

Title: Workskills: Teamwork (Landmines)

Objectives: In this lesson, the participants will:

1. Increase their awareness of the importance of teamwork.
2. Recognize and appreciate each individual's contribution to a team effort.
3. Use metaphors to simulate a real world application.

Session Time: 50-60 minutes (It will take approximately 10 minutes to set up with the group, 20 minutes to complete (depending on the size of the group) and 20-25 minutes to debrief.)

Materials: A large, open, level area (This can be done indoors or outside.), marker board or chalkboard, roll of masking tape, 100 16oz plastic bottles of water or 100 soda cans, bandannas for blindfolds

Methods: Interactive participation, guided discussion

Instruction:

Everyday in business, we set out to do battle with the competition. We must produce or sell a quality product at a fair price in order to be successful. Along the way, there are many obstacles or **land mines** that if we trip on them, they will blow up. This explosion could ruin not only the project, but the person as well. There is a long stream of people involved in the business success chain. These people must learn to communicate effectively as a team in order for them to survive the minefield of business.

As we send out the field personnel to sell or provide our service, it is the leader's responsibility to make sure that they can deal with and negotiate the "landmines" that await them. The further from the leader the employee gets, the harder it is for the leader to do this effectively. Both parties must know what the other is dealing with in order for them to be successful.

Activity

1. Bring the materials to the open area and place a line of tape on the floor or ground across each end of the "minefield". The size of this area will vary depending on the size of the group. Be careful not to set an area too small. The participants will start to bump into each other and cloud the objective of the activity. You may need to mark the sideline as well, if you are outside.
2. Place the water bottles or cans sporadically around the minefield area. Make sure when you are finished that there are no straight paths from one side to the other. Also, be careful not to put too many mines out as to make it so difficult that the group does not have a chance to complete it.

3. Set the bandannas for the blindfolds aside and out of view until you are ready for that part of the discussion.
4. Convene the group in an area adjacent to the prepared site and give them a summary of what this activity entails. Try not to give too much information or strategy as this will dilute the effectiveness of this exercise. **No time should be given to plan strategy!**
5. Depending on the size of the group, divide the participants into 2-4 teams and have them partner up.
6. Have one person from each partner group volunteer to be the employee who will negotiate the minefield and have the other one serve as the leader who will guide them.
7. The guides may speak to their partner, but they may not touch them and they may not move across the tape line at the end.
8. The employees are not allowed to speak for the rest of the activity.
9. When you say go, each team starts with one "employee/manager" pair and tries to successfully negotiate the minefield by "shouting" the instructions to his or her partner. If the employee hits a mine, then he or she must return to the start line and begin again. When the first team member successfully navigates the mine field, the next "employee/manager" pair may start.
10. Every team must get all of their "employees" to other side before the activity is complete. If you stop before they are done, it will be very frustrating to your group and the debriefing will go very poorly.
11. The group is trying to get from one side of the minefield to the other. However, they may not use the walls along the side to do this. The walls or sidelines are out of bounds and count as a mine. Therefore, if the employee touches them, they must go back.
12. After your explanation is over, have the "employees" put on their blindfolds. Do not explain that there will be a blindfold until this point, but make sure that anyone who has volunteered to negotiate the minefield is comfortable with being blindfolded. Prepare for any concessions needed like holding of eyeglasses, etc.
13. Make sure that you have provided adequate safety instructions to the group and that you have facilitators to help provide for safety.
14. When all of the teams have successfully negotiated the minefield, hold the debriefing.

Debriefing Questions

On the board, write the students' responses to the following questions.

Questions for the blindfolded participants (employees):

How did it feel to try to work your way through the minefield without being able to see?

How dependent were you on your partner?

How hard was it for you the further away from your partner you got?

Was it difficult for you to know if the directions being shouted were for you or for someone else?

How did it feel to get so far through the exercise and then be told to go back because you struck a land mine?

Were you ever confused by the instructions being given to you?

Questions for the guides (managers):

Did you have a plan for success before you started?

Did you have to change that plan during the exercise?

Was it frustrating when your partner would not move correctly no matter how hard you tried?

How hard was it for you the further away your partner got?

Questions for the entire group.

Why did the exercise naturally evolve into a competition?

Did we state at the beginning that this activity was a competition?

In business, what are some of the “land mines” that could be waiting for you?

In the scenario, whenever you hit a land mine, you blew up and had to return to the beginning. Is it possible to prepare people to strike land mines and survive? (hint: You are looking for training.)

As leaders or managers, how could you provide for effective communication the further away your people get?

Note: This lesson is included in the workshop, ***An Essential “Soft” Skill for the 21st Century--Teamwork***, in the ***SIPDC Catalog of Professional Development Opportunities***.