



By Jeff "Chief" Urbaniak  
COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I'm a manager for a 48-person office team and every time I plan a team-building exercise, most people complain and the exercise rarely achieves its intended objectives. I'm looking for ideas to help improve the effectiveness of our team-building activities.

PERPLEXED TEAM BUILDER



DEAR PERPLEXED TEAM BUILDER:

It can be very tricky planning and executing team building sessions. Ineffective sessions cause people to cringe every time one is scheduled. According to a 2012 Wakefield Research Study commissioned by the cloud technology company Citrix, almost a third of U.S. workers dislike team-building exercises. However, when properly assessed, planned, and executed, these exercises can be quite beneficial in improving overall teamwork in an organization.

First, when planning a team-building exercise, keep the following in mind to ensure it will accommodate and satisfy most everyone involved:

1) Avoid putting employees in potentially embarrassing or uncomfortable situations. Not everyone is comfortable with certain rituals like séances or group meditation.

2) Recognize that your employees have different preferences and respect their boundaries regarding physical contact and the disclosure of personal information.

# Team building exercises - Ugh!

3) Avoid participation times that are outside of work hours to prevent alienating those who have family or other personal obligations.

Here are some suggestions for team-building activities for your team:

1) The simplest to coordinate and the most reoccurring type of team-building activity is shared meals. Whether it's someone's birthday, retirement, or just a routine gathering for a meal, breaking bread with coworkers is a social experience easy to organize and is commonly cooperated with by almost everyone who desires to have a meal during their work day (after all, people need to eat!).

2) Field trips are another great way to get people out of the work environment and provide them with an opportunity for new learning experiences. When I was a college superintendent, I took my staff of 100 people out for a tour of the Hyundai automobile assembly plant in the local area. This allowed them to see the fascinating way an assembly line builds cars in an efficient manner, but more importantly, they witnessed a living example of how teams of people seamlessly worked together in accomplishing multiple objectives.

3) Fitness and sports activities can also be a fun option for team-building exercises. Just be sure to organize more than one option to accommodate people's physical abilities or handicaps.

4) Volunteering together as a team to serve the local community not only promotes teamwork within but also encourages team members

to become caring and active citizens. And, according to the U.S. News and World Report, research suggests that participating in volunteer activities outside of the work environment can help employees recover from work and come back energized.

5) Watching a team-oriented motion picture movie like *Hoosiers*, *Miracle*, or *We Are Marshall* in an auditorium or movie theater can give everyone a chance to relax and enjoy a different pace to the work day. Then having a team discussion to analyze the movie's key points can be beneficial in developing their comprehension of effective teamwork.

6) Lastly, signing team members up for excursions like rope challenges, wilderness treks, water rafting, or other orientation/navigation activities are usually very effective but can also be quite costly for the organization in both travel costs and loss of man-hours and productivity while team members are gone for a few days at a time.

Regardless which team-building option you choose, it will be important for you to know your team's personalities, strengths, and preferences. This will enable you to properly plan and execute the right team-building event for your organization.



*For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to [www.DearChiefAdvice.com](http://www.DearChiefAdvice.com) and submit your comments or email them to [Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com](mailto:Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com).*