

TEAM BUILD A WORD

Group Size 20 – 200+

Age Range: Elementary – adult

Intensity: Mental=3, Physical=1

Time: 15-45 minutes

Space Minimal – Medium– Lots

Set Up Time: 60 seconds

Props: One 3x5 index card per person

Objective: Create words using letters on index cards.

Set Up / Preparation

1. First you must create at least one 3x5 index card for each person. Using a black marker, write one letter of the alphabet on each card using BIG block letters. One set of cards = 26 letters (all letters of the alphabet).
2. If you have less than 26 people playing, give some people two cards. If you have more than 26 playing, have a second set of index cards (26 letters) ready to hand out. If you have a large group (say...200) you'll need lots of sets of the alphabet so everyone can play. **IMPORTANT:** Each time you create a set of alphabet cards you must add an additional set of vowels (A, E, I, O, U).

Rules:

1. Each person is supplied with one card. You must stay with your card throughout the activity (no trading cards or handing them off).
2. When I give the signal, form a 3-letter word. Once you've formed your word, stay with your word (group) until the next set of directions. Give the group about 60 seconds to form their words. Ask all non-utilized letters to come to the "lost and found" area (so they can help each other).
3. After the words are formed, take a moment to see what all the words are (let everyone see each other's words). Most likely all the letters won't get used in each round (but look in the variations section below).
4. Round 2: Now form 4-letter words (but not the bad kind of 4-letter word. You know what I'm talking about.) Everyone plays, even the lost and found letters.
5. Round 3: Similar to rounds 1 and 2 in that you will be forming words with your letters. During this round your team will be timed - - you have 5 minutes to complete the task starting from the moment I say "Go!" Every letter in the room must be used or the

entire group fails. You can make words of any length. You can use letters in a crossword fashion (i.e. sharing letters is permitted).

Debriefing

1. After round three I like to have people form into small groups to discuss the differences they observed in the behavior of the group between rounds 1, 2 and 3. People almost always observe that rounds 1 and 2 had people acting on their own self-interest where as in round 3 people shifted into helping the COMMUNITY. What types of behavior would you like to see carried over from round 3 into our daily life?
2. I like to use this activity when discussing inclusion vs. exclusion. Consider giving a vowel to someone who is normally treated as an "outsider". Because vowels are so useful, the owner of the vowel will usually feel included when the group invariably needs their help on a consistent basis when forming words. On the flip side, consider giving a "tough" letter (Z for example) to someone who is popular or with the "in" crowd. It can be enlightening to hear how these two people were treated.
3. I will often lead this activity at the beginning of a personal mission statement workshop. After we play, I ask the group if there are there any wrong letters (out of 26 letters in the alphabet)? The response is usually – no. I continue...If there are no wrong letters, then how is it possible to have a misspelled word? The group responds with - - 1) right letter in the wrong place and/or 2) missing letter. I then share with the group my belief that our mission in life is unique, just like the letters of the alphabet. There is no other person on the planet like you. I believe there are many people who are unhappy with their job/life because they are, like the wrong letter in a misspelled word, in the wrong place. We are all unique and it's our job to awaken to our divine purpose. Until we awaken, frustration abounds.

Quote

"I respect a man who knows how to spell a word more than one way."
-- Mark Twain

Variations:

If you're teaching Spanish, ask the group to form Spanish words. If you're teaching Pig Latin have the group form Pig Latin words.

History

I learned this activity from the book "Cowstails and Cobras II" by Karl Rohnke.