

The Giant Jigsaw Puzzle



The Challenge

For the group to cooperate and successfully complete the jigsaw puzzle, while blindfolded.

Typical Presentation, Storyline or Metaphor

Begin by asking for one or two participants to remain sighted, but speechless, and act as observers during this activity. You can provide them with optional pen and paper to take notes. For a serious corporate initiative, consider using a video camera to view the event, from the ceiling downward, and then replaying portions of the activity during the debriefing stage of the activity.

Next, blindfold the remaining members of the group, while they are seated in a circle on the floor. Inform them that you have some “stuff, that I would like you to put together. All the necessary pieces are within arms reach of where you are right now, so there is no need to move around. You are encouraged to utilize all members of your team, and during the activity, I will answer any **THREE QUESTIONS** that you might ask as a group.”

Next, place most of the pieces within the center of the group, 3 pieces on the outside of the group, and one piece the facilitator can hold just above the head of one of the participants. In this manner, ALL pieces are within arms reach, but obviously some outside-the-box thinking needs to occur to find them all. Once all pieces are in place, tell the group to “begin.”

Variations

If the participants are seeking a particular goal as part of this activity or program, you can paint words, pictures, slogans, quotations, corporate symbols, or even photographs onto the picture, so that when participants remove their blindfolds, there is a familiar sight to see.

Rather than allowing participants to “find” the pieces, you can give a piece of the jigsaw puzzle to each participant, and tell them that they are responsible for placing this piece into the puzzle. Rather than having two observers that cannot communicate to the group, consider one observer, and a second person that can also answer questions for the group. You can attach “rewards” to each piece, so that when it is successfully placed, the participants can share in the reward or treat. Many groups will complete the task without actually using all of the three questions. One of the possible questions might be, “can we remove our blindfolds?”

Important Points

The hardboard is fairly durable, but be careful not to damage the corners of the puzzle pieces. Do not allow the wood to get wet. Because the pieces are fairly heavy and the participants are blindfolded, do not allow them to throw or toss the pieces to another group member. Ask them to pass these pieces carefully to the next person in the circle.

Discussion and Debriefing Topics

At the completion of the puzzle, ask the participants to take off their blindfolds. Then ask the observers to be the first to share with the group their observations. Next allow the group to consider who displayed leadership during this activity. Who created a workable plan? Who first identified that the object was a puzzle? What techniques were successful? How were ideas from the group members considered?

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