



BUILD A BRIDGE

Program Description

Overview

Build a Bridge ignites your team's creative energy as they move through the stages of designing, planning, building, troubleshooting and presenting their prototypes to the other teams.

Charged with building two halves of a bridge in separate locations, teams have access to limited communication modes to keep them on track during the construction phase. Once built and the halves connected, the completed bridges are rated on aesthetic value and tested for strength. Teams success depends on someone capturing everyone's imagination, providing a vision and motivating them forward.

BENEFITS

- Empowers teams to apply effective project management skills.
- Necessitates building consensus and implementing a plan.
- Replicates the communication challenges of geographically dispersed teams.
- Requires both mechanical skills and interpersonal skills as well as attention to details and a big picture view...just like your workplace.
- Provides an opportunity to examine the ambiguous nature of communication and reinforces best practices to proactively ensure that one's message is understood.

BLEND WITH CORPORATE TRAINING

We particularly recommend this event for virtual teams (as it very closely parallels their daily work situation), R&D groups, and upper level managers who must coordinate the work of many disparate units. Consider a full day workshop combining [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®](#) or [Communication Skills](#) with Build a Bridge.

NUTS & BOLTS

- Indoor
- 3.5 hours
- Team size of 8; group size of up to 500
- All fitness levels
- Portable: 2 meeting rooms or one large divided room





INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Our lead facilitator provides a brief overview of the parameters of the building assignment and guidelines for successful completion. (approximately 10 minutes)

ROLES AND GOALS

This discussion in small teams sets the tone for a fun experience that also has inherent opportunities for team learning. As each team member shares how he/she can contribute to the experience, everyone gains a better understanding of that individual's strengths. Some people want to highlight known strengths while others want to practice behaviors that don't come easily such as not taking control or being more assertive. Each team also agrees on goals for the program which often include providing space for all ideas to be shared, getting to know each other better or communicating with their subteams clearly and in a timely manner. (approximately 20 minutes)



BRIDGE DESIGN

Each team conducts its own round table discussion to develop blueprints. Group planning is fascinating to experience as team dynamics emerge. Thwarted structural engineers have the opportunity to become an "expert leader," and armchair physicists get to experiment with a variety of creative design concepts. The teams are allowed to examine their building materials at this stage: foam core, dowel rods, pen knives, glue, straws, construction paper, etc. (approximately 30 minutes)

CONSTRUCTION TIME

During the construction phase, teams have limited simulated phone calls, e-mails and texts. Teams must be strategic about the content, the timing and the medium of communications. Time is limited and even the best planning can't prepare for every eventuality. Participants have to make decisions on the fly, sometimes without the input of the other half of their team. (approximately 90-120 minutes)

JOIN BRIDGES

The anticipation at this stage is palpable as the participants wonder: Can we get the two halves to connect? Will they match? How much weight will the bridge support? Teams are given only a few minutes to connect the halves. (approximately 10 minutes)

BRIDGE PRESENTATIONS AND TESTING SPECS

Teams proudly unveil their finished product. Not only do they describe the features of their bridge, but they also share their successes and obstacles related to virtual teaming, decision-making and communication. The excitement builds as each bridge is tested to see if it meets all of the specifications including the decisive weight test. (approximately 15 minutes)

DEBRIEF

All teams reconvene to talk about their experiences during the Build a Bridge event. We address: How they organized around the tasks? How did the two "sides" communicate throughout the construction phase? What lessons can they take back to the work environment? Who fulfilled leadership roles? (approximately 20 minutes)

PROGRAM COMPLETE

(3.5 hours)