It!

"You don't have to be great to start,
but you have to start to be great."

Zig Ziglar

“I still don’t feel ready to be a trainer!”

Preparation is the key to success, and we hope this eBook has given you some of the tools to help you on your journey of being an effective trainer.

The truth is, you may never feel ready and that’s okay. The early days of being a trainer often involves a lot of nervousness and doubts about whether you can pull it off.

Ask yourself what you’re most scared or nervous about, and then find solutions to alleviate your fear. For instance, if you’re nervous about speaking in front of a group of people, you could consider taking a short course on public speaking. Or you could script out your main talking points and then practise delivering it to a group of friends. Get their feedback on how you did, and how you can do better.

Having a solid training plan that includes contingencies in case anything goes wrong can also give you peace of mind. If you know the structure of your session like the back of your hand, you can more easily navigate anything unexpected and be flexible in your approach.

Plus, sometimes, just doing it will help. Face your nervousness head on and conduct your first training session anyway. With your training plan in mind, try to stay calm and conduct the session as best as you can. If you can project an image of confidence, your audience may not even be able to detect your nerves or any mistakes that you make.

Remember, it’s your training session and your group will likely only catch your mistakes if you point them out! Instead, stay calm, remain flexible and everything will be alright.

“My training session was a mess! I don’t think I’m cut out to be a trainer.”

We believe that if you did put in work doing preparation and planning before the delivery of the session, it’s unlikely that your training session was a mess. Perhaps it didn’t run as smoothly as you had hoped or there were some obvious hiccups. That can be fixed with time and experience. Don’t be discouraged!

If you think that you didn’t do as well in a particular aspect of the training, check the feedback from the participants to see if they felt the same way and if there were any comments or suggestions that you can take in. Take each mistake and each piece of feedback as something you can learn from to become an even more awesome trainer in the future!

You Can Do It!

Experience is the best teacher, so just go out there and do it! Know that being a trainer is an on-going journey, and every time you add a new skill or technique to your personal toolkit, that’s one more thing you can bring to your next session.

De-Brief Questions: Master List

General Questions:

- *How did you feel during the activity?*
- *What challenges did you face?*
- *What did your team have to do or believe to be successful?*
- *What positives can you take away from the activity?*
- *What was your plan for the activity? How did you come up with it?*
- *How can you apply what you learned from this activity in your life or the workplace?*
- *How did you feel when you were initially briefed?*
- *What advice would you give to any other team working on this activity?*
- *What would you do differently next time?*
- *What surprised you the most?*
- *What did you enjoy about the activity? What didn't you enjoy?*
- *What lessons can you learn from this challenge?*
- *How well do you feel you contributed as an individual to the task? What was your role?*

Communication Questions

- *Do you feel you communicated well as a team?*
- *What changes would you make in how you communicated?*
- *Did you listen to others in the team?*
- *Did everyone have some input?*
- *Did everyone understand the plan? If not, why not?*
- *How did you ensure everyone knew what was happening?*
- *How did you communicate your ideas?*

Coaching Point: Communication is central to the success of any team and your participants need to recognise their responsibilities both as an individual and as a team player. The ability to both listen and discuss often determines success or failure.

Leadership Questions

- *What is good leadership?*
- *Did anyone take the lead during the activity?*
- *Can you have more than one team leader?*
- *How did your leader manage the group? Were you allocated responsibilities?*
- *Was your leader a good leader? Why?*
- *How important was communication when leading?*
- *Who was responsible for the success or failure of the activity?*
- *What key qualities does a leader need to have?*
- *What is the purpose of a team leader?*

Coaching Point: Leadership is an important factor for a team to achieve success. The purpose of leadership is to give clear direction to help achieve a specific goal or outcome. The leader does this by organising the team and providing support, stability and motivation to others to maximize efficiency. How a group chooses to make its decisions is also important. If a group chooses to have a leader, the leader must have good listening and discussion skills.

Problem Solving Questions

- *What is a goal? Does reaching your goal mean you are successful?*
- *How do you achieve your goals?*
- *How did you come up with your idea or solution to the problem?*
- *Did your team try different ideas? If so, why did you change your approach? What can you learn from this?*
- *How important was planning? Did everyone have a role during the challenge?*
- *Did the group have a clear action plan and how did you come up with this?*
- *If you failed, what happened next? How did you move past it?*
- *Did you spend time reflecting on your approach? Why was that important?*
- *Did you adapt your approach to the task at any point? Why did you change it?*
- *What did you learn about solving problems during the activity? How can we use this in the future?*
- *Why is goal setting important?*

Coaching Point: Explain the problem solving model – identify the problem, plan, do, review and adapt. Teams usually have no problem proposing several solutions to the problem. However, they need to be made aware of the difference between ideas and plans. To plan they need to consider the consequences of their actions. A common problem is that teams put ideas into action before fully discussing in detail, the merits of all the ideas proposed.

When there is a time restriction on tasks, it is common that the team performance may also become rushed. When this happens the team usually fails to spend enough time thinking and planning before taking action.

Teamwork Questions

- *Do you feel you worked well as a team?*
- *How did you help your team during the activity?*
- *Did the whole team agree? Did everyone have an input?*
- *What did a fellow team member do that was really helpful?*
- *Did anyone in your team surprise you?*
- *How important was the support of your team? When do we need support from others in life or the workplace?*
- *How did you support others in the team?*
- *Did anyone feel left out? Why?*
- *What helped you or stopped you from achieving the outcomes?*
- *Did you trust your team during the activity? Why was this important?*
- *How did you overcome negativity in the team? Did this affect how you approached the activity?*

- *Looking back, what do feel is the most important element of teamwork?*
- *How would you rate your teamwork between 1 and 10? 10 being the best value.*

Coaching Point: Teamwork is important when working with others towards a shared goal. It allows us to collaborate and share ideas in order to improve. When faced with a difficult challenge, it is helpful having other people there to support and offer advice. This links back to aspects of life and can relate to both every day and workplace problems.

Reflection Questions

- *If you had to do it again, what changes would you make to the way you approach the task?*
- *Think about your own personal experience in the activity. What would you do differently next time?*
- *Looking back on the activity, what two things stand out to you the most and why?*
- *What did you learn through this experience and how can you use it in the future?*
- *Before moving on to the next challenge, I would like you to identify one area where you feel you could have contributed more.*

Coaching Point: In order to move forward, we sometimes need to look back and think about our experience and how we can use what we learned to progress. By asking ourselves questions and reflecting on performance, we can work out where we can improve and grow as both individuals and teams.

Failure Questions (Mental Toughness)

- *Since you were unable to solve the problem, does this mean your team failed?*
- *How did you feel when you failed the activity?*
- *What did you do to turn things around?*
- *Is failure a bad thing? Why do you think that?*
- *What is more important, completing the task or the process (how you worked towards the goal)?*
- *How did you support others when you found the activity difficult?*
- *What did you learn about yourself and your team from the failure of this task?*
- *What would you do differently next time?*

Coaching Point: Emphasize the importance of the need to fail in order to learn from the experience. Failure teaches us success, as we learn how to adapt and become better at what we do. It also teaches us the power of resilience when faced with difficult challenges. The most important thing is to learn through the process – sometimes it's not the destination but the journey that truly matters.

Contributors

David Priestley

The majority of the content in this book was written by David Priestley. David is a team building and training specialist based in the UK. He began his career as an activity instructor back in 2003 and today offers team development programmes and training consultancy to a number of private and public sector organisations across the UK and Europe.

For questions about activities in this book, please contact us:

E-mail: web@ventureteambuilding.co.uk

Website: www.ventureteambuilding.co.uk

About Venture Team Building

Venture Team Building was created to provide resources for anyone interested in providing experiential learning and team building activities. The site currently has over seventy team challenges, fifty ice breakers and over a hundred games ideas to try. Currently the website has the largest collection of team building challenges on the internet, helping teachers, managers, instructors and facilitators from all over the world provide activities to just about anyone.

What will you find on the website?

- Downloadable training tools, exercises and content
- How to video tutorials
- Web-exclusive offers
- Training tips, articles and news



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