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## **ProSeminar Top Tips Series**

# **Eleven Activities for Team Building**

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Perhaps you've been appointed to take over an existing team, or need to reinvigorate one you've been managing for some time. Perhaps you need to create a new team either for a specific project or as a result of organisational restructuring. Whatever your situation, team building - and on-going team building - is a critical part of being a successful manager.

While the heart of team building lies in providing good day-to-day management, there's also immense value in taking specific team building initiatives such as arranging themed away-days or other special activities. This article provides some ideas you might like to pursue - including ways to make work fun!

### **1. Outdoor problem solving day**

Organise a team building and development day using outdoor problem solving exercises. Make sure the physical challenges are not so great as to put off some team members and that the exercises require real team work and test out co-operation and communication.

Good facilitation which can link the experiences of the exercises to the reality of day-to-day work is vitally important otherwise some team members might think that the day was good fun, but rather a waste of time and a distraction from other pressing priorities.

Search on-line for 'outdoor team building activities' for a whole host of ideas and providers.

### **2. A physical challenge**

Set the team a physical challenge such as an arduous walk or an expedition of some sort. Sharing an extreme experience bonds people together.



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(I joined with a solicitors' firm in their challenge of climbing the three highest peaks in North Yorkshire – a great day was had by all (including family and friends) and successful completion fostered a great sense of achievement. Some of the incidents - particularly the story of the consultant who sunk into a bog and nearly disappeared forever – still form part of the firm's folklore today!)

### 3. Supporting a charity

Find a fundraising event and support it with team participation – e.g. a charity run, charity abseil or a charity parachute jump.

### 4. Continuous improvement session away-day

Organise an away-day for the team on 'continuous improvement' to review current practices and processes and enhance service. Include some activities on creative thinking and problem-solving techniques. Encourage team members to think 'outside the box' and challenge their usual restraints. It's usually best to use an outsider to facilitate the process.

Keep the momentum going by having quarterly quality and process review meetings.

### 5. Inter-team quality forum / quality circles

Set up a forum with other teams/sections with whom you work to discuss quality issues. Adopt a quality circles approach which means that you allow team members to facilitate the process themselves. Get them to report back with well-developed proposals for further action.

### 6. Internal customer survey

Get the team to design and carry out an internal customer survey – what do your internal customers think of the service they get from the team?

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### 7. Team session on communication & delegation

Run a day, or half-day, team session on improving communication and delegation within the team. Some of the articles in ProSeminar's Top Tips series could provide a useful stimulus, or it may make sense to make use of an outside facilitator.

### 8. 'Top Ten Frustration Factors'

Ask team members to identify the ten things that most significantly frustrate their working efficiency. 'What stops you getting done all the things you'd like to get done?'

Split the team into at least two groups, ask them to list their points on a flip chart and report back. Then, in plenary discussion, explore what you can do together to overcome these 'frustration factors'.

Factors raised are likely to include

- lack of resources – inadequate equipment/ equipment breakdown and/or support services
- cumbersome or unnecessary systems
- colleague behaviour – unnecessary interruptions, leaving job requests to the last moment etc
- office layout

### ProSeminar Top Tips

Other articles in this series include:

- [Criticism Skills](#)
- [Structured Delegation](#)
- [Making Meeting work](#)
- [Dealing with Change](#)
- [Leading an Appraisal Discussion](#)
- [Ten Principles for Time-Management](#)

### 9. Meetings review

As a team leader you'll want to ensure that your team meetings run as efficiently as possible. Undertake a review with the team.

The PNI format (Positives –what we do well; Negatives what we do badly; Improvements – what changes do we need to make) can provide a useful framework. Review not only the processes of the meeting (e.g. agenda quality, timing, minutes etc) but also the necessity and regularity of the meeting.

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### **10. Publish & celebrate weekly results**

Identify performance targets that can be monitored on a weekly basis. Publish the results at a particular time each week and generate interest. (Include comparisons – what we did last year, what we're budgeted to achieve etc.) Celebrate success – manage disappointment.

### **11. Fun**

Make work fun. The value of fun is often overlooked as a key factor in ensuring team solidarity, stability and success.

Here are some suggestions gleaned from friends and various websites.

- Have a notice board for 'office graffiti'- a place where those humorous stories which poke fun at organisations, work and the human dilemma can be posted.
- Use humorous cartoons and posters to make work-related points e.g. on safety awareness, efficiency etc.
- Have special clothes days e.g. the 'odd socks' day or 'dress-down Fridays' or 'wear something blue'.
- Have an ugly tie competition and award the winner with another ugly tie.
- Have an exotic sandwich competition.
- Arrange a sports match against another department (nothing serious and ideally something which both men and women, and folks of all ages, can join in).
- When you go out for the team lunch, turn it into an awards ceremony with a series of light-hearted categories and silly gifts to fit.
- Have a 'bring your soft toy to work' day. Ask everyone to link their toy to some aspect of how you work together. (My frog friend François makes some valuable points about the way we need to deal with change.)



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- Have a baby photo competition - pictures of each team member as a child with guess-who. Vote for who's the prettiest. Vote for 'most likely to succeed (and at what)'.

Don't feel you have to add 'Director of Fun' to your job description. Fun is best when it comes naturally from the team – but you do need to join in and contribute.

### Short Courses for Management & Professional Development

Please see our [Course Directory](#) for details of all courses currently available from ProSeminar including

- [Team Working & Interpersonal Skills](#)
- [Managing People & Performance](#)
- [Communication Skills: Understanding Yourself & Others](#)
- [Introduction to Management](#)