



Team Navigator Instructions



TeamNavigator is an exercise in communication, cooperation, and team interaction. Because up to 18 people must learn to draw effectively with a single pen, it demonstrates how even the smallest actions can impact others. You can use it to address leadership, systems thinking and problem solving. It's also great as an icebreaker for learning names and activating a group.

How does it work?

Participants use strings to control a single writing pen held upright by a plastic disk resting on a large sheet of paper. As everyone pull the strings, the disk slides around leaving a trail of ink from the pen. Even with a shared objective in mind, drawing as a team is difficult until the group learns how to work together. Once the lines of communication are running smoothly and everyone has a feel for how they influence the outcome, they can draw effectively as a single unit.

You can stage this activity many ways. You can use pre-designed templates to give the group a winding path to follow or a maze to solve. If you ask the group to write a word or phrase, or draw a shape or company logo, then the activity will require more planning, leadership and extra coordination. You can also prepare the paper sheet in advance with cards half-hidden in slits so that when the pen reaches a card, a new topic of the day is revealed.

What do you need?

People: 6-18

Time for Activity: 15-30 minutes

Materials: 1 folding wooden case, 18 braided strings, 10 printed maze sheets, 1 pen and 1 set of instructions

Workspace: Tabletop of at least 3 x 5 ft and standing room for participants

Instructions

1. To prepare for the activity, open the TeamNavigator box as wide as possible so it lies flat on the table. Add or remove strings according to the number of people in the group. Each person should have 1-2 strings, and any unused strings should be put away. Insert the pre-designed paper template inside the box, and secure it in place under the metal clamps.
2. Ask everyone to gather around the table, and explain the goal of the activity. You can say something general like, *“The goal is for each of you to take one or two strings, and work as a group to draw a line (or word or image) together.”*
3. If you are using this activity as an icebreaker at the beginning of a session, you can say, *“This activity will be just like our time together. Each of you can make a unique contribution, but must also work together for our time to be a complete success.”* Or *“We are going to use this activity to introduce everyone to the group. When we arrive at your name card (which you will have inserted into a slit in the paper), you must say three things about yourself.”*
4. Outline the rules:
 - The strings must remain taut at all times.
 - You can only use (insert your choice of words here) to give each other directions. (See variations below for ideas.)
5. Observe the activity.
6. Lead the debrief, basing the conversation on your original intent for the activity. Here are some sample questions to ask the group:
 - Did any roles emerge?
 - How did you cope with the complexity of the exercise?
 - What part of the activity was the most challenging and how did you deal with it?
 - What was significant about the communication that took place?
 - Did you address quality management as a team?

Variations

Name Compass

In this variation, participants cannot give each other directions in the usual way (as in “move to the left”) and instead can only use each other’s names (“A little more toward Anita and Rob!”). This is an unusual way of learning names that will set your workshop apart from anything the participants have seen before.

Guide Dog

Have 4–6 participants put on blindfolds. The others take the lead and verbally coordinate the drawing activity. The “blind” experience the importance of sharing essential information; the seeing discover just how much precise instructions help overall success.