



Exploring Leadership

PLANNING & ORGANIZATION: PROJECT PLANNING

Teamwork is more than just a group of people coming together to get something done. Imagine a game of pick-up basketball, where random players join forces. They may do well initially, but the longer they play together, the better they become. Why? Because they learn to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses, improving their teamwork.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

Quote: "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Have you ever experienced this? What elements are necessary to create a good plan? Brainstorm and share ideas with the group.

It's not just about individual talent—it's about how the team works together, using their unique skills to support each other. Communication and personal dynamics—like the difference between a ball hog and a playmaker—are key to success. Teams that work together effectively can achieve incredible results, often outshining groups of highly skilled individuals.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Learn that effective communication can be critical for success in team projects.
- Understand the importance of developing a shared vision or goal to guide team efforts.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Structural materials: paper (can be rolled into tubes), straws, toothpicks or skewers
- Types of fasteners: two feet of masking tape, gum drops, marshmallows, brads, binder clips, rubber bands
- Tennis balls and bigger balls
- Candy for rewards

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

In this activity, you'll work as a team to build the tallest tower that can hold a ball. It's all about planning, teamwork, and making improvements.

- Display the supplies in a designated area.
- Divide participants into teams of 3–5 people.
- Teams have five minutes to build the tallest tower that holds a tennis ball, using only two types of structural materials and two types of fasteners.
- Measure each tower's height with the ball on top after the first attempt.
- As a whole group, discuss Reflection 1 questions.
- Give teams two minutes to discuss improvements.
- Then give teams 4 minutes to build another, taller tower that holds the ball.
- After the second attempt, measure each tower's height with the ball on top, and discuss Reflection 2 questions.

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Observe how the teams interact. What strategies are effective, and what needs improvement?
- Optional: Use a larger ball for more challenge.
- Optional: Reward each team with candy once they successfully complete a structure.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

Reflection 1 – After first attempt:

- What worked well in your first attempt? What didn't work?
- Did you have a leader in your group? How was the leader chosen?
- What roles did each person play? Did everyone contribute equally, or did you assign specific tasks?

Reflection 2 – After second attempt:

- What changed between the first and second attempts?
- Were you more successful the second time? Why or why not?
- What made the biggest difference in your success?
- What were the key elements of your plan that helped you succeed? Write them down on the board.

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Were you able to build a tower that held the ball without planning during your first attempt?
- How can planning, like you did for your second tower, be applied to other projects or activities in the future?
- What were the key elements of your planning process that made a difference?
- Compare your team's process with the professional program development steps (see Appendix). How did your planning align with those steps? What could you do differently in the future based on what you learned?



CONCLUSION:

Fostering teamwork is a powerful leadership tool. There are countless examples of teams where collaboration, not individual skill, leads to success. When everyone works toward the same goal, the synergy of teamwork can achieve more than any one person alone. Effective teamwork doesn't just happen—it's built on trust, communication, and a shared vision. With these qualities, a team can overcome obstacles, innovate, and reach goals that would be impossible for any single individual. See Appendix for a list of essential elements needed to successfully run a professional program.

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REFERENCES

- The Balance: What Needs to be in a Project Plan - <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/>
- The Balance: Project Planning - <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/>



APPENDIX:

Professional program development includes these elements:

- **Initiation:** project team formation, shared vision or common goal
- **Planning:** project scope (who, what, when, where), identifying what needs to be done, delegate roles, assessing risk, identifying resource requirements, finalizing the schedule, and preparing for the actual work
- **Execution:** performing the actual work required by the project definition and scope
- **Monitor and control:** the actual management, reporting, and control of the resources and budgets during the execution phase
- **Project completion:** project delivery, assessment of lessons learned