

Get Connected

May 26, 2014 | by [Abigail R. Kies, MBA and Michelle Tillis Lederman, CPA, MBA, CEC](#)

Primary Market

Teambuilding, Corporate Training

Character Focus

Communication, Cooperation, Teamwork, Project Management, Creative Thinking

Items Needed

One Toobeez set

THE OVERVIEW

“Individual commitment to a group effort – that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”

Vince Lombardi

Description

Everyone is given a Toobeez, and the group is instructed to connect all the pieces, forming a single object with no loose ends. Each participant must hold his/her respective piece at all times.

Time

Setup Time: 10 minutes

Materials

- One Toobeez set

Time Required

Activity: 10 – 45 minutes

Debrief: 20 minutes (minimum)

Group Size: 20 – 52 participants per set of Toobeez

(NOTE: There are 52 pieces per set)

For smaller groups, make sure to have at least one connector sphere for every three people.

Space: 20 x 20 (minimum room size)

Open space – no chairs, tables, etc.

THE ACTIVITY Set Up

Give each person one Toobeez piece.

Instructions

In this activity, you will each be given one Toobeez. Work as a team to connect everyone together, creating a structure with no dead ends. You must follow these guidelines:

Facilitator Script

There is only one correct way through this Toobeez maze from point A to point B (indicate beginning and end to the

participants). The object of the activity is for you to determine what that correct path is and then have as many of you go through the maze as possible in the time allotted.

- *Everyone must be connected – no free-floating pieces are allowed in the solution.*
- *You must be touching your Toobeez at all times.*
- *To be complete, not only must you all be connected to each other, but also there may not be any dead ends. That is, everyone must be connected to at least two others.*
- *During the activity, if any rules are broken, everyone will break up and begin again.*

Any questions on the material covered? You will have 20 minutes to complete this activity. (Answer any questions and get teams situated with their Toobeez). Begin.

Observations and Modifications

During the activity, listen and look for the following: How people work together, manage the project, and communicate. The questions below, based on the primary Learning Intentions, are provided to guide your observations.

Learning Intention: Teamwork and Cooperation

In this activity, people may focus on themselves or their piece, or they may focus on everyone else and the overall project. The only way to successfully complete this activity is to work together and communicate effectively with the other team members.

During the activity, observe:

- How are people working together (or not)?
- Are there roles and alliances?
- Are people looking at where their piece can go or how to make the whole project work for everyone?
- Did anyone break apart to make it work?

Learning Intention: Project Management

This activity is a great opportunity for people to assume project management responsibilities. Given that the participants may be under a time constraint, effective project management is crucial. During the activity, observe:

- Who (if anyone) steps into the Project Manager role? How is this decided?
- Is the PM doing everything or really managing the process and including others?
- How does the PM communicate with others to create results?

Concluding the Activity

After 20 minutes, regardless of where the team is, conclude the exercise.

Facilitator's Choice...

You may choose to wait until there is a solution instead of being restricted by time.

Variations

Variations are optional and will highlight additional skill sets.

1. Highlighting: Communication

In addition to the instructions above, this exercise must be done in complete silence. Only nonverbal communication will be permitted.

2. Highlighting: Creative Thinking

In addition to the instructions above, each participant will be given two Toobeez (instead of one) for which to be responsible. Again, all pieces must be used and everyone must be touching both of his/her Toobeez at all times. You may not connect your two pieces to each other.

NOTE: If you have more than 26 people, you will need an additional set of Toobeez to execute this variation.

THE DEBRIEF

The debrief should be an interactive discussion. Lead it by offering a series of questions and soliciting responses from the participants. To begin, ask questions about the activity itself and continue with specifics related to the skills you want to address or highlight. You may stick to one area of focus or choose to cover many topics. Suggested questions are offered below to guide you as you facilitate this debrief.

The debrief is organized with an Opening and Closing and then by Learning Intention, and it may be used in a variety of ways. You may use just the Opening and Closing for a basic debrief or add the Learning Intention-specific debriefs in between. To include the Learning Intention specifics in your debrief, either pick one or two questions from each area in order to touch on many topics or work in depth on one or more areas of learning and go through all of the questions for that topic(s). Look through the questions, TIPs, FCs, and Transitions prior to the training session in order to choose which ones you will cover (see “How to Use this Book”).

Opening

The intention of this activity is to develop teamwork, cooperation, and project management skills. It requires extensive coordination among participants, and everyone must play an active role.

This activity offers many lessons, so let the participants share with you what they learned and their comments as to the purpose of the activity.

- What was the point of this exercise?
- Where in your professional life are you dependent on other people, and how do you deal with them?
- What was the biggest challenge of this activity?
- What did you learn? How can you apply that to your professional life?

Closing

This activity is a platform for new actions. There are many situations in which we are interdependent with others. Cooperation, teamwork, and effective project management skills are necessary to work together successfully, regardless of the restrictions put on each of us.

Concluding Questions

- What did you learn about trust, cooperation, teamwork, and project management?
- What could have been done differently?
- Where in your professional life are you dependent on others? What can you now do differently to overcome the challenges?

Action Plans

- How many ways can you apply what you've learned in this activity to:
 - Managing new projects
 - Client relationships
 - Professional development
- Based on your new experiences and insights, what could be different in going forward?
- What three action steps (with specific, measurable results) will you take this month to begin incorporating what you've learned into your daily routine?

LI: Teamwork and Cooperation

Teamwork and cooperation includes how people interact with each other, the roles people take in group settings, and how people perceive situations – as competitive or collaborative. Use the following questions to generate a discussion about how people work together.

Teamwork

- How did your team work together?
- What roles did you/people assume?
- If you didn't get your way, how did you participate? Where in your job and career are you the same way?

Cooperation

- How much did you work with others?
- Were you most concerned that you knew where you and your Toobeez went or that the whole team was complete? Where did you focus your energy?
- How did you coordinate or assume leadership among your group?

When Using Variation #1

- How did not speaking affect how you worked with others?

When Using Variation #2

- How did having multiple pieces to manage impact how you worked with the group overall?

Summary Script

When people work together in an empowering way – one in which everyone is listened to and respected as a contributing member of the team – results are impacted. We often interpret situations as “us versus them,” or “mine first”, when all parties would benefit by working together. As we expand our interpretation of “team”, we also expand the possibilities for success and achievement. So, by putting cooperation and teamwork above our personal concerns and into action, what do you think the results would be in your organization?.

LI: Project Management

Everyone working on a project uses “project management” skills. Sometimes people are in official PM roles. Other times, people are part of the project team. Regardless, learning to manage a project and your piece of it effectively impacts everyone and forwards your personal and collective results. Use the following questions to generate a discussion about how people manage projects and others, regardless of their official role.

- What was the “project” in this activity?
- What role did you assume in relationship to others?
- Regardless of which role that was, how did you manage the project overall?
- What were the challenges in managing this project?
- How did you coordinate and share management with people?

Summary Script

Project Management is a set of skills, a position, and ways of being that anyone in any role in a project can assume. When people take responsibility for the outcome of a project, clearly communicate steps and outcomes, keep track of the status, and empower others to continue working and meet commitments, they are managing the project, regardless of their official role or title. Successful organizations cultivate project management in everyone while also supporting and empowering those in official project management roles. How would your organization be impacted if everyone took on project management while also accepting that only certain people have that official role?

LI: Communication (S)

Communication determines how people work together and the results they create. Use the following questions to begin a discussion on the role communication played in this activity. If using Variation #1, emphasize the nonverbal.

- How did you communicate during this activity?
- What was the biggest challenge?
- What did you learn about assumptions you make and how your communication incorporates them?
- How can you enhance your clarity and effectiveness as a communicator based on what you’ve learned in this activity?

Variation #1

Ninety percent of our daily communication is nonverbal, yet we rarely focus on it. When speech is taken away from us, we get to highlight all of the other ways we're communicating with others and the ways others are communicating with us.

- How did not speaking impact this activity?
- How did you communicate with others?
- How did you deal with failed attempts to complete the activity?

LI: Creative Thinking (S)

Creative thinking supports everything from strategy to communication to implementation. Variation #2 is an opportunity to stretch people's thinking even further by having you "connected" to two separate pieces instead of one.

- What did you notice about how you and your teammates managed the two pieces?
- What did you do differently from others?
- How many different ways are there to complete this activity?

Key Take-Aways

- In order to complete a project successfully, it is often necessary to focus on the whole picture and all of the team members rather than on any one particular piece.
- Regardless of your official role in a project, you can communicate clearly with others, manage effectively, and impact the end result.
- Regardless of whether "your piece" of a project is complete, your results affect others and you are not really complete until, as a team, you've achieved the goals you've set.

About Author

Abigail R. Kies, MBA and Michelle Tillis Lederman, CPA, MBA, CEC (9 Activities)

Abigail R. Kies, MBA is the founder of Play To Win Coaching, a leadership development company. Combining her business background and powerful coaching skills, Abigail works closely with individuals, teams, and organizations from diverse backgrounds in varied situations... entrepreneurs, managers, Fortune 500 executives, artists, teachers, lawyers... to enhance communication, enrich relationships, develop leadership, and realize visions.

Michelle Tillis Lederman, CPA, MBA, CEC is the founder of Executive Essentials, a training company. She has delivered seminars internationally for corporations, universities, high schools, and non-profit organizations including: JPMorgan Chase, Deutsche Bank, Columbia Business School, and The Museum of Modern Art. Michelle is an Adjunct Professor at NYU's Stern School of Business in the Management Communications department and serves on the faculty of the American Management Association.

[All Activities of Abigail R. Kies, MBA and Michelle Tillis Lederman, CPA, MBA, CEC](#)