



StackMan Instructions



StackMan challenges groups with a task that is nearly impossible without a plan, a process, clearly defined roles, and excellent communication. Naturally, participants discover what it takes to succeed. This is an excellent activity for team interaction, change management and process optimization.

How does it work?

The group spends a few minutes assembling a structure using interlocking wooden boards and a set of instructions. Then, the group must rebuild it in less than a minute without the instructions and with each participant contributing at least one of the boards. This is a real challenge! Everyone learns they need a plan and a process with clearly defined roles and excellent communication.

What do you need?

People: (min / optimal / max): 5 / 15 / 15

Time for Activity: 30-45 mins

Materials: 15 interlocking wooden boards, 1 visual construction guide, post-it notes, pens, 1 set of instructions

Workspace: 16 x 16 ft

Instructions

1. To prepare for the activity, set out the wooden boards (and post-it notes and pens if you are using them) in a pile.
2. Explain the goal of the activity. Say something like, *“Your task is to build a StackMan as a group in less than one minute. It will resemble a shelf lying on its side. For your first attempt, you can use the printed blueprints (and possibly post-it notes and pens), but after that, you will have only the wooden boards and any verbal blueprints you can quickly develop on your own as a team. The current record is just 14 seconds!”*
3. Distribute the boards to the group. Please note:
 - If you have 5-8 people, distribute all 15 boards to the group so each person has at least one board. The post-it notes may not be necessary.
 - If you have 9-15 people, distribute all 15 boards to the group so each person has at least one board. Participants can write on post-it notes and stick them to the boards, and write on the printed blueprints. With bigger groups, participants are usually more involved in developing the new building plan.
4. Explain the only rule:
 - Once you are given your board(s), you cannot let go until the StackMan is built.
5. Observe the activity.
6. Lead the debrief and record the group’s feedback on a flip chart. Here are some sample questions to ask:
 - What was the key to this activity?
 - Which roles did people adopt and not adopt?
 - What steps were helpful in completing the task?
 - Was there something else you could have done to find the best solution possible?
 - How did you deal with the complexity of the activity?
 - What are the parallels between this exercise and your daily life?

Variations

Easier

To make the activity easier, give the group two or three minutes to complete the task instead of one minute. Keep in mind that some groups are able to finish the exercise in less than 15 seconds! You can also provide the group with a StackMan you have already completed as a visual aid.

Harder

To make the activity harder, do not allow the use of post-it notes, and take the blueprints away before the group finishes its first attempt.

Common Sense Caution

This activity requires participants to move up and down, kneel, squat and move around on their feet. Some participants may experience dizziness, nausea, vertigo or headaches, and may fall or stumble as a result.

If a participant suffers from balance problems, vertigo, dizziness, lightheadedness or orthopedic problems, he or she should refrain from participating in this activity.

Participants who are pregnant or suffer from back pain or other orthopedic injuries should consider refraining from participating in this activity.

Choose the room or area for this activity carefully. Participants will move around and could lose awareness of their environment as they focus on the exercise. Choose a room or area free of steps, posts, debris or other potential trip hazards. The floor should be dry, level and stable.

Visual Construction Guide

