



System Instructions



In this activity, teams learn to deal with interdependency, risk and change. With success literally hanging in the balance, it is essential that we see things from each other's point of view.

How does it work?

A round plate balances on a pedestal with wooden figurines spread out on top. The plate's balance shifts as teams of two remove the figurines, one turn at a time, until all of them are taken away and the plate is left resting level on the pedestal.

Each team consists of a “speaker” and a blindfolded “grabber.” The speaker directs the grabber’s hand with verbal instructions and feedback, without touching either the grabber or the figurines. Good communication and trust are essential because the plate is unstable and there is always the danger it will tip over.

What do you need?

People (min / optimal / max): 4 / 9 / 12

Time for Activity: 20-45 minutes

Materials: 1 round wooden plate, 1 stainless steel pedestal, 16 wooden figurines, 3 blindfolds, 1 set of instructions

Workspace: 10 x 10 ft

Instructions

1. Prepare for the activity. Insert the stainless steel pedestal into the base, then set the wooden ball on top the pedestal. Balance the wooden plate (cork side down) on the ball until it is level. For the first exercise, place the figurines on the plate one at a time until they're all in balance.
2. Explain the goal of the activity. Say something general like, *"You are going to divide into two teams, then work together to remove all the figurines from the wooden plate without it toppling over. Each team will select one person to be blindfolded and become the figurine 'grabber,' and one person to be the 'speaker' who tells the grabber how to move the figurines. Each grabber / speaker pair will take turns moving one figurine at a time until they are all gone and the plate is left resting on the pedestal. You have 45 minutes."*
3. Ask the group to divide into two equal teams, and select their first grabbers and speakers. Blindfold the grabbers.
4. Outline the rules:
 - You can only remove one figurine at a time, and only after the plate reaches equilibrium.
 - If the plate begins to wobble after a figurine is removed and looks like it will topple over, you must put the figurine back down in the same place.
 - You may not touch the plate, ball or base.
 - The speaker may not touch the grabber.
5. Observe the activity.
6. Lead the debrief. Here are some sample questions to ask:
 - Let's talk about the speakers' communication style. What did they do to enable the grabbers to succeed?
 - How did the rest of you regard the speakers' and grabbers' roles?
 - Were there any risky moments? What triggered them?
 - How is this exercise similar to management / employee communication at work?

Variations

Placing

The teams must place the figurines, one turn at a time, until all figurines are on the plate. As an added challenge, they must avoid a “taboo zone” where no figurines are allowed.

Moving

The figurines are divided on the plate into four equal fields marked by tape. One turn at a time, each team must move all the figurines from their assigned field to the one adjacent to it.

Common Sense Caution

This activity requires participants to wear a blindfold at times. Some participants may experience dizziness, nausea, vertigo or headaches, and may fall or stumble as a result. Some participants may experience anxiety or undue stress when blindfolded. If a participant suffers from balance problems, vertigo, dizziness, lightheadedness, back pain or orthopedic problems, he or she should consider refraining from participating in this activity.

During the exercise, participants must balance a tabletop on a single pole. If balance is not maintained, the tabletop may fall. For this reason, participants should wear closed-toe shoes. Participants should not wear high heel shoes or footwear that does not provide a stable platform underfoot.

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, furniture, debris or other potential trip hazards in the immediate area of the SysTeam table. The floor should be dry, level and stable.