

# TEAMWORK

## *Moldy Oranges Like Drinking??*

To get team members familiar with brainstorming practices, ask student groups of 5-6 to pick a four-or-five-letter word. Give three minutes for participants to create sentences using each letter of their word, in sequence, as the first letter of a word in the sentence. Sentences must have proper structure, but they don't have to make sense.

Example: MOLD = Moldy Oranges Like Drinking.

The team creating the most sentences from its one word is awarded a small prize. Encourage teams to pick words relating to the course content. This exercise gives new teams a chance to develop some synergy and work on brainstorming together.

## *Let's Be Open*

To introduce trainees and create an open atmosphere, provide lots of colored markers and give each participant a sheet of flipchart paper. Ask participants to divide the sheet into quarters and label the quadrants --

Upper left: Strengths I bring to the team

Upper right: Ways I might hinder the team

Lower left: What I need from others to do my best

Lower right: Hobbies, interests

Ask participants to use drawings (no words are allowed) in each quadrant. The trainer completes a flipchart sheet too, and "models" the introduction. Then have each person come up and share his or her chart and tape it up on the classroom wall. Leave the drawings up throughout the session as conversation-starters during breaks and

## lunch. *We're Small but Tough*

To get small groups thinking together and creatively solving tough problems:

Break the class into an appropriate number of small groups (trying for an average of 5-7 people). Display a prepared flipchart page with the alphabet written vertically on it. Ask an attendee to share a sample sentence from a newspaper or other piece of written material and spell out that sentence vertically next to the alphabet, creating random pairs of letters, stopping the process when the 26th letter of the sentence matches the letter "z."

The groups are then asked to come up with names of famous people or fictional characters that match the random initials (for example, AN = Alfred Nobel; BO = Brian Orser), using each set of letters once and only once. (Note: This is not as easy as it sounds.)

## *Building a Bridge*

A bridge serves as a metaphor for teamwork. Draw two bridge standards on opposite sides of a large piece of poster paper. The bridge deck itself is slowly built with attendee ideas that are related to class material. The ideas are written on Post-it Notes and handed to the trainer, who sticks them on the poster with the promise that if the bridge is "finished" before the end of the day, the class will earn a reward.

The trainer intentionally tries to make the bridge come up short by "building" it in an arc that will almost, but not quite, reach the other side. As the day goes on (and after the trainer drops some subtle hints),

one or more attendees usually point out the

### **Sentence-Writing Exercise**

This exercise is a good starting point for discussion about teamwork and observing, analyzing, and thinking ahead.

1. Divide the class (of 25 or fewer people) into two teams. Tape a flipchart page to the wall for each team. Give each team a marker, and have the members form a line about 10 feet from the paper.
2. Instruct the teams to each construct a complete sentence on the flipchart sheet, written one word at a time - with each team member writing one word and then passing the marker to the next person in line - until the page contains a sentence complete with subjects, verbs, and punctuation. No preplanning of sentences is allowed, and team members cannot insert words between words already on the page. Each member must contribute at least one word, and the rotation continues until the team completes a sentence.
3. Designate a prize for the winning team - the first to complete a meaningful sentence with a contribution from each member - before you begin the exercise. Make a presentation after reading aloud all the groups' sentences.

Two variations to consider: Require that each word in the sentences begin with a specific letter, or have the teams compete one at a time against the clock so the other team (or teams) can observe the interaction.

### **Team Building with Diversity**

Combine team building with a lesson in diversity by having teams share information about themselves with others in the group.

Create a list of questions like those shown in the example below - interesting,

bridge's flaw and straighten the deck.

but not embarrassing - being careful to have at least as many questions as there are members on the largest team. Break the class into small groups of 4-6 trainees and hand out copies to each participant, asking them to cross off those that exceed the number of group members. For example, a team of six would answer only the first six questions. (Flipchart pages, each bearing one question, are posted on the wall for later use.)

Then instruct participants to label the question number one with the name of the person directly to their left, number two with the name of the next person, and so on around the table until each question has a member's name beside it. The result: Each person's name should appear beside a given question on only one other person's sheet.

Next, give participants Post-it Notes and instruct them to ask the person whose names appear next to each question on their sheets for the corresponding answers. Answers are recorded (along with the respondent's name) on the Post-it Notes and placed on the appropriate flipchart page.

Sample Questions:

1. NAME Where did you go on your last vacation?
2. NAME What brand of toothpaste do you use?
3. NAME What is your favorite food?
4. NAME Who was the last person you said thank you to?
5. NAME Where is the *last* place on earth you'd want to be right now?
6. NAME What was the name of the last video you rented?
7. NAME What type of music do you like?
8. NAME What toppings do you like on a hamburger

(be specific)?  
In the discussion that follows, ask participants what they learned about their

teammates that might contribute to their groups' success.

**Groupwork Is More Productive than Working Solo**

Have trainees brainstorm a list of qualities and characteristics of an individual or group, such as traits of an ideal professional. Suggest a few traits to get them started. Then ask them for additions. Write them on a flipchart at the front of the class.

Then have participants vote for what they consider the most important quality. Give three mini Post-it Notes to each participant and ask them to write their top three qualities on them - one per note - awarding three points to the top quality, two points to the next most important quality, and one point to the third most important quality. Then ask participants to post their votes on the matching spot on the list of traits.

Tally the votes and report what qualities were rated the highest. After the session, prepare a laminated card with the items on one side and the results on the other side. Trainees receive the card at the next day's session. People believe their own data and tend to hold onto and use the card because they created it.