Teaching Effective Teamwork with Engaging Games

Errin Comparet  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Jordon Nicodemus  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Adrienne Roberson  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Jennifer Hunt  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Opus Citation  
http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_pres/5

Follow this and additional works at: [http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_pres](http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_pres)
Teaching Effective Teamwork with Engaging Games

Errin Comparet (presenter), Jordon Nicodemus, Adrienne Roberson, and Jennifer Hunt

Advisor: Dina Mansour-Cole, Ph.D.

Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, Division of Organizational Leadership and Supervision

Abstract: In our program, we were required to complete a course entitled Leadership for Team Development. This course was a flipped course with readings, videos, an ignite presentation and other materials we completed for ourselves. In class we completed a variety of exercises collaboratively with an intact team. For our final team project in this 400 level course we were tasked with creating games that would teach at least two topics that were important to teams to know and use and yet these concepts were often misunderstood by team members and their leaders. Nine teams completed this assignment, and the class played nine very different games. Feedback from the professor and from the gamers indicated that students in the class were thinking, laughing, and engaging in the learning process. After the games, we were required to write an individual paper that included metacognition and extension to the workplace.

In this session we have two student teams presenting results. The games we will showcase are low tech, but could be developed into electronic games with some code and some creativity.

The first game includes game pieces that are familiar to most of us: Lego blocks. With this game many areas could be explored including the importance of avoiding role ambiguity and assumptions.

Clearly defining individual roles within a team has been shown to correlate with improved team effectiveness, yet many assume that holding vague roles allows members to more readily share information and ideas (Gratton, Erikson, 2007). We aim to prevent this common misconception by examining the disadvantages of leaving individual team member roles undefined. We also explore possible consequences of making assumptions and the value of asking questions. This game illustrates problems with relying solely on the task-related information that has been provided to a team while conveying the importance of taking additional factors into account.

The second game, Empower Tower, is also low tech but is played with materials that may be familiar to freshman engineering courses. Two presenters will discuss how their game helps give students a deeper insight into three concepts important to teams: hidden agendas, empowerment and devil’s advocates.
Hidden agendas are something many leaders and managers are either unaware of or fail to account for in a professional setting. Hidden Agendas are basically what people actually want, not what they say they want. Not all hidden agendas should be surfaced. Empowering members of the team can yield more diversified and complete decisions and projects. Empowered teams decide “how to do it” but also whether the tasks should be done at all (Ford & Fottler, 2001). Finally, with ‘Devil's Advocacy’ a common misconception is that a devil’s advocate is the person who argues just for the sake of arguing. When enacted correctly, a devil’s advocate proposes questions to fill in holes or gaps in the idea or decision. Devil’s Advocates can be very helpful for a team, particularly if the role is purposefully passed around to different members.

Employers are expecting that engineers and students from related disciplines know how to work collaboratively. We also know that increasing knowledge of team design and team development issues enhances that collaboration and ultimately increases the success of projects they complete. Creating physical, board games or online games to teach concepts insures that we understand the concepts. Holding a ‘Game Night’ with a debrief for students should be an engaging learning experience that is remembered for a long time.