

# Perfect Square

**Team Building Event**



*Creating Transformational Experiences*  
[www.BuildingTeams.com](http://www.BuildingTeams.com)  
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# Perfect Square

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## Be Legendary

Introduction to Be Legendary and [www.BuildingTeams.com](http://www.BuildingTeams.com)

Be Legendary was founded to help organizations build successful teams through individual discovery and experience.

A **real** team requires many attributes to be successfully implemented:

- Common Goals
- Leading and Leadership
- Communication
- Trust
- Accountability
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making

As a company, we focus on every aspect of a real team. We have developed team building products and workshops to help your team successfully implement the attributes we have listed above.

We created these products to be as easy as possible to facilitate, yet powerful enough for you to achieve your desired outcomes.

You could have purchased, or may even own, any number of books on team building activities with hundreds of exercises. But, if you are like most of our customers, after looking through the book, you are left more confused than ever, wringing your hands and wondering,

*'Which one of these activities is **actually** going to work!?'*

This is where we come in and we are here to help you every step of the way.

You did not simply purchase this activity; you purchased our professional expertise. You can call and speak with any one of our facilitators about your specific needs, group, and environment. We are here to help make sure this event will work for you and to provide suggestions for tailoring it to fit your team's needs.

There may be times when all you need is to talk to someone and be reassured that the activity **will work**. We are more than happy to do this as many times as necessary until you feel completely confident with your choice and with facilitating the exercise.

This is the same approach we take with our own workshops, so you may want to consider giving us a call for your next training event, retreat, meeting or conference to find out how we can help you.

Make it a great day!

Be Legendary Facilitative Staff

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## ***Complete Instructions to Run a Successful Event***



The Perfect Square is an easy event to facilitate but it is very powerful.

The focus is on leadership skills and the degree of group participation and the exercise will always reveal interesting dynamics and insights that allow participants to learn from one another.

### **Purpose**

This activity clearly demonstrates interdependence among team members while highlighting how difficult, but important, reaching consensus can be.

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Total time needed is approximately 30 to 45 minutes and should not exceed 60 minutes. The duration depends largely upon how quickly your group accomplishes the task and how much discussion is generated.

### **Length of Exercise and Short Agenda**

- 5 Min. Introduce activity & cover ground rules (if any)
- 15 Min. Activity
- 20 Min. Group discussion
- 5 Min. Wrap up and set expectations – Miracle 10%

The discussion is the most important piece of this agenda as that is where the knowledge learned in the activity is transferred back to life, work, etc.

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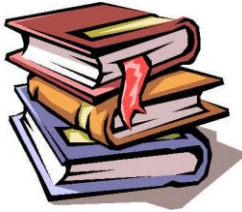
### **Safety Tips**

- Remind people to be careful when picking up the rope so they don't bump heads.
  - Watch out for holes in the grass or other items that participants can trip over.
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## Equipment You Will Need



## Storyline

- 60-foot rope tied together at the ends to form a continuous loop
- Blindfolds for all members of the team
- A flat open space where it is safe for people to move around and form a large square.

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You are stranded on a desert island. A person on your team has found a magic rope in one of the ancient ruins on the island. When the entire rope is put into the shape of a perfect square and all the members of the team are holding the rope it sends a beam of light into the sky.

In the middle of the night you are awakened by the sound of an airplane flying over. You have no fire to attract the pilots so you hurry to the magic rope and attempt to form the perfect square to create the beam of light and be rescued.

Hurry, the plane will be gone soon.

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## Setup

1. Place the rope in a pile on the ground and have participants make a circle around it.
  2. Instruct everyone to put on a blindfold.
  3. Tell the team members the story and have them form a perfect square while holding the rope.
  4. Let them they have no time limit to complete the task.
  5. When the entire team feels they have completed the task have them place the rope on the ground.
  6. Now have them remove their blindfolds and see how they did.
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## Variations

- ✓ Have one person remain sighted but he or she cannot touch the rope.
- ✓ Have the group attempt different shapes.
- ✓ Have the group step inside the circle, put the rope on the small of their back and step backward until the rope is tight. Then have them put their blindfolds on. This makes the activity slightly easier but is also a bit safer.
- ✓ Place a time restriction on them. This will help simulate the atmosphere at work – accomplish a difficult task or goal without all the resources (eyesight) available and without the time to strategize the best way to do it. If you do this, allow them to try the event several times and see if they strategize and/or leave their blindfolds off to strategize.



## Dynamics to Watch For:

- How the group reacts toward each other if they event takes more time than expected.
- People starting to play or be distracting in some way.
- The quality of the results and how the group comes to an agreement about ending the exercise.
- Many groups find this difficult because all non-verbal communication cues are taken away with the blindfolds. Watch the frustration levels and/or individuals who may be withdrawing from participating.

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## Questions for Group Discussion

1. What was the quality of your experience and what would have improved it?
  2. Was it clear at any point what the strategy was and how did you decide to take action?
  3. Are there situations at work similar to the Perfect Square?
  4. How can we take what we learned and apply it in everyday life?
- 



## Tips and Tricks from Our Professional Facilitators

- Do not specify that they have to use the entire rope or that everyone must be involved. Clever groups may tie the rope in a smaller circle to make the task easier.
  - Most groups do not take off their blindfolds to strategize even though you did not say they couldn't – they assume they should leave them on although it would be much easier to talk without them on. If they do this ask in the debrief, 'What other assumptions do you make that hinder your performance?'
  - Let them try several times to see if they improve.
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## Facilitative Tools

The key to a good facilitation is to let **the group** discover and learn what is appropriate for them. As the facilitator, do not try to manipulate the questioning to get the group to observe what **you** feel is important.

Below are some tools to help you with your questioning of the group. These tips will allow the group to discover their own learning without you manipulating the conversation.

### Maintenance Tools

#### Throw-Back:

Team Member: "How can we possibly get through this obstacle?"

Facilitator: *"If it were possible, what would need to happen?"*

#### Share Observations:

Facilitator: *"It is very quiet. What does the silence mean?"*

Facilitator: *"It seems that not everyone is actively participating. Is there a reason for this?"*

#### Review Group Agreements:

It is very important to review base rules when the group becomes disinterested, when rule violations are occurring without thought, and when the group is attacking each other personally.

Facilitator: *"Remember the ground rules we discussed as we began to talk about this event." (If there are any)*

#### Check-In:

If a group is really struggling or people are becoming very frustrated, interrupt the activity and ask:

Facilitator: *"So what are you doing right now that is working?"*

Facilitator: *"What is not working?" "Why?"*

#### Accept/Legitimize/Deal With or Defer:

Create a safe environment for participation by:

Accepting an idea: Respond neutrally to a participant whose ideas are "out of synch" with others in the group

Legitimizing an idea: Discover the relevance of all contributions

Dealing with an idea: Agree together about how to move forward

Defer an idea by saying:

Facilitator: *"You're not convinced we're not getting anywhere? That's OK, you may be right. Would you be willing to hang on for 15 more minutes and see what happens? Yes? Thanks."*

*"The issue you just raised sounds like it is important to you. Can we finish debriefing this event before we move on to discuss your issue?"*

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## Clarity Tools

|                           | When You Hear:                           | Respond With:   |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Universals</b>         | All<br>Every<br>Never                    | "All?"<br>"Every?"<br>"Never?"  |
| <b>Rules</b>              | Should<br>Shouldn't<br>Must<br>Can't     | "What would happen if...?":<br>"What causes or prevents...?"<br>"Must?"<br>"Can't?" |
| <b>Non-Specific Verbs</b> |  | "How specifically?"   |
| <b>Non-Specific Nouns</b> | We<br>It                                 | "Who specifically?"<br>"What specifically?"   |
| <b>Quantifiers</b>        | Too Much<br>Too Many<br>Too<br>Expensive | "Compared to what?"   |
| <b>Statements</b>         | I Don't<br>Know<br>That Is<br>Impossible | "Well, if you did know, ..."<br>"If it were possible, what would need to happen?"   |



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In this stage, the group generalizes their experience from this exercise and explores how the lessons might be reflected in other areas of their lives. Participants are asked to focus on situations in their personal or professional lives that are similar to those in the activity. The task is to identify similarities and state principles that can be applied to other situations. Some questions to ask include:

*"What did you learn from the experience?"*

*"What other similar situations have you experienced?"*

*"How does this relate to your work life?"*

## Stage 5: Apply

Finally, participants are encouraged to decide on a course of action for the future. As a facilitator, ask questions such as:

*"What do you want to remember from this experience?"*

*"What would you do differently in a similar situation?"*

## The Miracle 10% - One Idea for Closure

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### The Miracle 10%

This is quite possibly the easiest method you have in your arsenal for assuring participant buy-in regarding the process of change.

In front of the group simply ask:

*"Who feels they can improve <insert topic, i.e. communication> by 10%?"*

99.9% of the time, everyone will raise their hand. (This is not to say that these people are not already trying as hard as they can. They probably are, but that does not mean there is no room for improvement. Sometimes you need to make the distinction.)

*"Does everyone agree that improving 10% is a reasonable goal?"*

Everyone will agree. After all you are not asking for a HUGE change, just a small one. Talk about how each person's small contribution adds up to an overall large change.

*"There are 15 of you here. So if each person improved 10% that would amount to a 150% improvement. What would work be like with that kind of improvement? How much better would our communication be? (Open up for discussion and create a specific list)*

*"So it sounds like everyone agrees that with just a small*

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*individual effort to improve, we would all be much happier.”*

*“Each person then will be responsible for their own improvement. You will each need to hold yourself accountable.”*

Set the right expectation.

*“We all agree 10% improvement is a reasonable goal but I want you to think for just a moment what that REALLY means.”*

*“After we leave today, we will be expecting to see a difference in <insert topic>. But a 10% improvement means that 9 times out of 10, you will see me (use yourself as an example) doing the same old stuff I always did.”*

*“And the one time I actually do the right thing, you may not be around. So you may see me do the same old stuff 15 or 20 times before you actually see me improving. It is important to have trust in me and the fact that I have agreed to work on improving and that I am consciously doing so.”*

*“Each person here must have that same expectation and when you do catch someone doing something right, make every effort to point it out to the person who did it and to everyone else. It is hard to become tired of praise, regardless of how well you handle it.”*

At the end of the workshop, you can have everyone spend 15 minutes writing out how they will improve by 10%. Simply writing “improve communication” or some other generic description is not good enough – participants must describe a specific action they will take that will result in a 10% improvement.

For example, *“When talking with others I will focus on, and listen to, what the person is saying and not on how I will respond.”*

Help participants drill down their goal behavior until they have something specific that they can act upon every single day.