

BROKEN SQUARES

<http://www.businessfundamentals.com/TeamBuilding.htm>

Activity: Group/Team

Time: 30 minutes

Participants: 6 - 18

Materials: A set of broken squares (pattern at the end of the exercise), Team Instructions, Observer Instructions.

Purpose:

Get the group working as a team, break the ice.

Expose the participants to behaviors that may contribute toward or obstruct group problem solving.

Learning Points:

Participation and cooperation by all members of a team are essential to attain team and individual goals.

It is necessary to understand the objectives of the task at hand.

Lack of communication makes the problem-solving process almost impossible.

Problem solving requires that team members keep an open mind to a variety of potential solutions.

Preparation and Notes for Facilitator:

Make the broken squares by using the template below. Draw or enlarge on a copy machine, until each square is about 6 X 6 inches. Cut the squares apart on the lines. Mix them up and then put an equal (or about equal) number of pieces in 5 envelopes. Make sure each group has 5 complete squares or one set. You will need one set for each team of 5 members. If you use card stock 60 lb. or heavier you should be able to use the same squares over and over again. (A good way to recycle old manila folders.)

Print Instructions for each team and a set of instructions for each judge/observer.

NOTE: Teams must have 5-6 members each.

Each subgroup should congregate in separate locations.

For subgroups having six members, ask one person from the sub-group to volunteer to as a judge/observer. Give each judge/observer an instruction sheet.

Give each of the subgroups its set of five broken square envelopes, and instruct the subgroups to distribute one envelope to each of the five participants. (Do not open the envelopes until instructed to do so.).

Give each subgroup its copy of the "Broken Squares Team Instruction." Read these instructions to the subgroups. Ask for questions or ask the group questions to ensure understanding.

Instruct the subgroups to begin the task. Monitor the subgroups, along with the judge/observers, to ensure that the subgroups follow the rules fairly closely.

When the subgroups complete the task or time runs out, have the judge/observer help you lead a discussion of the experience. Ask, "What happened during the process?" Encourage the team to relate this experience to their work situation.

Have the entire team develop a set of learning points, which you record on a flipchart.

Team Instructions:

Each of you has been given an envelope that contains pieces of a puzzle. When the facilitator gives you the OK to begin, you may begin to reach your objective which follows:

Objective:

Your team will be successful when there is a perfect square, each of the same size, in front of each team member.

Important:

You may use only the pieces provided.

No member may speak or gesture in any way throughout the activity.

Members may not ask another member for a piece, take a piece from another member, or in signal in any way that another person is to give them a piece.

Members may give pieces to other members.

Members may not place their puzzle pieces in the center area for other team members to take.

Your team will have up to 20 minutes in which to meet your individual and team goals.

Observer/Judge Instructions:

Your job is part observer and part judge:

As a Judge, make sure each participant observes the following rules:

There is no talking, pointing, or any other kind of communication.

Participants may give pieces directly to other participants but may not take pieces from other members.

Participants may not place their pieces into the center for others to take.

It is okay for a member to give away all the pieces to their puzzle, even if they have already formed a square.

As an Observer, look for the following:

How willing were members to give away pieces of the puzzle? Were participants more interested in getting than in giving?

Did anyone finish their puzzle, and then withdraw himself or herself from the group problem solving? If so, how did it affect the rest of the team?

Did dominant individuals emerge, or did everyone seem to participate equally?

Did you detect evidence of frustration? How did it affect the group?

What was the critical turning point(s) affecting the teams working together?

Other observations?