UNC Charlotte

Initiatives Training Manual

Introduction:

Leading groups can be both difficult and fun. Imagine a room full of students, faculty or staff, who have never met, and yet are assigned to work together for the next semester or year. Then imagine that it is your job to bring these individuals together to work as a functioning group; a productive team. **WOW!** What a job! Can you say stress? This short manual provides some ideas for how to facilitate the forming process with new groups. Feel free to use these activities anywhere you go and to share them with friends. If you would like additional ideas or training, contact Venture, located in the Cone University Center. **The Venture Program** is the on-campus resource for team building and group development training.

What is Facilitation?

A leader is best when
People barely know that he exists.
Of a good leader, who talks little,
When his work is done, his aim fulfilled,
They will say, "We did this ourselves."
Lao Tse

The unexamined life is not worth living
Socrates

People who "reflect" on an experience are better able to assimilate that experience into learning, making connections between the experience in the "here and now" and events in their daily lives. Sometimes these insights occur internally, more often by a facilitator's thought provoking question or another group member's comment sparking something inside.

The facilitator then creates the environment and opportunity for reflection and changing a "game" into a "learning experience".

Assuming the role of facilitator can be an intense responsibility. You should take it very seriously. You must be mindful of the impact your actions will have on your participants and be aware of this factor in preparing for and conducting a workshop. You should impart, through your behavior, the following values, all of which are integral to the Venture philosophy:

- Belief in and commitment to high-level wellness
- Openness and honesty
- Respect for the individual (manners, language, challenge by choice)
- Respect for diversity (welcoming to all)
- Respect for the natural environment
- Respect for equipment and personal property
- Physical fitness

Planning/Program Design

Know your group:
Make sure you know some basic information about who will be participating, such as group size, age range and physical ability of group members, how well they know each other, etc.
Have clear goals:
Know what you are trying to achieve. Do you want to help people know names, get to know each other at a deeper level, build trust, just have fun?
Choosing/Sequencing Activities
Using the information you have about your group, choose activities that are appropriate. Have a reason for doing what you are doing. Always attempt to structure workshops so that there is a graduated series of challenges from which participants can emerge with an experience of success. This requires planning.
Think about Safety
Finally, safety <u>must</u> be your overriding concern at all times. You would be amazed what people will do if you don't tell them not to (and sometimes, even if you do).
There is, therefore, a whole set of principles which should guide everything you do. Not only must you be safety-conscious yourself, you must also teach your participants how to be responsible for themselves and others.

Introducing the program

* Give general description or overview of what happens during a program: Experiential Learning, a series of mental and physical group challenges, discussions after activities to reflect on experience
* Explain "challenge by choice"; participants are encouraged to push their own limits but are not required to put themselves in any situations where they feel uncomfortable. Explain various levels of involvement (watching, cheering, coaching, participating)
*Have people remove all hazardous items from their person: pens, keys, bracelets, watches, rings, necklaces.
* Ask participants what <u>their</u> goals or expectations are, or give brief talk about reasons for using GIC, which might include some of the following:

- increase appreciation within the group of each individual's abilities
- increase awareness that a group working together can accomplish things that individuals can't alone
- increase group perseverance by pointing out that sometimes a seemingly unsolvable problem can be solved with determination
- increase individual initiative: give the confidence to fully participate in the group
- increase group trust
- give each person an opportunity to see how s/he works within a group
- increase awareness of leadership, communication and problem solving within a group
- give each person an opportunity to experience some level of physical or psychological challenge; i.e. dealing with fear, overconfidence, lack of trust, etc.
- allow the group to get to know each other in new and different ways- to help break down barriers to interaction
- have **FUN**

See if anyone has any questions or concerns (particularly about safety) before starting.

FACILITATOR GUIDELINES

As the group's learning facilitator, you should:

- Explain the challenge and objectives clearly, with demonstrations where necessary.
- Get a clear contract with the group. They accept ownership of the challenge.
- The participants work on the problem. STAFF STOPS THE ACTIVITY IF SAFETY FOCUS IS BAD. GET THE GROUP TO RECOMMIT.
- You, as a facilitator, should possibly observe, while actively spotting. Ask questions, seek their answers. People feel learning is more rewarding if they find the answers.
- When rules are broken by the team, you as the facilitator, must decide whether to make them start over or not, in order for them to learn to persevere and discover that- if you TRY, you CAN- or whether the lessons are already learned and rigid rule adhesion may be a drain on group energy.
- Always maintain the team's AND participant's self-esteem. Use positive remarks with a positive attitude.

Briefing

Before each activity, briefing should include:
- Group task or overview- big picture (with or without storyline or metaphors)
- Rules/ additional restrictions or parameters - the details
- * Safety considerations

Debriefing Activities

Depending on the group with whom you are working, you may or may not want to attempt to lead a discussion to help the group learn from the activities. If your goals lean towards light hearted fun, probably not. If your goals are to improve group performance, learn to manage conflict, etc, you will want to spend time helping the group identify lessons learned.

- Sit in circles. Make sure everyone in the group can see each other's faces.
- Allow time for closure.
- Never allow the attacking of a participant's worth.
- Foster accepting attitudes toward other's opinions.
- Be courteous; do not interrupt when others are speaking.
- Try to involve everyone in discussion, but don't force anyone.
- Accept your own and others' feelings.
- Don't talk in "shoulds;" talk about behavior and consequences (what worked, what didn't).
- Encourage cooperation, discourage competition.

There is often resistance and a hesitancy to speak up during a debriefing. It may be easiest to get people talking first about:
- What happened (what),
- Then to talk about the meaning of what happened (so what),
- And finally, how to apply that information (now what).

For example, Group discussion questions might include:

What:
Who did what? (Who was last, who was first, who suggested ideas, who were the leaders, whose idea was used? When the group seemed stuck, what happened that got the group moving again? Were their times when there was a general group feeling of frustration, euphoria, etc.? As a group, what were you especially good at, where could you improve?

So what:
How do you feel about your own or the group's performance?
What significant issues did you notice?
What generalizations or lessons might you draw out of this activity?

Now what:
In the next activity what do you want to do differently based on what you've learned?
How might you apply some of the things we have just talked about to your everyday life (or to work, school, or other setting)?
Base your discussion on:
- the stated goals of the group
- individual contributions
- your observations about group interaction

Activities

Movement Name Game

Group Task:
Each person introduces themselves using a favorite active movement. A great stretching type of warm-up and name game.

Brief:
Have the group line up in a loose circle, to allow for movement. Ask the group to think about a favorite active movement activity. This activity could be an indoor or an outdoor activity, but must have some kind of movement. The group will then introduce themselves by name and activity, as follows, "My name is _**steve,**_ and I like to _**play tennis**_", while demonstrating their activity. Then, the entire group says, pointing, "This is _**steve**_ , and s/he likes to _**play tennis**_", while doing their movement, then the whole group does the previously introduced members until they get to the beginning. Then the next person in the circle introduces themselves, and so on…

Line -ups

Group Task:

To line up, according to a wide range of criteria, with or without talking.

Brief:

Depending on the goals of the group, request them to line up according to almost any criterion. For example, alphabetical order by name, alphabetical order of their mother's maiden name, chronological order, personal characteristics (level of outgoingness, ability in ___) etc. Facilitators can increase the level of difficulty by asking the group to not speak while attempting to communicate where they belong in the order.

Common Themes:

Leadership: Did someone take on the task of helping the group create an order? Shared information: Depending on the line-up criterion, participants will learn information about each other.

Resources

Materials: Paper plates

Set up:

Give each person 1 paper plate. Establish a start and finish line (with lengths of rope; distance apart should be approximately 1 step per person in your group.

Group Task: To move from start line to finish line without touching the ground in between.

Brief:
- This activity can also be called resources. Each paper plate represents a resource. The group's goal can be to cross from one boundary to the other making the most of their resources.
- Participants cannot touch the ground with any part of their body. If a participant touches he/she must return to the starting point.
- The plates can support people, so you can step on the plates to cross the distance.
- If you lose contact with the plate (even for just a split second), you lose the plate. Some part of someone must be in contact with the plates at all times.

Common Story:
- You are crossing a shallow but fast moving river, using these stepping stones. If you aren't touching the stones, they float away. The water is toxic, so you can't touch it.

Safety considerations:

A lot of stretching (particularly leg splits) may occur during this activity. Make sure the group is sufficiently warmed up and stretched out before starting.

Bull Ring

Materials:

Tennis ball, ball stand, ring with colored strings attached, blindfolds (optional)

Set-up

Lay down stand, place ring over stand, put ball on stand, spread out the strings.
Arrange obstacle course (around a trash can; between two objects such as trees, poles, chairs or a doorway; up/down stairs or over a table or chairs, etc.)

Group Task:

To transport the tennis ball through obstacle course and return to pole.

Brief:

- Without dropping it, transport the tennis ball around/ through certain obstacles and replace the tennis ball on the pole.
- You can only hold the end (last 6 inches) of the strings.
- No one may touch the tennis ball.
- If the ball falls, start over (back one obstacle, have goal of fewest possible touches, etc.)

Safety Considerations:

- Be aware for participants walking backwards, sideways, etc. as they may not be able to see all potential hazards as they move.
- Use standard precautions for blindfolded participants if using that variation (remove hazardous obstacles in the area, spot the person if moving over objects or down stairs).

Common Story:

The ball represents something very important to your group/company/organization (the essential purpose or function).   You must handle this resource, without "dropping the ball" so to speak.

Options/Variations:

- Vary difficulty of obstacles- simplest might just be to go around a tree/chair and return.
- Have some of the group blindfolded before they see the activity: only blind people touch strings, sighted partners must give directions.
- Use same idea with magic marker with paper to do group writing (assign them a sentence).
- Place a cup of water on the ring, or use a cloth napkin (group holds the corners only).

Common Issues:

Teamwork, communication, planning. Blind variation- managing others.

Lower the Bar

Materials: Enough tent poles for the group.

Set up:
- Divide the group in half.
- Have half of each the group line up side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, facing the same direction.
- The other half lines up the same way but directly across from and facing toward the first group.
- Have the group make a toy gun shape with their hands (thumb up and index finger pointing ahead) and point the gun at the person across from them.
- Ask them to arrange their hands so that you will be able to lay the bar down and it would rest on everyone's' fingers.

Task: Lower the bar to the ground, with the following rules about how they do it:

- Everyone's fingers must remain in contact with the bar at all times.
- Fingers may only contact the bottom of the bar- no one may put a thumb, finger, or anything else on the top of the bar
- You (facilitator) will always start by placing bar on fingers positioned at shoulder height of shortest person (they will need many tries, so this establishes a starting line each time.
- If they come up with the idea themselves, they can get down on the ground instead of standing, making "shoulder" height much closer to the ground.
- *Facilitator- as the bar goes up in the air, if it gets so high that some people can't touch it anymore, you will want to take it away and restart at should height again.
- This activity does cause significant frustration. You may want to intervene in the group process, depending on what you observe happening. You may want to reassure the group that the task is possible, although very hard.
- Once (and if) the smaller groups accomplish the task, combine the two groups and try again!

Safety Concerns: monitor the group. Sometimes a frustrated person can send the pole flying and there is a risk that the people on the ends could get hit in the face or eye with the end of the pole.
Common Issues: Coordination, communication, handling frustration, placing blame, system theory, leadership, integrity (following the rules).