

Web of Connection Exercise

(adapted for Communication Team Performance Indicator)

Participants build a yarn or string web, explore its dynamic properties, then watch it collapse. Insights about community and interconnectedness are revealed in the discussion that follows the activity.

Materials needed:

A large ball of yarn or string. An inflatable balloon or beach ball.

Instructions:

1. Have the group stand in a circle.
2. Name a business process that the team is responsible for that requires interdependence.
3. Name the first step in the process and the person who completes that step. (If it's not clear, the team discusses and decides.)
4. Have the first person hold the end of the yarn or string.
5. Name the next step and the person who completes it. Toss the ball of yarn to that person; it will unwind as it goes. (Again, the team discusses for clarity.)
6. Have that person loop the yarn around a finger, then name the next step and person who completes it, tossing the ball to that person.
7. Each person in turn should catch the ball of yarn, loop it around a finger, and then toss it to the next person. Some people may receive the ball multiple times. As the ball unwinds, it creates a web of interconnection.
8. Continue until every step in the process is complete and everyone has gotten the ball at least once (or you run out of yarn, whichever comes first).
9. Once the web-building has ended, de-brief the web a bit.
 1. What do you notice about its shape?
 2. Is there an even or lop-sided distribution of touches?
10. Experiment: what happens if one person pulls strongly on the yarn or one holds loosely?
11. You could drop an inflated balloon, Nerf ball, or beach ball onto the web and bounce it around. What happens if a ball is dropped onto the web before it is complete?
12. Next invite someone to let go of the yarn. Watch what happens to the web and the ball.
 1. What would happen if people let go as soon as they pass the string to the next person?

Discussion/Reflection Questions

1. What did you notice about the pace of completing the process?
2. Were the steps and responsibilities clear?
3. Was there any re-work? Surprises? Frustrations?
4. What assumptions were you making about the others in the process?
5. What happens when people are excluded from a process or only get a few touches?
6. How is this like your normal work environment?
7. What lessons could you draw from this exercise to improve your current team communications?

Adapted from <http://www.manyvoices.org>