

## Tinker Toys Team Building Activity

Often employees are given goals from an organization or department and asked to reach them without much direction. The team tower building exercise teaches employees how to accomplish goals, emphasizing teamwork and communication.

Supplies Needed: Sets of tinker toys, can work with up to 6 groups of people.

### 40 Minute Scenario:

Generally, the supervisors will ask you to conduct the training during their department meeting time. This timeframe usually allows for 10 minutes of announcements/business for the department to conduct, and 40 minutes for the training.

### Preparation

1. Call the supervisor. The first thing you will want to do is call the supervisor and ask for details on what kind of an activity they're looking for. Some departments simply want their students to get to know each other better. Others want increased team unity. Plan accordingly.
2. Create a favor/treat. An example is this bag of Reese's Pieces with a note attached: "You are an important PIECE of our team!" OPTIONAL
3. Prepare an "icebreaker" game/question to lighten the mood and allow for joking and interacting among you as well as among the students

Note: If the supervisor would like to emphasize getting to know each other, spend a little more time on the "icebreaker" game.

4. Prepare a presentation. For clarity on the rules of the game, it is good to have a slide with the instructions/information to refer to. An example of a PowerPoint that we have used can be found under the Training Workshop subfolder under the HR Secretaries folder.

### The Activity

1. Set up. Go 20 minutes early to bring the Tinker Toys, the treats, and to set up the PowerPoint. Try to make the room as "flexible" as possible since they'll be building the towers from the ground up.
2. Announcements/Introductions. Let the supervisors conduct their announcements and then introduce you and the activity. (10 minutes)
3. Introduce everyone/Play your "icebreaker" game. (5 minutes)
4. Split into groups and introduce the game. Keep in mind that we have 6 sets of Tinker Toys. The amount of groups as well as the size of the groups will depend on how many participants there are.
  - a. Ideally, you will have groups of three or four. The best way to split into groups is by counting them off. That way you can almost always ensure that friends are split into different groups. (5 minutes)

(see next page for details on the rounds)

### **Round ONE (15 minutes)**

1. Goal: build the tallest tower
2. Preparation/Planning: 5 minutes
  - i. No touching the Tinker Toys (only looking)
- b. Building: 10 minutes
  - i. Build from the ground up
  - ii. The tower has to be able to stand on its own
  - iii. The only time warning we will give you is a 10 second count down! (But you can keep track of your own time)
3. Observe: Make sure that you are watching the groups and noticing how they use their time and interact with each other.
4. Give candy to the winners.

### **Round TWO. (6 minutes)**

If the supervisors want the students to get to know each other, then you might consider counting them off again and switching the groups up again for the second round.

1. Same Goal
2. Preparation/Planning: 2 minutes
3. Building: 4 minutes
  - a. Same rules apply!

### **Discuss. (10 minutes)**

- Introduce the topic of teamwork with an example or a story (from the media, from history, from personal experience, etc.)
- Ask about the activity: What happened? What changed in the second round? What were the different roles each member of the team played? What went well or didn't go well?
- Discuss any topic/point that the supervisor asked you to discuss
- Discuss how to apply the principles from the activity to the workplace.

### **Scenarios for Less Time:**

If you have less than 40 minutes, consider cutting the introductions short or cutting out round two. The main focus should be on the first round and the discussion afterwards.