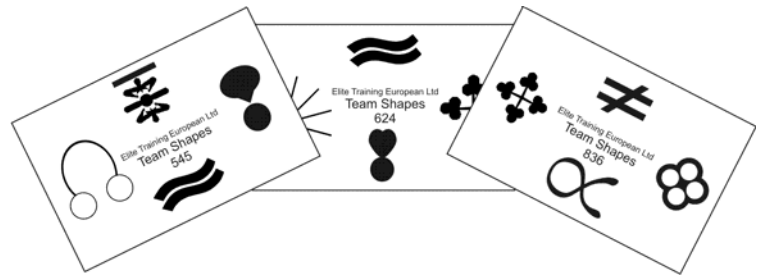


Team Shapes

Teams have problems (or opportunities, as we prefer to call them) to overcome which require leadership, a strategy, planning, effective communication and teamwork whilst under the pressure of a critical time constraint.



Team Shapes is an ideal training game which combines all these areas in a challenging but fun activity.

Imagine being given lots of jigsaw pieces without a picture of the completed pieces; how would you assemble the pieces correctly? This is similar to the first problem the team will have to overcome, except all the pieces have straight edges and no obvious corners!

The different pieces are divided amongst the team and they cannot be shown to other team members. The only way they can be matched up is by describing the shapes to each other and carefully listening – but a person describing a star will mean a certain shape to one person and fit a piece they have, whilst another person will see it differently and make it appear like a different shape they have!

Perceptions of the information can lead to confusion, ambiguity and uncertainty. Assumptions are easily made and clarifying the message is essential. Key communication learning points will abound.

Each card is numbered and this will help to decide the order, but the number is in code so it has to be decoded first. Another opportunity for someone to solve!

It is essential that the team clearly define the challenge, agree a strategy and work out a plan to overcome it. But the limited time is ticking away, adding pressure to the task.

It is important that everyone is involved or vital clues will be lost. Someone has to take control or over talking occurs and more vital clues are lost.

How It Works

Each person is given one or more cards (depending on the number of participants) and they have to identify how their cards can be linked with others to form a pattern.

Sounds easy, but it is challenging, fun and like the workplace there are restraints placed upon them:

- There is no completed 'picture' for them to follow
- They are not allowed to look at each other's cards
- They have to accurately describe their shapes whilst others listen to see if they have a matching shape
- They have a time limit to plan the task; then 30 seconds for all the team to place the cards into the pattern.



It is essential that the team clearly defines the challenge, agree a strategy and work out a plan to overcome it. But the limited time is ticking away, adding pressure to the task.

It is important that everyone is involved or vital clues will be lost. Someone has to take control or over talking occurs and more vital clues are lost.

Time constraints create an exciting climax to the activity; will their planning and practice bring success in the final run?

If they are not organized everyone crowds around the table and get in each others way. They soon learn the 'Failing to Plan is Planning to Fail!'



This exercise will form the basis of powerful communications skill workshop. It develops team organisation, leadership and emphasizes the importance of sharing information, enabling the whole group to achieve a collective goal.

Team shapes is used to achieve many outcomes. Here are some that we have used it for:

- Illustrating the importance of sharing information to enable the group to achieve a collective goal
- Identifying different learning styles and thinking patterns in a team
- Recognising diversity in teams and how different perceptions can cause misunderstanding
- Helping managers to apply strategic planning for their teams to develop into action
- Identifying and using communication skills particularly for virtual and distance working
- Bringing together different teams to complete a joint project
- Improving performance by involving team members in the development process
- Assessing performance of potential staff at an assessment centre.

Contents: 20, 30 or 60 laminated plastic cards.

Timing: This training activity runs for 35 to 45 minutes + debrief.

Numbers: 4 to 60 delegates in a team (depending on the pack you choose).

Who: Staff at any level.

PC required: None.

Licence Free: When you buy this training material, there are no restrictions on the number of times you can use it.

Cost to buy (including a trainer's manual) to facilitate it yourself:

20 card pack for 4 to 20 people £200 + delivery and VAT (if applicable).

30 card pack for 10 to 30 people £220 + delivery and VAT (if applicable).

60 card pack for 20 to 60 people £250 + delivery and VAT (if applicable).

We will also run this game for you, please contact us for details.

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