

River Crossing

Team Building Event



Creating Transformational Experiences
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Be Legendary

Introduction to Be Legendary and 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



Purpose

This is a complex activity that has many different purposes and reveals many behavior patterns.

- It develops support (emotional, content and physical) within the group.
- It helps clarify communication and decision making skills.
- It helps groups to examine how and why leadership shifts during planning and completion of task
- It shows how balancing planning activities with execution helps groups solve problems.

The exercise is a very good metaphor for a 'goal'. At the beginning, each person has the same perspective of the goal – get to the other side. As the participants move into the river their perspective changes dramatically as they may not be able to see an obstacle in the way, or even figure out how to move forward. The way to get to the goal changes, as there are many bumps in the way and groups that persevere, plan, communicate, and support each other are the most successful.



Length of Exercise and Short Agenda

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.

- 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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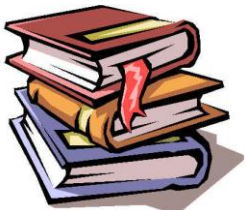


Safety Tips

- If anyone is blindfolded, be sure the team is taking care of that person and coaching him or her while moving.



Equipment You Will Need



Storyline

- Three Planks: two 4' and one 5' in length
- 10 Mouse Pad 'Rocks'
- Two 20' lengths of rope
- Several Blindfolds

You have managed to guide your group through a treacherous swamp and have one last fast-moving river to cross. You can see a few rocks in the river on which you can balance some planks of wood you found. It appears that if you are careful, you just might be able to make it across. If you fall off the planks, you might be able to be rescued, but surely not without injury. To make matters worse, you just heard something in the swamp behind you – you had better get across the river fast!

Alternative

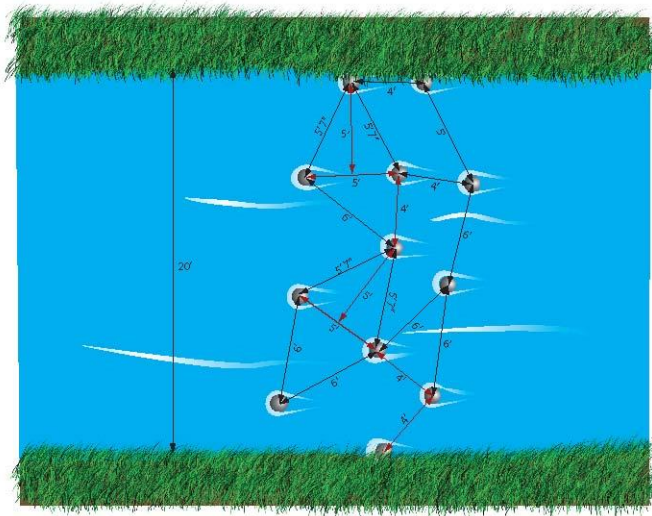
Your group was on an overnight retreat; camping on several small islands next to the ocean. In the night, the tide came in and stranded some group members on the different islands. You look around and find a few planks of wood on the main island where most of you slept. It looks like the tide is still rising so you had better hurry or you will be swimming!

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Setup

1. Be very careful about the setup of this activity and be sure to do it before the group arrives.
2. Place the 20' ropes at either end of the playing field, 20' apart. This is the river. Set up the mouse pads (rocks) according to the diagram below. If you change the setup, be sure the activity is solvable and that there is only one solution.



3. See larger diagram on page 9 for distances.
4. Tell participants to start balancing the planks on the rocks. There is such a small difference in length that it will not be obvious to them which plank to use and which way to go.
5. The entire group must cross the river at once, which means that the participants must take the planks with them as they go.
6. During the event, the participants will discover that it is not possible to reach some rocks directly from others (see the third and fifth moves). Make sure you set up the rocks correctly to ensure this occurs.

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Variations



Dynamics to Watch For:



Questions for Group Discussion

- ✓ Blindfold and/or silence participants who fall into the river as well as make the group start over. Blindfolding creates an entirely new aspect to the activity, as each blindfolded person must be led across the planks.
 - ✓ For larger groups you can place one member on each one of the 'rocks' and they must be rescued along the way. Use the alternative storyline if you like this variation. Expect this to take longer.
 - ✓ Anyone who steps off the plank and into the river can no longer be used as a resource and is silenced.
-
- Too much time planning and not enough executing.
 - Does the group realize that their perspective changes as soon as they step onto the 'plank' and into the river?
 - Watch to see how the group communicates before they begin and how that changes in the middle of the river. Compare the structure and how that affects communication, leadership, etc. In the beginning did they plan in a circle? How did things change when they were lined up on the planks?
-
1. What was the biggest problem experienced during this event?
 2. What did you first think of the exercise and what do you think about it now?
 3. What kind of support did you find was helpful during the activity?
 4. If you were blindfolded, how difficult was it for you to participate? Did you feel supported?
 5. Do you find you need similar support at work or at home?
 6. How can you apply what you learned during this activity on a daily basis?
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Tips and Tricks from Our Professional Facilitators

- The 'planks' come rolled up. Put them in the sun for a few minutes before the activity to help them lay flat and look more like 'planks'.
 - This activity is fairly complex. Use one or two easier activities before beginning. Also, do not begin this activity late in the program unless you are certain you have time to finish.
 - Each 'plank' is good for roughly 5 people. If you only have 10 people, only use one 4' and one 5' plank.
 - Do not allow the group to 'ferry' people from one shore to the other. Make them move into the river together. You may have to emphasize that they may only stay on the shore for a very short time and give them a time limit of 3 minutes. This will also force them to balance strategy with action.
 - Be very careful about the set up and make sure the 'rocks' are the correct distances. You will need roughly 10 minutes to set up, so the activity is perfect to run after a break.
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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?"

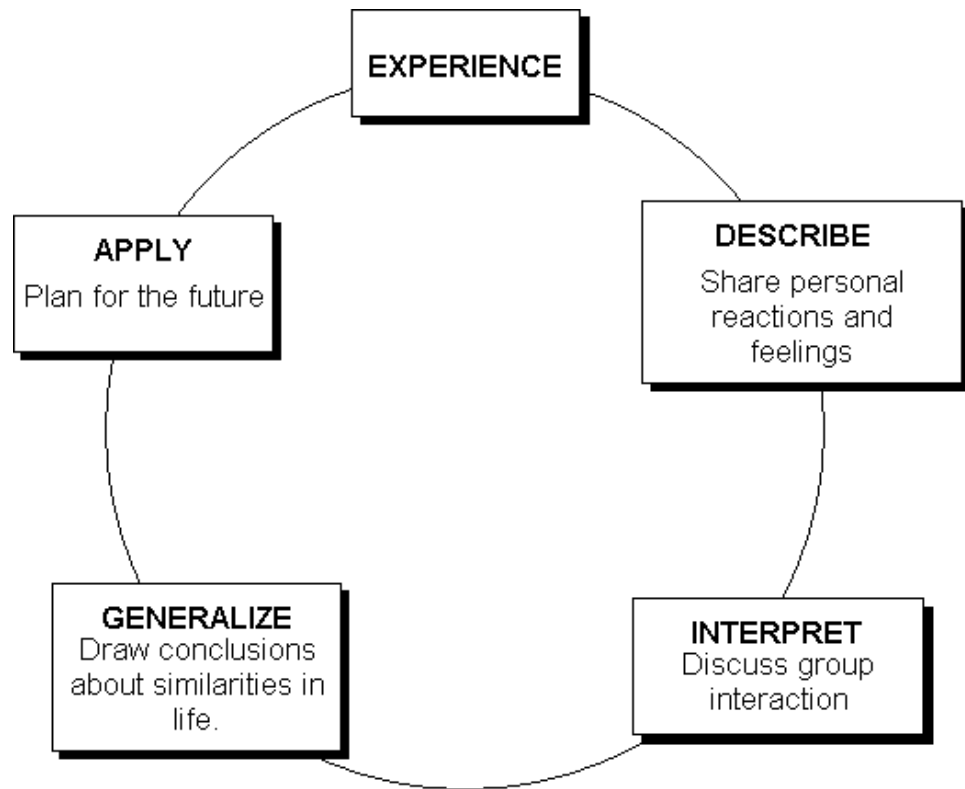
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Clarity Tools

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

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Learning Cycle Stages



1975 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators, University Associates

Stage 1: Experience

The experience forms the basis for the rest of the cycle. The facilitator presents an activity or game, which is specifically structured to provide an experience from which to draw relevant learning.

Stage 2: Describe

In this stage, the facilitator asks the participants about their feelings and reactions to the experience. The focus in this stage is on the individuals' feelings and experiences. Ask questions such as:

"How did you feel?"

"What did you do?"

"What happened to you?"

Stage 3: Interpret

In this stage, participants discuss what went on between group members during the exercise. Good questions to ask to help process individual reactions into collective ideas include:

"Why do you feel the way you do? "

"What caused that particular result or feeling? "

Stage 4: Generalize

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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

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.