

The Ball Game

Context and purpose

"The Ball Game" is a simple but powerful kinaesthetic/active exercise showing how creativity can dramatically improve a team's performance. It's a good ice-breaker at an Away Day or as part of the bonding and exploring element at a workshop for new partners or people who don't know each other.

Skills demonstrated include continuous improvement, motivation, communication, creativity, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership skills.

Setting up the game

Group size: between 10 and 25 people (more people is more fun I find)

Setting: a large space with no tables and chairs

Preparation Time: 5 minutes (for everyone to read the rules)

Running Time: 30 minutes (to perform the task in 6 rounds)

Materials: a soft ball that is easy to throw and catch; a stopwatch



The instructions to the group:

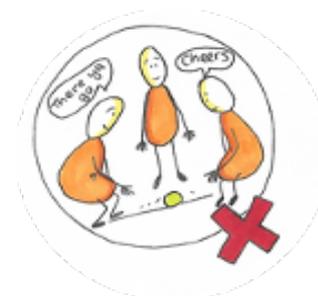
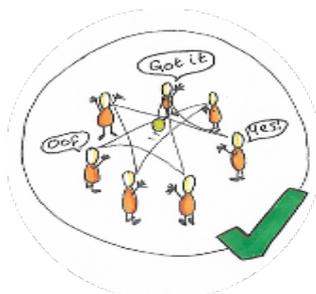
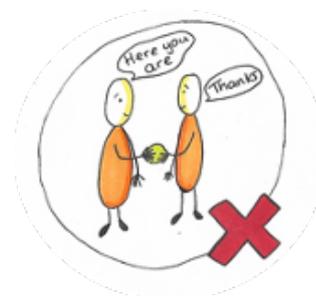
1. Your task, as a group, is to create a process for giving and receiving the ball in your group.

2. You cannot pass the ball to the person next to you.

3. The ball must travel through the air.

4. The ball cannot be rolled across surfaces, eg the floor, walls, tables and chairs.

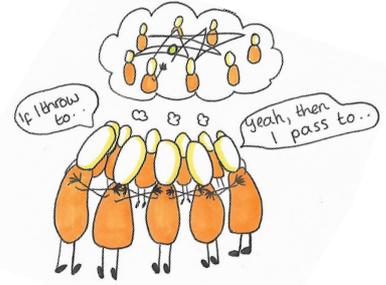
5. A successful round is when the ball has been given and received by everyone in the group and is back at the person who started with it.



The six rounds progress as follows:

Round 1

In round 1, there is no time target and no rounds target. The group have to work out a method for the ball to be passed around the group without being passed to the person next to them.



Round 2

In round 2, let the group know that the rounds target is 3. If anyone drops the ball, the group must start again. Set the team off and use the stopwatch to time them. When they complete the 2 rounds, shout out the time.

Round 3

In round 3, tell the group that they must repeat the task but their time must be 10 seconds less than in round 2, ie under 25 seconds. Give the team time to work out what they must change in order to achieve this. A cohesive group will come up with a new plan quicker than a less cohesive group. When they are ready, set the team off and time them again. Usually, the group will move closer together so that they are passing not throwing the ball.

Round 4

In round 4, tell the group that they must repeat the task but their time must be 10 seconds less than in round 3, ie under 15 seconds. Give the team time to work out an even quicker method. Set the team off and time them again.

Round 5

Round 5: In round 5, tell the group that they must repeat the task but their time must be 5 seconds less than in round 4, ie under 5 seconds. Give the team time to agree how they are going to work. Set the team off and time them again. In the accompanying youtube video, the group work out an even faster system and perform the task in 3 seconds.



Round 6

In round 6, tell the group that they must repeat the task but their time must be under 1 second. This is an extremely tough target but if the team reach this stage, they should be feeling both highly motivated and highly creative. See if the team can figure out a way to perform the task. Set the team off and time them again.

Note: you can adjust your time and round targets according to numbers of participants.

Discussion

- Ask how it went? How did people feel at different points in the rounds? You can ask about motivation, creativity, confidence, communication in this way too.
- What worked, what didn't work quite so well?
- How were decisions made?
- What were the critical success factors?