

Experiential Team Building Exercise for On-Line Students Using a Virtual Scavenger Hunt

Introduction

Building cohesive teams is an important aspect of management and leadership. Having an enjoyable and effective way to apply team building theory in an on-line environment requires a creative approach. This exercise was originally developed for face-to-face delivery but has been adapted to the on-line learning environment in a unique way that enables students to participate in an experiential, team building exercise, even if they are remotely located and never meet face to face.

This exercise enforces the following team building concepts.

- Interdependency of team members (Walker & Miller, 2012)
- Establishing team norms (Walker & Miller, 2012)
 - Implicit rules
 - Explicit rules
- Collaboration
- Group Formation
 - Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing (Tuckman, 1965).

Students are given a power point lecture on team building as an introduction. They are then assigned to a team and given a virtual scavenger hunt assignment where they must work together to achieve the stated goals of the assignment. The explicit rules assigned by the instructor are given in such a way that all team members must participate. Additionally, they must communicate with each other and assign roles and responsibilities in a collaborative effort. The project is debriefed by students posting a reflection on the team building experience on a discussion board, applying the above concepts through the answers to some guiding questions.

Instructions

Learning Goals

After completing the exercise students will be able to

- Identify team norms
 - Identify explicit team rules
 - Identify implicit team rules
- Describe how the establishment of rules impacts team function
- Describe how their team collaborated to achieve the established goals
- Reflect on any challenges the team faced in achieving the established goals (storming)
- Describe how team effectiveness could have been improved

Timing

In a face to face format this exercise can be completed in a contiguous 1 hour and thirty-minute session. In an on-line format, students may be given a one week time period to complete the exercise but each participant will spend approximately the same time (1 hour and thirty minutes) of hands on time including viewing the power point, communicating with team members, completing his or her assigned tasks and posting a reflection.

Number of Participants

It is recommended that students work in teams of 4 for the best result. Larger teams may be too difficult to manage leading to frustration and reduced learning outcomes. Smaller teams may not face enough communication challenges. Challenges are important to the exercise to facilitate effective reflection and enable the students to generate ideas for improvement.

Materials and Technology Needed

Instructors need the ability to assign students to teams and to create a discussion board where team members can post attached files or photos. Most on-line learning management systems like Blackboard for example, offer Group Tools. In Blackboard instructors can create groups and randomly assign students to each group. The group can have its own discussion board accessible only to the group members and the instructor. If a course management system is not available, instructors may use a social media site like Facebook or Instagram to create a private group that includes the team members and the instructor. If those options are not feasible then a Google Doc can be created for each group granting permission to each member to edit the document. Instructors must have the e-mail addresses of each student.

Each student must have at a minimum an e-mail account and the ability to take pictures either with a phone, camera, tablet or laptop. They must have access to the Internet and the ability to post the pictures to a discussion board.

Appropriate Level

Most appropriate for undergraduate level or entry level supervisor.

Preparation

A power point lecture or handout on team building concepts must be prepared as an introduction to the exercise. The instructor must assign the groups of 4 students and prepare group tools including e-mail lists and a private discussion board to which the team members and the instructor have access. A list of instructions and scavenger items that the team must collect must be prepared.

Students must view the power point or read the handout on team building concepts. They must read the instructions for the virtual scavenger hunt and communicate with their assigned team members.

Teaching Notes

At the beginning of the module on team building the instructor delivers a power point presentation or handout on key team building concepts. In the on-line format this information is delivered to students either in the form of a voice narrated power point or a written handout. See Appendix A for the power point slides and Appendix B for a written handout.

The instructor randomly selects teams of 4 students each. The instructor creates an online group using a Course Management System like Blackboard, a Facebook group, an Instagram group, or a Google Doc granting access to each team member and the instructor.

The instructor assigns the group activity to each group member by sending the following instructions identified in *italics*. This can be delivered to students in the form of an e-mail or as an “assignment” on a course management system like Blackboard.

Instructions Virtual Scavenger Hunt

After reading the Team Building Handout in this week’s unit, apply what you have learned by participating in an on-line, team building experience in the form of a virtual Scavenger Hunt.

Learning Goals: After completing the exercise students should be able to

- *Identify any team norms that developed*
 - *Identify explicit team rules*
 - *Identify implicit team rules*
- *Describe how the establishment of rules facilitated team function*
- *Describe how the team collaborated to achieve the established goals*
- *Reflect on any challenges the team faced in achieving the established goals (storming)*
- *Describe how team effectiveness could have been improved*

You have been assigned to the following team.

Team Member1 Name – Team Member 1 e-mail

Team Member2 Name – Team Member 2 e-mail

Team Member3 Name – Team Member 3 e-mail

Team Member4 Name – Team Member 4 e-mail

*Each team must collect **photos** of as many of the items listed below as possible. Each photo should be posted to the group discussion board for your team as an attached file. Each item can only be submitted by one team member. If duplicate items are submitted they will be disqualified (this is to ensure that you communicate as a team). All team mates who participate in the scavenger hunt will earn 2 points.*

Teams that collect all items without breaking any rules will receive 1 extra credit point added to your final score for the class. In order for a team member to get credit for the assignment, they must submit at least one item to the discussion board.

- *A copy of the New York Times*
- *An item with the university or company Logo*
- *A sorority T-shirt*
- *A fraternity T-shirt*
- *A Dunkin Donuts cup*
- *A selfie in front of a local restaurant*
- *A selfie with a dog*
- *A selfie with a cat*
- *A selfie in front of a tree*
- *A selfie in front of a local super market*
- *A Starbucks cup*
- *A selfie with a red solo cup (any beverage)*
- *A selfie wearing a baseball cap*
- *A business card*
- *An item with a McDonald's logo*
- *A photo of the front cover of a magazine*

Debriefing

After completion of the virtual scavenger hunt exercise students are asked to reflect on the dynamics of their team by posting comments on a discussion board that is accessible to the entire class. Students can view the comments of students in other groups to see different points of view and experiences. This simulates a face-to-face debrief where students would share their experiences with the entire class after the exercise.

Students may be given the following guiding questions to focus their comments.

- What were the group norms?
- Where there any explicit rules?
- Any Implicit rules?
- How did the establishment of rules impact team function?
- Did a leader emerge?

- How cohesive was your team?
- How would you describe the level of trust among the team members?
- Where there any communication challenges?
- Any conflicts?
 - If so how was the conflict resolved
- What worked well?
- In reflection if you were a manager responsible for this team, what could you have done to improve the team's effectiveness?

Hints for Effective Implementation

In an on-line class students work on different schedules. Some begin working on a unit as soon as it is released, others wait until a day or two before it is due. Some work at night, some in the day. When this exercise is assigned it is best to give all students a warning to encourage them to view the assignments early in the week so that they can collaborate with their team mates. An e-mail to all students announcing the assignment is a good idea. Once teams communicate with each other, establish norms, set rules and assign responsibilities, students can work at their preferred time and pace to complete their individual tasks. Team mates need to trust each other that they will perform the tasks they agreed to complete.

The items on the scavenger hunt list can be tailored to the season or location of the students. For example, in the summer the list may include selfies in an amusement park or by a lake or ocean. In the Spring, the list may include selfies in front of flowers or trees. If the exercise is for a workplace instead of a college class, the sorority and fraternity T-shirts should be switched to something like a company newsletter or employee handbook for example.

The number of items on the list can also be tailored to the size of the groups having more items if the group size used is larger than 4. If the exercise is done in the class room, the number of items can be shortened to save time. It is important to have items that can be found without too much trouble.

Student Reactions

Overall students are positive about the assignment. They enjoy hunting for the items and taking pictures. Many students do not like the rule that duplicates are not allowed. This rule is crucial to the team building exercise however, because it forces students to communicate with each other. If not for this rule, every student could just post what they had access to and not communicate or coordinate with each other. The rule that all students must participate is also not popular among students but again, it is crucial to the team building aspect of the assignment.

Below is a comment from one student in the most recent offering of the class.

“Once I found out there was a scavenger hunt on this week’s list of assignments, I was excited. This was a great way to study team dynamics first hand. I immediately contacted my group members, and told them that I would be able to get three of the items on the list. One of them answered right away and said she could get them all. I had to explain to her that all of us had to post, so while it was nice of her to offer, we had to make sure each team member had a chance.”

ELA Presentation

An abridged/hybrid version of the scavenger hunt, team building experience will be presented for the ELA session. Attendees will participate in a mini scavenger hunt that simulates the face-to-face model, but an explanation of how to adapt the exercise for on-line delivery will be presented. Below is a description of the session.

A packet of information for each attendee will be placed on the tables before the session begins. The packet will include the Team Building Handout (Appendix B), the full Scavenger Hunt Instructions (listed above in italics), and instructions for the mini scavenger hunt, Appendix C, that will take place during the ELA session.

Introduction – 2 minutes

A power point presentation of the overview of the Experiential Teambuilding Exercise that includes a brief description of the face-to-face version and how it was adapted for on-line learning.

Team Building Concepts and Learning goals – 3 minutes

A high-level overview of the team building concepts and theories will be presented to prepare participants for the experiential exercise where they will apply these concepts. The basic concepts will be presented directing the attendee’s attention to the handout for more detail. The learning goals for the exercise will also be presented.

Instructions - 3 minutes

The explicit rules of the mini scavenger hunt will be explained to the group, see Appendix C. These instructions will be included in the packet of information placed on the tables before the session begins. Attendees will be asked to form teams of 4 with the persons that are seated closest to them. A list of only 6 items that are readily available in typical hotel convention spaces, will be included in the instructions. Some examples are a picture of a business card, a picture of a sign for a restroom, a selfie by the front desk, a selfie by a plant or flower arrangement etc. Attendees will be asked to work with their teams to take pictures of the six items on the list and return to the session meeting room in no more than 10 minutes. The time they must return will be provided to attendees.

Scavenger Hunt – 10 minutes

Teams will have 10 minutes to plan their strategy and collect the pictures.

Debrief – 5 Minutes

A subset of the de-briefing questions will be asked of the teams.

- What were the group norms?
 - Where there any explicit rules?
 - Any Implicit rules?
- How did the establishment of rules impact team function?
- Did a leader emerge?
- Any conflicts?
 - If so how was the conflict resolved
- What worked well?

Adapting to the on-line environment - 5 minutes

A power point presentation will be given to explain how the exercise is adapted for on-line. The following topics will be discussed.

- Team selection
- Discussion Board creation
- Team rules – unique to on-line delivery
- Grading
- Debrief using discussion board.

Questions and Answers – 2 minutes

Appendix A

11/29/18

TEAM BUILDING

WHAT IS A TEAM?

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- GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WHO SHARE A COMMON GOAL AND THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACHIEVING IT. (DI GIOVANNA, 2007)
- TASK ORIENTED WORKGROUPS

TEAM BUILDING (WALKER & MILLER, 2012)

- FORMALLY APPOINTED
 - WORKPLACE TEAMS
 - SCHOOL PROJECT
- INFORMALLY APPOINTED
 - IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS
 - GROUP LEADER NO FORMAL POWER OVER THE GROUP

SUCCESSFUL TEAMS

MEMBERS TRUST EACH OTHER
CARE ABOUT EACH OTHER
INTERDEPENDENCY – VARIOUS SKILLS
GOOD IDEAS
ORGANIZED
TECHNICAL EXPERT

TEAM NORMS

- IMPLICIT OR EXPLICIT RULES OF BEHAVIOR
- WORK BEST WHEN TEAM CREATES THEIR OWN NORMS

TYPES OF TEAMS

- WORK AREA TEAMS
 - SERVERS
 - COOKS ON A LINE
- PROJECT TEAMS
 - IMPLEMENT NEW SYSTEM

EFFICIENT TEAMS HAVE

- COHESION – COMMUNICATES WELL WITH EACH OTHER
- WELL DEFINED NORMS
- RESPECT AND TRUST FOR EACH OTHER

HOW CAN A MANAGER INFLUENCE A TEAM TO BE EFFICIENT?

HOW CAN A MANAGER INFLUENCE TEAM TO BE EFFICIENT?

- GIVE CLEAR GOALS
- EMPOWER THE TEAM
- BRAINSTORM SHARED LEADERSHIP
- INCLUDE EVERYONE
- GET INPUT FROM THE TEAM

TURNING GROUPS INTO TEAMS (TUCKMAN, 1965)

- FORMING – GROUP MEMBERS LAY GROUND RULES FOR ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR
- STORMING – HOSTILITIES AND CONFLICTS ARISE
 - JOCKEY FOR POWER
- NORMING – AGREE ON SHARED GOALS, CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS FORM
- PERFORMING – GROUP CHANNELS ITS ENERGY TOWARD THE GOALS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Appendix B

Team Building Handout

What is a team?

A team is a group of individuals who share a common goal and the responsibility for achieving it. (Di Giovanna, 2007) Task oriented workgroups.

Teams may be formally appointed or informally appointed (Walker & Miller, 2012)

- An example of a formally appointed team is a team of servers in a fine dining restaurant. One provides drinks, the other takes the order and delivers food, the other bussing the tables. The teams are assigned by the front of the house manager. Another example is a group of students assigned by the instructor working on a group project.
- An example of an Informally appointed team is a team that forms on its own. For example, in a classroom setting students break into discussion groups and form a team of whomever is sitting closest to them. Or members of a club who volunteer to be on a committee to work on a project. If a leader emerges they do not have any formal power over team mates.

Characteristics of Successful Teams

- Members trust each other
- Care about each other
- Interdependency of skills. For example, one team member may have great ideas, the other may be very organized, another may have good technical skills.

Team norms will develop

- Norm may be explicit rules – Written rules like policies or procedures of conduct
- Implicit rules may be implied for example all team members will contribute to the work of the group
- Team norms work best when they are created by the group.

Efficient Teams have

- Cohesion – Communicate well with each other
- Well defined norms
- Respect and trust for each other

How can a manager influence team to be efficient?

- Give clear goals
- Empower the team
- Brainstorm shared leadership
- Include everyone
- Get input from the team

Turning Groups into teams (Tuckman, 1965)

- Forming – group members lay ground rules for acceptable behavior
- Storming – Hostilities and Conflicts Arise
Jockey for power
- Norming – agree on shared goals, closer relationships form
- Performing – group channels its energy toward the goals

Appendix C

Mini Scavenger Hunt Instructions

Each team must collect photos of as many of the items listed below as possible.

Each team member must collect at least one photo in order to complete the task successfully.

Teams have exactly 10 minutes to complete the exercise and return to the session.

Items to be collected

- A picture of a business card
- A picture of a sign for a restroom
- A selfie of the group
- A selfie of at least one team member by the front desk
- A selfie or at least one team member by a plant or flower arrangement
- A picture of hand sanitizer

Debriefing Questions

What were the group norms?

Where there any explicit rules?

Any Implicit rules?

How did the establishment of rules impact team function?

Did a leader emerge?

Any conflicts?

If so how was the conflict resolved

What worked well?

References

- Di Giovanna, J. M., (2007), "Five Components Needed for High Performing Teams," *Design Firm Management and Administration Report*, vol. 7, no. 4, p.3.
- Walker, J. R., and Miller, J. E., (2012), *Supervision in the Hospitality Industry*, John Wiley and Sons Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.
- Tuckman, B. W., (1965), "Developmental Sequence in Small Groups," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol.63, pp 384-399.