

Ideas for Building Community

Achieving and maintaining true community within a team is not a matter of chance. Rather, it demands intentional effort to continually nurture and sustain the team's spirit. Leadership teams, often dedicated to serving others, can sometimes deplete their own resources in the process, letting their light shine outward while neglecting their own needs. Teams that prioritize the "human element" and focus on their internal dynamics before tackling their tasks are the ones that truly experience a sense of true community.

Many resources include ideas for building community. They are generally short activities, up to ten minutes, that are designed to stimulate thinking and build group cohesion and enthusiasm because they depend on the team's cooperation, participation, and interest to complete the activity. Here are a few.

PICTURE OR POSTCARD ACTIVITY

To utilize this activity, have enough pictures or postcards for each team member to have one. Either have them choose a card from a centrally located table or put several cards on the team's worktable for them to select. Team members share why they chose the card and what it means to them. If the cards carry a theme, such as being outdoors, you might ask, "Which picture represents your happy place, and why?"

THIS OR THAT

In this activity, the leader calls out several "this or that" scenarios to generate conversation around team preferences. Examples can include "Do you prefer chocolate or vanilla?," "Vacation at the beach or in the mountains?," "Are you most engaged during the day or at night?," and so on.

GARAGE SALE

Team members address the following garage sale topics.

- **For sale or trade:** Something you would be willing to sell or trade with another
- **Junk:** Something you have that does not work as intended
- **Toxic-waste dump:** Something that takes up all your time before you know it
- **Not for sale:** Something you possess that would never be for sale

As an example of putting this activity to use, consider a team meeting in which team members are discussing the topic of engagement strategies. They might include the following in their garage sale answers.

- **For sale or trade:** Engagement strategies and practices that work for them
- **Junk:** Engagement strategies and practices that do not work for them
- **Toxic-waste dump:** Warnings of practices to watch out for that will sabotage their efforts
- **Not for sale:** Precious insights and advice that keep their system on track

VEHICLE MOST LIKE ME

As an opening for a team meeting, the leader might begin with an activity like this: "If you were a car or vehicle, what would you be, and why? What color is it? What qualities does it have that reflect who you are?" This simple, creative prompt helps shift the focus to the *humanness* in the room before diving into the work. It brings a sense of levity and lightness, helping team members relax while fostering a sense of trust, psychological safety, and connection among the group.