

Teamwork & Teamplay

The Adventure-Based Training Company

Magic Carpet

Equipment

The Magic Carpet consists of a single piece of tarp or plastic cloth. For groups of 8-12 participants, the Magic Carpet should be approximately 4 feet by 5 feet.

The Challenge

To turn the Magic Carpet over, without touching the ground surrounding the Magic Carpet.

Typical Presentation, Storyline or Metaphor

Your group is on a Magic Carpet ride, high above the fields of the surrounding countryside. You suddenly realize that you are going the wrong direction, because the carpet you are riding on is in fact, up side down! Since you are no longer touching the ground, you must turn the carpet over, without stepping off the carpet.

Variations

In order to limit the risk in this activity, request that all participants must maintain contact with the Magic Carpet at all times. This eliminates the option of carrying participants on shoulders and other balance related concerns. One variation which greatly increases the difficulty, and time required to accomplish the activity, is to only allow participants to touch the Magic Carpet with their feet. For this technique, participants will typically scuff the carpet to turn it over. Make sure to use a tough material if you choose this method. Thin plastic sheets have been known to tear during this variation.

For large groups, provide three Magic Carpet sizes, and place these near each other before participants climb on board. If you mention that the whole group is one team, they may decide to combine resources, and transfer to another Magic Carpet while turning over their own empty Magic Carpet. Once the group has accomplished this task by combining resources, encourage them to repeat the activity, this time without sharing space or carpets with the other members of their group. If the three Magic Carpets are placed further away, participants may choose to shuffle the carpets closer together rather than working alone.

Using a plastic cloth or tarp that is a different color on each side makes it easy for a group to see when they have accomplished their goal.

Consider using a series of decreasing size Magic Carpets to increase the difficulty level. If you happen to be using the inexpensive plastic table coverings available at many party stores, you can even cut off a portion of the Magic Carpet after each successful inversion.

Another variation using a single Magic Carpet is to begin the activity with a single person, and gradually add additional team members each time the carpet is flipped over.

A substantially different solution is possible if the facilitator mentions that each participants feet must be touching the Magic Carpet, but yet allow other parts of the body to touch the ground surrounding the carpet. This method works well for very small carpet sizes.

Another variation involves using different shapes for the Magic Carpet. In general, rectangles are easier to flip than squares. Triangles are easier to flip than circles. Perhaps alphabet shaped Magic Carpets could be used. Each new geometry is likely to produce a slightly different solution technique.

Finally, rather than calling this activity Magic Carpet, you can call it Surfing the Web, and make up your own metaphors regarding the flip side of data and anti-data in the computer world.

Important Points

The size of the Magic Carpet and the size of the group greatly effects the difficulty in accomplishing this initiative. Minimize risk by requiring all participants to be in contact with the carpet at all times.

Typical solutions for this activity involve crowding a majority of the group towards one edge or corner, and having a few group members attempt to twist or fold the Magic Carpet over. For a rectangle, twisting a corner of the Magic Carpet, somewhat like a bow-tie, provides the greatest amount of area for movement.

From a mathematical viewpoint, the fundamental problem with Magic Carpet is that many of the techniques available to turn the carpet over result in reducing the area of the carpet to approximately half the original area. An optimum solution then, is one that would allow the carpet to be turned over, and yet maximize the total area of the carpet throughout the activity.

Oddly enough, carpet is not a good choice for the Magic Carpet initiative. It is difficult to fold and is generally too thick to twist easily. Plastic sheets are a better choice, and take up much less space in the equipment storage container.

Discussion and Debriefing Topics

An interesting question to ask participants during this initiative is what their role is with regard to the solution. Were they active or passive in their contribution to the final solution. Who did the most work. One debriefing method, known as *Both Sides Now*, uses the Magic Carpet as a tool for conflict resolution. Using a light colored plastic material, allow participants to write their feelings, or expressions, or supporting evidence for their side of the conflict. Participants with opposing views are then asked to write their comments on the other side of the material. The activity proceeds just as Magic Carpet does, but with participants reading these comments out loud during the struggle to turn the material over. Another therapeutic technique for Magic Carpet, known as *Turning Over a New Leaf*, uses this metaphor for audiences with dependencies. The struggle to overcome adversity and turn over a new leaf can be assisted by other group members, and occasionally some outside support - all of which can be processed during the activity.

Sequence

Magic Carpet requires all participants in a group to work within a tightly constrained space. As such, it is important to build up to this level of proximity.

Activities Using Similar Skills

All of the following activities can be found in the book, *Teamwork & Teamplay*, by Jim Cain.

Midnight Sun - The Challenge

For the group to create shadows using their bodies that completely shade the surface of the object or space in front of them.

Cave In - The Challenge

For participants, playing roles as either themselves or imaginary personalities, to take part in a simulated cave-in, where only one member of the group is guaranteed survival. The group must collectively decide which member of the group is the best choice to leave and seek rescue assistance, knowing that the fate of the remaining group members, under the magic carpet, is uncertain.

Blackout - The Challenge

For the group to completely cover up the Magic Carpet using only their bodies.

Danger Zone - The Challenge

With participants standing within the limited space available, have everyone assume a position that they could sleep in for the entire night.

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