



Team Building Ideas for Small Businesses

Maintaining a healthy work environment is one of the best ways to keep your employees motivated and keep your team running smoothly. Keep everyone happy with a few team building games and activities that will help strengthen your team and teach your [team members](#) how to most effectively work with their colleagues.

1. Eye Contact Game

For some reason, people feel extremely uncomfortable making eye contact; however, the ability to maintain eye contact with another person is an extremely lucrative skill.

Teach your employees how to stay connected by playing the “blinking” game.

Ask two of your employees to sit across from each other and stare at each other without blinking. The first person to blink “loses”. Then, ask the same employees to maintain eye contact with each other for 60 seconds (they can blink this time). Finally, ask the same two employees to hold a conversation for two minutes without breaking eye contact. Monitor how each pair of employees works together throughout the day and note if they work better together after the exercise.

2. Listening Game

Break your employees into pairs. Have them recite to the other, step by step, what each of them did that morning before work, except have them recite this information at the same time. Afterward, ask each employee what the other did throughout their morning. Then, repeat the same exercise over again, except this time, ask each employee to detail their morning separately. Ask each employee about the details of the other employee’s morning.

Explain that you can listen more effectively when you're not speaking.

3. Problems and Challenges

Give your employees a work scenario in which something goes awry. It could be a scenario with a missing shipment, a scenario where someone mixed up a schedule or a scenario in which a customer is extremely unhappy. Ask your employees to offer solutions to the problem. The first time someone refers to the situation as a problem or offers a negative answer, call "time". Write the negative words on one side of a wipe board. Tell them that every time someone says a negative word, you're going to write the word on the board and then the word is off limits. But every time someone offers a positive solution or comment, you'll write that word on the other side of the board. See which side of the board fills up first and how long your team takes to solve the problem.

4. Non-Verbal Communication Challenge

Ask each employee to write down three words that describe how they felt this past week; ask them to keep these words secret. Give each [employee](#) 30 seconds to non-verbally tell a partner how they felt. They can use their hands, eyes, mouths or movements like jumping or curling up into a ball to describe their emotions. The partners who can get through the most emotions in 30 seconds win the round.

5. Back-Up a Partner

Break your team into groups, with four people per group. Then, break each group into partners. Ask one employee to tell a story (one that's made up or real). The two people who aren't in the storyteller's group should try to interrupt the storyteller and discredit her story. The storyteller's partner should work as hard as possible to back up his or her partner—no matter if the story is true or made up. The rest of the group should watch and based on how well the partner backs up the storyteller, decide if they think the story is true or false.

This teaches your team members how powerful backing up their teammates can feel.

6. More Flies with Honey

Break your team into groups of five people per group. Make one person in each team the fly. The other four people in each team need to pay the fly three compliments each. After the fly hears all three questions from each of the four employees, each team member should ask the fly for three favors (something small, something normal and something large). Based on the compliments, the fly needs to respond whether or not he or should would do the favor. This game teaches employees how treating someone with kindness can color an experience.

7. Three Questions

Ask your employees to break off into pairs and ask their partners three questions. The employee who finds out the most intimate piece of information about his or her partner wins. Repeat this game three times to see the most private details they can discover (without being inappropriate).

Teaching your employees the basics of team building shouldn't be difficult—in fact, it can actually be fun!

Show your team how easily positive reinforcement and positive comments can color a situation and produce positive responses. All it takes is your fantastic team and a few games, and your employees will have all the tools they need to build a better communication system.



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Amy Klimek is an experienced HR recruiter and VP of Human Resources for [ZipRecruiter](#), a company that simplifies the hiring process for small to medium size businesses. Prior to that Amy has held similar roles at Rent.com, eBay and US Interactive.

For Amy, corporate culture isn't about dogs and free lunches, it's about empowering employees and creating an enriching environment for people to excel.