

FNTG Leadership Academy Team Building Exercises

1. Two Truths and a Lie

What you'll need:

- A slip of paper or index card and a pencil for each person

How it works:

- Hand out paper and pencil to each person.
- Have everyone write down their name and 2 truths and 1 lie about themselves in any order. (2 interesting, not very well known facts that they would like to share with the group and 1 interesting but possibly believable lie). Have them fold these in half.
- Collect slips of paper and read them off to the group one at a time.
- The group then gets to discuss which of the 3 items is true/false.

Purpose:

- Group discussion / getting to know each other

2. Show and Tell

What you'll need:

- N/a

How it works:

- At least a day BEFORE your office meeting, tell everyone to bring something for show and tell to the meeting.
- This can be an object or picture of something that they find interesting or is important to them that they would like to share with the group. (For example, an award or medal they've earned, a picture of their pet, or of their vacation, their favorite treat to bake to share with the group, etc.)
- At the meeting, have each person take turns standing up and showing the group what they brought and talking about it.
- Have them take questions.

Purpose:

- Group discussion / getting to know each other
- Giving every individual a chance to shine and share something about their life
- Getting people talking to the group/out of their comfort zone by talking about something that their comfortable with or passionate about

3. You Get One Question!

What you'll need:

- A sheet of paper and a pencil for each person

How it works:

- **BEFORE the meeting, write out a list of jobs/careers someone might apply for. (For example, a teacher, a doctor, a babysitter, a manager, a waitress, an escrow officer, etc.) Have the list ready.**
- At the meeting, hand out paper and pencil to each person.
- Read a job description and ask that everyone come up with ONE question they would ask someone applying for this job during an interview if they could only ask that one question. ("You get ONE question!")
- Go around the table and have everyone read their question. Once everyone has read theirs, have a quick discussion and vote on which question is the best. This will reflect what the group collectively feels is the most important attribute of someone in that position.
- Do this for however many job descriptions you have time for, but end on the job title of "escrow officer."
- Ask the group if they feel that the office is doing well in that particular area. Discuss.

Purpose:

- Group discussion
- Reveals what values are important to everyone in the office
- Helping to discover the office culture / "What's our WHY?"

4. Hello, My Name Is _____.

What you'll need:

- "Hello, my name is _____." name tags
- Pens

How it works:

- **BEFORE the meeting, come up with some adjectives that describe an employee that might be helpful or hurtful to maintaining a healthy, happy office culture. These will be paired with names.**
- **For example, you might have *helpful* Hannah/Henry, *rude* Rhonda/Robert, *positive* Patty/Peter, *negative* Nancy/Nick, *enthusiastic* Emily/Ethan, *sluggish* Samantha/Sam, etc.)**
- At a morning huddle or meeting, announce that you are doing a team building activity, and everyone will be assigned a persona to embody for the day. Assign names to each person and write them on their name tags.
- Everyone will act as their nametag suggests all day. (Disclaimer: this should be internal. We shouldn't be "Negative Nancy" with customers!)
- The next day, have a quick discussion about how everyone individually felt to be for example, Negative Nancy, and how it affected their work.
- Also, ask the group to discuss how it felt working with Negative Nancy, for example.

Purpose:

- To get everyone to let their guards down and be silly / team bonding
- Group Discussion
- Shedding light on how important having a good attitude can be to you and others

5. Quick Share

What you'll need:

- N/a

How it works:

- This can be done at any length meeting, from quick daily huddles to monthly office meetings.
- BEFORE the meeting, come up with ONE topic that will allow everyone to share something about themselves to the group, preferably non-work related topics.
- For example,
 - What's your first memory ever?
 - What's the scariest thing you've ever done?
 - What's your favorite movie and what do you like about it?
 - Who has been the most inspirational person in your life?
 - If you could be one animal, which would you be and why?
 - What is your favorite color/Starbucks drink/candy?
 - If you could be best friends with one celebrity, which would you choose?
 - What is your favorite season of the year and why?
- At the meeting, ask one question and go around the room, allowing everyone to share their answer with the group.

Purpose:

- Getting to know each other / ice-breaker to open meeting and get everyone engaged

6. FUN FACTS

What you'll need:

- A slip of paper or index card and a pencil for each person

How it works:

- Hand out paper and pencil to each person.
- Have everyone, including you, write their name and 2 little-known fun facts about themselves that they feel comfortable sharing with the group
- Collect the slips of paper and read one out loud without reading the person's name.
- Have the group take a few seconds to individually decide who they think the fun facts are about. They are not to say the answer out loud.
- On the count of three, everyone points to the person they think the fun facts were about. The person they were about will then reveal it to the group.
- Repeat this with all of the slips of paper.

Purpose:

- To get everyone to let their guards down and be silly / team bonding
- Group discussion / getting to know each other
- Giving every individual a chance to shine and share something about their life

7. All Together Now

What you'll need:

- N/a

How it works:

- Give the group 5 minutes to come up with something that they ALL have in common OUTSIDE of work. (For example, hobbies, sports teams they are a fan of, sports they play, favorite _____, etc.)
- Let them discuss freely until they come up with something.

Purpose:

- Group discussion / getting to know each other outside of work topics
- People will learn a lot more about each other than just the one thing they come up with for the entire group.
- Ice-breaker to open meeting and get everyone engaged

8. Candy Questions (GREAT for Holidays)

What you'll need:

- Assorted candies
- Bowl
- Optional, to dress up candy depending on time of year: plastic eggs at Easter, ribbons, etc.

How it works:

- BEFORE the meeting, put a variety of candies (3-5 types) in a basket/bowl/etc.
- Also BEFORE the meeting, come up with a number of questions (however many types of candy you have) and assign each question to a type of candy.
- For example, some questions might include:
 - A life goal you are currently working on
 - Your favorite book and movie
 - Your favorite dish to cook for breakfast, lunch, and dinner
 - Your favorite form of exercise and favorite way to be lazy
 - One stressful thing about this job you wish you could change and one thing you LOVE about your job
 - Your favorite sport to watch and your favorite sport to play
 - Your favorite outdoor activity and your favorite indoor activity
- At the meeting, pass around the candy bowl and have everyone pick one.
- Explain that each candy corresponds with a question.
- Go around the table and ask each person their question based on the candy they picked.

Purpose:

- Group discussion / getting to know each other
- Giving every individual a chance to shine and share something about their life
- Ice-breaker to open meeting and get everyone engaged

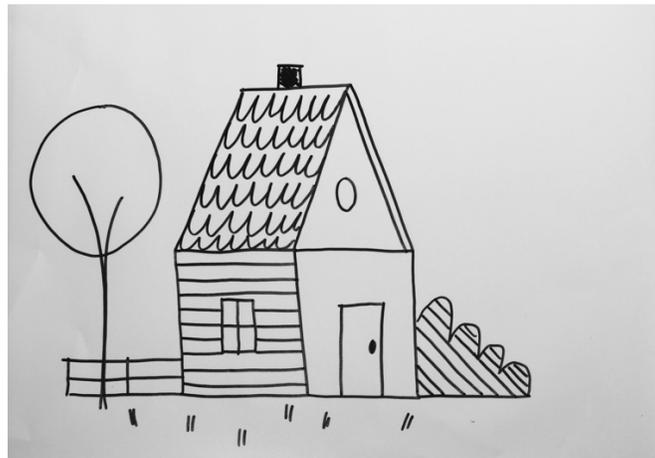
9. Blind Drawing

What you'll need:

- A sheet of paper and a pencil for each person

How it works:

- Explain that you are going to be doing a team building exercise.
- Give everyone a sheet of paper and pencil.
- Instruct the group to not look at each other's papers. They will be drawing a picture based solely on the description that you give them. They are not allowed to ask questions.
- Look at the picture below but don't show it to anyone. Describe what you see. Everyone will attempt to draw what you are describing. It helps you make your point if you are less specific with your description. (You can use any other picture or photo if you wish.)



- When everyone is done, have them show their picture to the group. Their pictures will probably be quite different from one another's.
- Then, show your original picture to the group.
- Ask what they think was the takeaway from this exercise. Have everyone share their thoughts. (The answer is the importance of communication, both on the side of the listener and speaker. It also shows that everyone interprets words differently, and that it is important to be clear and concise as well as sensitive to others perspectives as to not communicate something other than what you intended. It also shows the importance of asking questions and getting feedback for optimal results.)

Purpose:

- To highlight the importance of communication (See above)
- Ice-breaker to open meeting and get everyone engaged

10. The Getting to Know You Exercise (from Alisha Word)

What you'll need:

- A pen
- Slips of paper (1 per person in your office)
- A jar/bowl/bucket/other (some container to hold the slips of paper)

How it works:

- **BEFORE the meeting, write everyone's name on a separate slip of paper, fold them, and throw them in a container.**
- At the meeting, have everyone draw one slip of paper.
- The name they draw is their "Secret Buddy" and they are not to tell anyone who they picked.
- Tell everyone that they have to keep their buddy a secret from everyone INCLUDING FROM THEIR BUDDY and try to learn as much as they can about that person before the next meeting so that they can share at the next meeting.
- Everyone will have to get to know each other by asking questions, but they can't give away the fact that they are asking because of the assignment.
- At the next meeting, everyone will go around the circle to reveal who their secret buddy was and share what they learned or noticed about that person.

Purpose:

- Group discussion / getting to know each other
- Encourages everyone to engage with one another
- Instead of just listening to what others have to say, team members have to go seek out the information for themselves
- Building and strengthening relationships

11. The Game of Possibilities

What you'll need:

- Any random objects (for example, a stapler, a spoon, a toothbrush, a paper clip, a mug, a hole punch, a mouse ad, etc.)

How it works:

- Give an object to one person in each group.
- One at a time, someone has to go up in front of the group and demonstrate a use for that object.
- The rest of the team must guess what the player is demonstrating.
- The demonstrator cannot speak, and demonstrations must be original, possibly wacky, ideas.

Purpose:

- Team building
- Inspires creativity and individual innovation.

12. Purpose Mingle

What you'll need:

- Small prizes (candy, food, cute pens, etc. for example... you can also crate a prize box with a variety of items)

How it works:

- Before a meeting, have each individual stand up and share with everyone what they hope to contribute to the meeting.
- Write these down.
- At the end of the meeting, pass around the bowl of candy or whatever prize you chose.
- As the bowl reaches each person, read off that person's intentions.
- Have that person decide whether or not they think they brought to the meeting what they said they would.
- If they can say that they successfully contributed what they shared, they can take a prize and pass the bowl to the next person.
- Repeat this with every person at the meeting.

Purpose:

- Improves meeting productivity and makes attendees think about how they're going to contribute, rather than just what they hope to get out of the meeting.
- Makes meeting attendees take ownership for their contributions.

13. Find the Common Thread

What you'll need:

- N/A

How it works:

- Before your regular staff meeting, break your team into groups. Instruct the groups to find out one commonality among themselves. It might be a hobby or an interest they all do, or having the same favorite genre of music or favorite food.
- Once they discover a commonality they can agree on, they create a list of what might be stereotypical qualities of such people.
- Then, the groups come together to announce to the rest of the groups who they are. For example, they might be "Roller Coaster Buffs" or "Jane Austenites."
- For the rest of the regular staff meeting (or the day, if you're daring), group members must fulfill the stereotypes they listed. The Roller Coaster Buffs, for example, might periodically raise their arms and holler, or the Jane Austenites might rephrase all of their speech to co-workers as quotes from Jane Austen books.
- At the completion of the meeting (or day), talk about stereotypes that we assign to people. Discuss how they affect how we perceive other people's abilities.
- Talk about how people managed to find a commonality, and the process it took to dig it up.

Purpose:

- Force your team to confront the foolish nature of stereotypes and how, if people really behaved as we casually write them off to be, the office would be much different.
- The game also reveals the ability of a seemingly random group of people to find a commonality.

14. Thank-You Box

What you'll need:

- A "Gratitude Box" (Any box clearly labeled and decorated however you would like, possibly a shoebox with a slit cut into the lid)
- Brightly colored scraps of paper
- Pens

How it works:

- Set a "Gratitude Box" in the middle of your office space, and let employees know that they were free to write as many thank-you notes as they liked to colleagues in the office.
- Provide brightly colored paper note templates and pens too, making it as easy as possible for people to get involved (and reducing the activation energy required to join the activity).
- Deliver the letters for everyone in your office all in one night (either monthly, or when the box is filling up, or when you think the office needs a happiness boost... you choose.) Everyone will come to work to find their desk littered with thank you notes.

Purpose:

- Encourage gratitude
- Increase happiness.
- Strengthen relationships

15. Play-Doh!

What you'll need:

- 1 small container of play-doh for everyone in your office

How it works:

- Read the following:
 - Way back in the 1930's a man (Noah) created a substance that looked like putty and was used as a wallpaper cleaner to remove soot of wallpaper from the old-fashioned heating. So, when gas and electric came out, there was no longer a need for the goo and Noah was going under. His sister-in-law Kay was a nursery school teacher, and she discovered that her little kids enjoyed squeezing the goo more than the hard modeling clay. She suggested they color the stuff and call it Play-Doh! Play-Doh was born. Who knew?!?!
 - Moral: Play-Doh is proof that we are just one small adjustment away from: hitting that goal, changing our mindset, landing that target, etc....
- Everyone gets a can of Play-Doh...A reminder that one small adjustment you make can change the entire direction of your day.

Purpose:

- Eye-opener
- Discussion
- Fun Team Building / Inspiration

16. Group Timeline

What you'll need:

- Bulletin board or other surface that accepts thumb tacks, magnets, tape, etc.
- Slips of paper
- Pens, markers, etc.
- Thumb tacks, magnets, tape, or whatever else will work for your purpose.

How it works:

- On a bulletin board or other surface which accepts thumbtacks, create a blank timeline.
- The timeline should start as far back as the oldest member on your team was born or when the company was founded, whichever came first.
- Mark each year on the timeline.
- Then, using narrow strips of paper, write down important dates for the company (e.g. founded, merged, changed names, incorporated, new product) and pin it to the correct spot on the timeline.
- Give your team members four slips of paper, and ask them to mark down four important moments in their life. Let them pin them to the timeline.

Purpose:

- This exercise helps show, in a visual way, the different generations and experiences of your team.
- It leads well into talking about cultural and generational differences and the effects that has on how people work and communicate.
- It is also an opportunity for team members to learn more about each other.

17. Bears, Cowboys, and Ninjas

What you'll need:

- (optional) prize for the winner

How it works:

- Much like the classic rock, paper, scissors game, each player chooses between three poses.
- Bears eat ninjas, ninjas beat up cowboys, and cowboys shoot bears.
- Each player either roars (with their paws in the air) for bear, shoot finger guns for cowboys, or strike a ninja pose.
- Have a tournament playing one against one, winner stays in the game and plays another winner and so on until you have one final winner. (You can even create a bracket!)
- The final winner may also win a prize if you wish

Purpose:

- This is a great team building game to get everyone to let loose and get a little silly.

18. Best and Worst

What you'll need:

- Slips of paper
- Pens
- Hat, bowl, or bag

How it works:

- Ask each person in the group to write down one *best* and one *worst* question that they want to learn about the group. E.g.
 - What's the best recipe you know?
 - What's the worst injury you've ever had?
 - What's the best thing you've ever smelled?
 - What's the worst present you have ever given someone?
 - What's the best voicemail you have ever received?
 - What's the worst trip you have ever taken?
- Put all the ideas in a hat and have everyone pick 2 at random (meaning they might get their own question)!
- Go around the circle and have everyone share their answers and brief related stories.

Purpose:

- Group discussion / getting to know each other