4 FREE TRAINING ACTIVITIES
FROM EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISES
AFTERNOON AT THE RACES

PURPOSE
To explore how a group works together when faced with a problem that doesn’t appear to have a logical solution.

TIME
30 to 45 minutes

PARTICIPANTS
10 to 36 people.
AFTERNOON AT THE RACES

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TIME
30 to 45 minutes

SUPPLIES
Participant Handout and Observer Form

PARTICIPANTS
10 to 36 people.

METHOD
Form groups of five or six. Assign a person from each group to be an observer.

Take observers outside and give each an observer form. Advise them that they are to report only on what they see. Their task is to observe how the group works together, using the observer form as a guide, and report later. After being briefed, the observers may rejoin their groups.

Advise the groups that they are a team that is celebrating the successful completion of a project. They’ve gone to the racetrack for a bit of fun and want to bet on the race. Their problem is to figure out which horse is going to win the race. They have 15 minutes to solve the problem.

Give each person a participant handout and assign them a different part of the room to work.

After 15 minutes, call time and have each group report on who they bet on and why they chose that horse.

(Correct Answer is Fire Dancer - the winner is based on the number of vowels in the horse’s name - 1st race - horse with one vowel; 2nd race...
Advise participants that not only was the activity to have them solve the problem, but it was also to see how they worked together as a group. Have observers report on what they saw.

Have group members report on what the observers noticed.

**DEBRIEFING**

Ask: What contributed to your success/lack of success in solving the problem? How could your team have been more successful? How does this activity apply to how you solve problems at work?
Your team is celebrating the group’s successful completion of a major project. You decided to take the afternoon off and relax at the horse races. Three races have passed and the group wants to place a bet on the fourth race.

The winners of the first three races were:

- First race - War
- Second race - Lobo
- Third race - North Racer

The names of the horses in the fourth race are:

- Black Bullet
- Fire Dancer
- Autumn Leaf
- Hoarfrost

Which horse are you going to bet on to win? Why? (Note: there is a logical, though not readily apparent, solution to this problem.)
What problem-solving methods did the group use to solve the problem?


Did the group work as a team or as individuals?


Was there a specific leader or was the leadership shared? Give examples.


What behaviours helped the group solve the problem?
What behaviours hindered the group in how they solved the puzzle?
GARDEN SALAD ICEBREAKER

PURPOSE
To help participants get acquainted with each other and to obtain information regarding how each person relates to their team members. Both variations help people realise that the best teams are made of people with different temperaments, skills and abilities.

TIME
10 minutes + depending upon the number of participants.

PARTICIPANTS
Any number
GARDEN SALAD ICEBREAKER

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TIME
10 minutes + depending upon the number of participants

SUPPLIES
None required.

Optional:

- Display of vegetables to be used as props

or

- Chopped salad ingredients each in its own container
- Salad bowl and tongs

PARTICIPANTS
Any number

METHOD
Tell participants to think back to the last few times that they’ve worked with their team. Ask them to remember how they worked with the other team members and what sort of role they assumed within the group.

“Now picture a large bowl of salad. What vegetable in that salad best describes your actions in your team? Why?”

Variation: You could also ask the group, “What vegetable in the salad best describes the special flavour that you bring to your workgroup? Why?”

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You may want to first describe how you work in a team to give them an idea of how to answer. For instance, you could say you are the radish because you add “a peppery zing” and colour to the meetings by always having a different viewpoint. Or you could say that you are lettuce because when things heat up you tend to wilt. Or you might be the apple in the coleslaw because you are the sweet, cheerful and pleasant voice in a group of “tangy” individuals.

DEBRIEFING
A salad with only one ingredient is boring. Even a Caesar Salad that is predominantly romaine lettuce also has dressing, parmesan cheese, croutons and sometimes anchovies.

In the same way, in order to have “taste,” a team needs variety in its composition. Many people find it difficult to work with people that are different from them. But, like a salad, a team needs a balance of vegetable to work. Too much or too little of a particular vegetable (or personality or thinking style) doesn’t work.

HINTS FOR ADDING DRAMA
For a more dramatic approach, have chopped vegetables (lettuce plus colourful and flavourful vegetables such as radishes, tomatoes, and yellow peppers) in plastic containers or ziploc bags, and a salad bowl hidden in a large bag. When it is time for the debriefing, pull out the bag and place it on a table. First, bring out the salad bowl and place it on the table. Add the lettuce. Then turn the bowl so that each participant can see the lettuce inside. While you are doing this state that a salad with only lettuce is boring – it has little flavour or eye appeal. Then take out each plastic container and add the other vegetables (dropping them from a height with over-emphasised arm motions adds drama). Take the tossed salad in its bowl and either tilt it on its side or walk around the room with it to show the participants how differences add beauty and taste.
JUST WHAT DO YOU SEE?

PURPOSE
To encourage the participants to realize that each team member/co-worker "sees a different picture," that each viewpoint is valid, and that understanding what the other person sees benefits the workplace. In addition, if the activity is used as an “icebreaker,” it encourages “buy-in” to the workshop’s purpose. This exercise can be used in workshops dealing with diversity, team-building, motivation, communication, problem-solving, and conflict management.

TIME
10 to 15 minutes

PARTICIPANTS
Any size group of more than five participants.
JUST WHAT DO YOU SEE?

PURPOSE
To encourage the participants to realize that each team member/co-worker “sees a different picture,” that each viewpoint is valid, and that understanding what the other person sees benefits the workplace. In addition, if the activity is used as an “icebreaker,” it encourages “buy-in” to the workshop’s purpose. This exercise can be used in workshops dealing with diversity, team-building, motivation, communication, problem-solving, and conflict management.

TIME
10 to 15 minutes

SUPPLIES
Handout

PARTICIPANTS
Any size group of more than five participants.

METHOD
Tell the participants that as an introduction to the day (morning/afternoon/topic), you want to have some fun. Pass out the handout.

Tell the participants that they have 60 seconds to look at the picture and then identify the colors in the picture.

Time them and when one minute is up, call out, “Time’s up!”

Ask them: “How many people identified three colours?”

“How many people identified four colours?”

“Five colours?”

“More than five colours?”

Ask participants to tell you the names of the colours they saw (start with those participants
who identified LESS colours). Write the names of the colours down on a flipchart or
whiteboard. (Most people will respond with the following colours: pink, green, orange,
yellow and purple. Other people will add colours such as raspberry, mustard, gold, magenta,
salmon, indigo, jade (yes, there’s a tiny bit of jade in the lower left corner), and mauve.)

If the participants do not identify colours other than pink, green, orange, yellow and purple,
tell them that the colours you see in the picture also include raspberry, mustard, gold,
magenta, salmon, indigo, jade, and mauve.

As an interesting aside, you might want to ask those participants who identified more
colours if they had any specific training (art school, graphic design courses, fashion design
training, etc.) which helped develop this colour sense. This could be further developed in
the debriefing (each person has natural and developed skills which further impact what he/
she sees).

DEBRIEFING

Just as the different participants saw different colours in the picture, so life has painted with
different colours a picture into our lives. Few of us have had the same life experiences as
the person sitting next to us, or the person working with us.

Team Building

• Because each person sees things differently, conflict can arise. This conflict can
  negatively impact our work. However, we can turn this potential negative to a
  positive by learning how to see with the other person’s eyes and see what they are
  “seeing.” Doing this results in greater creativity and better problem-solving.

• We all bring different skills, abilities and life experiences to the team. We need to
  appreciate and use each member’s talents in order to obtain the BEST results.

Motivation

• Because of these different experiences and viewpoints, we react differently to
different stimuli - what motivates one person does not motivate another. Some
people might be highly motivated by money. Others could care less about money
as long as they have funds enough to pay the bills. But feeling they are respected by
their boss and their ideas are listened to might motivate them.
• Successful motivators understand how the other person “sees” and use this knowledge to provide behaviours/rewards that motivate that individual.

Communication

• Because each person sees things differently, misunderstandings can arise. These misunderstandings can have negative consequences in the workplace and can develop into conflict. Good communication skills involve understanding the other person’s point of view. This involves listening to understand, not half-hearted listening or listening to gain ammunition against a particular viewpoint.

Problem-Solving

• Because each person sees things differently, conflict can arise. This conflict can negatively impact our work and our relationships with co-workers (it is human nature to view people who are different as being inferior to ourselves). However, we can turn this potential negative to a positive by learning how to see with the other person’s eyes and see what they are “seeing.” Doing this results in greater creativity and better problem-solving.

Conflict Management

• What one person sees as positive flexibility, another perceives as negative disorder. What one person views as driving towards a goal, another sees as stifling creativity.

• Because each person sees things differently, conflict can arise. This conflict can negatively impact our work. However, we can turn this potential negative to a positive by learning how to see with the other person’s eyes and listen to what they are “seeing.” Doing this results in greater creativity and better problem-solving.

NOTE: See if any person noted more than six colours. There were only six lines for colour names and most people will stop at six. That doesn’t make for exemplary problem-solving.

Variation: Instead of asking participants what colours they see in an image, ask them to remember back to their childhood when they used to stare up at the clouds and see ever-changing pictures in them. Project a cloud photo onto a screen and ask them to write down the various shapes they see in the clouds.
JUST WHAT DO YOU SEE?

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Look at the image below and write down the names of the various colors that are in the photo.

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I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way - things I had no words for.

Georgia O'Keeffe
RIGHT OUT TO LUNCH

PURPOSE
This activity has each group learning a creativity technique that enhances innovative problem-solving. It can be used in either a creativity or problem-solving workshop.

TIME
Approximately 30 minutes.

PARTICIPANTS
10 to 50 people.
RIGHT OUT TO LUNCH

PURPOSE
This activity has each group learning a creativity technique that enhances innovative problem-solving. It can be used in either a creativity or problem-solving workshop.

TIME
Approximately 30 minutes.

SUPPLIES
Handouts, flipchart, candy as a motivational tool.

PARTICIPANTS
10 to 50 people.

METHOD
Form groups of three to five members each.

Advise them that you are taking a break from theory and wanting to see how good they are at coming up with ideas. You are going to give them an assignment - they only have five minutes to work on it and at the end, you are going to judge which are the best ideas and reward those teams.

Give each group Handout #1 and start timing. At the end of five minutes, shout, “Time’s Up!”

Have each group report on their ideas. Hand out candies for innovative solutions.

Ask the group as a whole, whether or not it was difficult to come up with these ideas. Ask them how innovative they thought these ideas were.

Explain that you are now going to teach them how to use exaggeration to come up with more innovative solutions to the problem. State that in order to motivate employees, you’re going to pay them $1,000/hour. Write $1,000/hour on flipchart paper. State that you are going to work through this solution with them to show them how this process works.

Advise them that it is easier to tame an idea that is right out to lunch than it is to add some ZING.

Innovation is the central issue in economic prosperity.
Michael Porter
to a tried and tired solution. What you have on the Handout is an idea that is right out to lunch. Of course you can't pay everyone $1,000/hour. But you’re going to take that idea and make a practical solution from it.

Ask the group what springs into their minds when they think about $1,000/hr. Write these down on a flipchart.

Add some ideas of your own. These could be: It's just like winning a lottery! This is what it must feel like being a movie star! $1,000/hr - wonder what else you could get 1,000 of? 1,000 is also 10 hundreds. And 1,000 reminds you of a game for the iPhone called 1000 Heroz where you have a new hero to control every day for 1000 days, a new adventure to embark on, a new relic to find every single day.

Give yourself roughly five minutes to brainstorm ideas with the group. Write ideas down on the flip chart paper.

Point to the ideas and ask the group if any of the ideas are both different and do-able. Circle those ideas.

Distribute the remaining three handouts to the various groups (give each member of a team the same handout). Have the teams practise taking these “out to lunch” ideas and creating workable solutions from them.

Ask the groups if they are clear on what their assignment is. Give any clarification required.

Time five minutes.

Ask each group to briefly report back on what their “out to lunch” idea was and some of the solutions they came up with as a result of this wild idea.

DEBRIEFING
Advise the group that when we are asked to come up with solutions to a problem, we usually stop thinking of ideas when we come up with the first possible solution. The problem is that the ideas that first surface are usually tried and tired, not tried and true. They’re the ideas that our competitors will also come up with. We need to think creatively, think differently. The problems is that most people don’t try to think creatively because they assume that it takes more time or that it’s hard. It doesn’t and it isn’t.
In your groups, come up with a creative solution to this question:

- How do we motivate workers and/or increase productivity?

You have 5 minutes.
PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

How do we motivate workers and/or increase productivity?

- We have our CEO kiss a frog and send the winning team to England for a date with a prince.

You have 5 minutes.
PARTICIPANT HANDOUT
How do we motivate workers and/or increase productivity?

- We give each employee the vacation of their dreams.

You have 5 minutes.
#2-C

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

How do we motivate workers and/or increase productivity?

- You tell them you’ll sign them up for singing the National Anthem at a ballgame if they don’t meet goals.

You have 5 minutes.