

In-Office Team Building Ideas

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Powerhouse



“Yay, team-building games!” said no one ever in the history of office team building (except maybe for the very well-paid consultant brought in to conduct said games). You’re not interested in a feelings circle or the latest greatest version of “let me guess your favorite ice cream flavor.” You don’t want to play games. You want to go to work, do your job, clock out, and go home, right?

What if we told you that feeling that way is a good sign that you could really use... wait for it... team-building activities at your office. Team-building efforts, when they work, mean you’re not watching the clock or doing your time like it’s a prison sentence. They translate to you feeling excited about the work you’re doing and engaged with the folks you’re working with. Don’t believe us? Well, put these tips to the test!

Think about team building before you build (or add to) your team. Want to create a company that feels like a family (if your family isn’t dysfunctional)? Consider team “fit” before you bring on new employees or contractors/consultants. Of course, you want those resumes or portfolios for prospective new hires to reflect the experience, education, and skills your business needs. But you also want to make sure you’re going to like (or at least not hate) working together as well.

Ask questions in your interview process that capture more than “What do you know?” and “What have you accomplished?” Learn about what drives a job applicant, what excites them about the work you’d be doing together, what special talents or interests beyond the job description they bring to the table. (Baking—yes, please! Nose whistling—maybe not so much.)

Bonus points. Better yet, include other team members in the interview process to see how people interact together (and to get perspective from individuals who may not normally be involved in hiring decisions but who will have to live with the choices you make).

Meet folks where they're at. Skip the meetings to discuss when to hold meetings and the death by PowerPoint (please). Instead, schedule regular check-ins (weekly, monthly, however often is feasible given time constraints and other such logistics). Feed and water your team (we promise —this part's important) and then communicate *with* each other instead of *at* each other. What's working? What's not? Where is help needed? How can you support each other?

Bonus points. Pick a food theme for each meeting (appys, desserts, casseroles, ethnic cuisine, etc.) and have people bring in their favorite things. You'd be surprised what you can learn about each other. Like that Sharon swears by her grandma's secret cupcake recipe but has been seen discretely transferring store-bought cupcakes to one of her dishes from home. Or that Dan makes a brisket that will make you want to slap your mama (we don't condone mama slapping, incidentally).

Celebrate good times, come on! Let Gladys know you saw that spectacular job she did on the new marketing materials. Bring cupcakes for team birthdays (don't ask Sharon for them). High five each other for positive Yahoo reviews, deadlines met, and goals achieved. Be loud and proud about the way you're rocking this business together.

Bonus points. This may be a bit controversial, but celebrate the flops, too. The five thousand t-shirts with your business name misspelled, the time you went to play the pitch video to that prospective client and instead played video of your five-year-old's dance recital...you know what we mean. You don't have to order balloons for this celebration, but approach the misfires in a way that honors your humanity and helps you work together to get things right the next time around (baked goods optional).

Get outside. Don't underestimate the value of a change of scenery. Hold a meeting (or lunch) outside. Plan off-site activities. If you can't see the forest for the trees, then maybe go see the trees. Rumor has it there's a whole wide world out there that isn't your cubicle or conference room.

Bonus points. Invite a team member you don't know very well to walk around the parking lot with you and make fun of people's bumper stickers instead of taking a smoking break. Team members who spend time outside together fight vitamin D deficiency together.





Since you're outside already... Serve your community together. Have team members give input about the causes they care about and work together to support those causes. You can raise money, run 5Ks, have a company-wide day of service, share info about the cause on company social media properties, etc. Every day you make a difference together at work—here's a chance to make a difference together in the world!

Bring your (team-building) game. We know we could have started here. Any Google search on "team building" will lead you to a plethora of links about "team-building games that don't suck" or "team building that your team won't hate." We've tried to focus more on daily practices rather than on game playing. But you know what they say: All work and no play make Skippy anxious to get out the door at exactly 4:59 each day.

Bring out the Jenga, spoons and hard-boiled eggs (the hard-boiled part is important, trust us), and a round of Two Truths and a Lie (the virgin drinks edition). Knock yourself out with a rousing version of The Floor is Lava or Air Guitar Sing-Off. Sing together, dance together, solve puzzles together, laugh together, roll your eyes at management together (okay, maybe not this one), enjoy each other's company together (definitely this one).

Maybe you won't find your new BFF at work. But we promise you'll find work markedly more productive and enjoyable. And that is good for both people *and* business.