



Team Effectiveness Hack



Play isn't just for children but adults too. It's about the ability to laugh and not take ourselves too seriously. The science supports this, showing how movement and laughter activate the brain's positive neurotransmitters, helping to clear away mental blocks and enhance problem-solving.

When used effectively, integrating playful moments into the workplace can revitalise your team's thinking.

The current reality

Today's teams are navigating a complex landscape of rapid change, increasing demands and the need for constant innovation. Balancing multiple priorities and projects often feels like juggling, requiring clear communication and collaboration to avoid dropping the ball. Amidst this, maintaining a sense of cohesion and shared purpose can be challenging as teams strive to align individual efforts with their team and organisational goals.

Introducing the Team Rhythm Activity

Here's a great team-building activity that can help your team explore and understand some of these challenges in a fun way.

Set up

Divide the group into teams of 8 -12 players. Use four different colour balls (e.g. red, blue, green and yellow). Make sure they are an appropriate size for throwing.

How to play

Starting Round:

Explain that players will pass (throw) balls randomly to one another, ensuring that everyone gets a ball once. Designate a starting player to begin the first round.

Gameplay:

- The starting player passes their ball across the circle to another player, calling out their name.
- That player catches the ball and passes it to another player across the circle.
- Play continues until each player has received the ball.
- The player who started the round gets the original ball back to end the round.
- Once players have a rhythm, add complexity by introducing a second ball. Keep adding balls, one at a time, until all four balls are simultaneously in play.

Additional Instructions:

- Players must make eye contact and identify the receiver by name.
- Balls should be passed deliberately for the receiver to catch easily.
- The goal is encouragement rather than competition.

When players struggle, provide an opportunity (1-2 minutes) to stop, analyse where they went wrong and focus on communication. Encourage them to support each other to succeed as a team. After a few rounds, once the team has found its rhythm, the first player passes the balls back to the facilitator, ending the game.



The debrief



Thank everyone for participating and ask them to take their seats. The talking points should be around how communication, focus and support are crucial in their everyday work lives. Engage the group in this conversation by asking them to draw parallels to their workplace situations.

Here are a few key questions to ask:

1. What happened and what did you observe?
2. What was the process and what patterns emerged?
3. What is the significance of these outcomes in your work setting?
4. And moving forward, what lessons can you draw as a team?

Linking it to context

There are strong parallels between the complexity of this game and the complexity teams face in their work:

- Adding more balls made the task harder, just as work gets more complex over time.
- Just like dealing with multiple balls in the game, teams face many distractions and competing priorities at work.

However, the game showed that with clear communication and coordinated collaboration, teams can handle complexity without inhibiting progress.

Key lessons learned

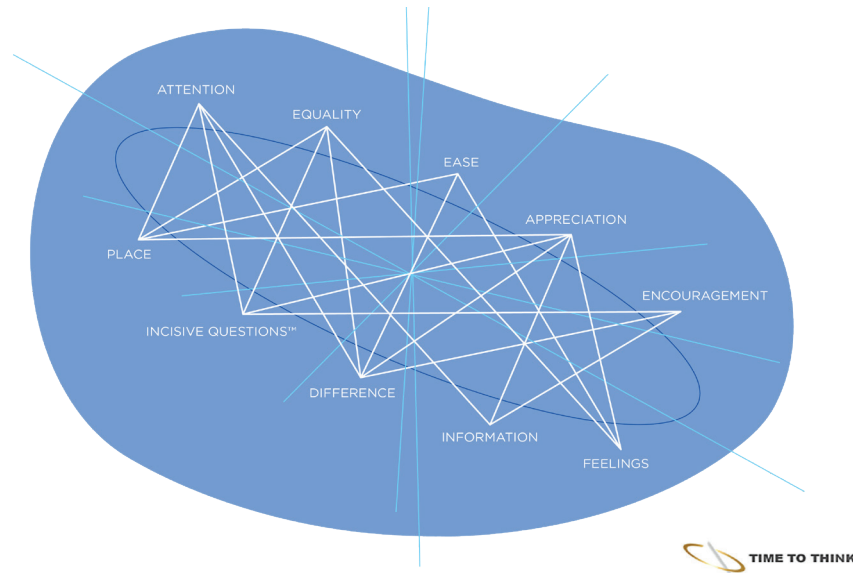
1. No one could manage the balls alone; success depended on relying on one another. This mirrors the workplace where the projects cannot be done alone.
2. With more complexity (more balls), only by working closely together could they manage and stay in sync. This is true for complex work projects too.
3. When mistakes happened, they had to support each other instead of blaming or competing. To get back into the rhythm, they had to cooperate and solve problems together. Work challenges need the same team alignment.
4. Focusing on just the next two passes made them function more smoothly, like parts of a well-oiled machine. This systems-thinking highlights that excellence depends on how well each role supports others to succeed.

By design, this game could not be won through individual performances, only teamwork. Likewise, workplace success hinges on interdependence, with each person's contributions enabling colleagues' contributions in turn.

Linking it to the Thinking Environment™

- When the team struggles, the facilitator reminds them to slow down and think about their approach. This mirrors the Thinking Environment™, where we slow down to do better thinking.
- Team members are instructed to make eye contact and acknowledge each other during the game, providing the attentive listening and consideration that defines a Thinking Environment™.
- Encouragement replaces competition as the goal, spurring generative thinking and idea-sharing over winning.
- Focusing on thoughtful communication and support over speed or individual success, the team can smoothly incorporate more complexity like additional balls, showing how collective thinking can address complex challenges.

This activity reflects key components of the Thinking Environment™: focus, attention to others, equality, encouragement and a cooperative mindset - vital for effective problem-solving.



Variations

- Use balls of different sizes/weights to introduce varying degrees of difficulty.
- Incorporate movement by having players pass while moving around the space instead of staying stationary.
- Add obstacles for players to maneuver around that simulate real-world constraints.
- Introduce roles where some players can intercept passes or cause brief disruptions to simulate challenges.
- Use music and have players pass in time with the beat for an added synchronization element.
- Pass objects other than balls like balloons, scarves, or bean bags to change the dynamics.
- Play in teams where players must coordinate passes within their small group before passing to another.

About CreateConsulting

At CreateConsulting, we integrate activities and energisers into all our workshops, making them fun and strategically relevant. Our purpose is to awaken conscious leadership, develop powerful teams and shift organisations through conversations that matter. Whether your need is consulting, coaching, facilitation or learning design, we contextualise our solutions for your environment, ensuring that they will make a difference.