

## Team Building

When managers and employees think of team-building, they often think of team building exercises, but these one-off activities, are not the backbone of building a strong team. The backbone of a strong team is built on trust. To establish trust between a team of employees, managers can encourage the following things:

1. Promote open communication
  - a. In order for teams to succeed, they need to be able to communicate with each other in an open and honest way. This will allow teams to get to the root causes of things and suggest new and innovative ideas without fear.
2. Create opportunities for collaborative thinking
  - a. Opportunities for collaborative thinking allow team members a practical environment to understand how each other think. Coming up with new collaborative ideas allow team members to recognize each other's perspectives and thought processes.
3. Value different perspectives
  - a. When creating a team, the goal is to have that team well-balanced, with individuals of different strengths/weaknesses/perspectives. If you don't value the different perspectives each individual brings, why bother forming a team at all?
4. Create time for quality interactions
  - a. People's time is valuable at work as employees are pulled in many directions. Employees will react positively when their time is respected. When information can be disseminated through email rather than a meeting, just send an email. When you do hold a meeting, ensure that the meeting is structured in a way that demonstrates the value of the meeting.
5. Ensure clarity in roles and scope
  - a. Having clearly defined roles and setting clear expectations prevents friction on a team and makes a lot of these other tips easier to achieve.
6. Improve shared understanding
  - a. When people have different perspectives or goals in mind, it can create friction. Take time to ensure open dialogues can occur so that everyone can listen to the perspectives of others and create shared understanding.
7. Streamline processes
  - a. People want to feel productive. Ensuring that processes are streamlined ensures less opportunities for disruption or delay.
8. Hold people accountable
  - a. There's nothing worse than partnering up with someone on a task who skirts all responsibility. In order to ensure cohesion in your team, everybody needs to pull their weight, meaning as the leader, you need to hold people accountable when they aren't.

9. Recognize achievements
  - a. Team members will have higher engagement when recognized for their achievements. Recognition does not have to be top down, but can be inclusive of peer-to-peer recognition as well. You can also recognize the work of the team as a whole to help reinforce the importance of teamwork.
10. Play to your team member's strengths
  - a. The most successful teams are diverse in their strengths and weaknesses and utilize them. This one is pretty self-explanatory.

**References:**

<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2023/07/12/nine-steps-to-building-team-cohesion-and-a-healthy-work-environment/>  
<https://www.podium.com/article/team-cohesion/>  
<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/team-cohesiveness>

**If you would like to utilize a team building exercise with your team, you can start with the exercise below, which will help you determine future exercises to use.**

### **Team Building Exercise**

While a strong team is vital for success in the workplace, a recent study from Citrix and Wakefield showed that 31% of surveyed American employees said they disliked participating in team building activities. This shouldn't come as a surprise as the mere mention of team building activities can be met with groans and eye rolls from some, but not all team building activities are the same. Your assignment is to come together as a group and determine a team building activity that you think would strengthen the team and be something you'd actively want to participate in, not just tolerate. Attached is a general list of team building ideas to help you think about what kinds of things people can do as team building activities. This activity will be complete in three parts.

**Part 1: Write down two things you would not want to see in a team building activity**

Examples: I don't like activities that are meta. I don't like icebreakers focused on sharing about myself.

- 1.
- 2.

**Part 2: Come together as a group to share your dislikes and discuss what you would like to see in a team building exercise. Please write down the final team building exercise that everyone in the group would enjoy.**

**Part 3: Reflection Questions**

1. What is the team building idea that you all agreed upon? Where did that idea originate from?
2. What were the dynamics of the group? Did you feel anyone was overly pushy with their idea? How did you come to an agreement?

**Below are some general ideas for team building activities to help you brainstorm:**

1. Volunteer based activity
2. Physical activity
3. Field Trips
4. Professional Development Conference/Educational Course
5. Shared meal
6. Cooperative Games/Strategy Puzzles
7. Brainstorming sessions
8. Icebreakers/ Personal Sharing
9. Conversations
10. Scavenger Hunt
11. Competition based activity
12. Sports
13. Interest Clubs