

## Adding Fun to the Team Skills Equation

As Continuous Improvement activities involve a lot of team work, it is important to create a work culture that values collaboration through fun activities. Samantha Rowan, CTPM Navigator, expanded upon these ideas and added some fun to the 2012 TPM & Lean Annual Forum with her presentation on "Teaching Team Skills Using Fun Activities."

According to Samantha, lack of cooperation is one of the foremost reasons given by organisations as a cause for poor Operational Performance. Therefore, it becomes imperative to find ways to encourage and develop cohesion among employees. At CTPM, we achieve this through Area Based and Cross-functional Teams.

**Figure 1: Samantha presenting at the Forum**



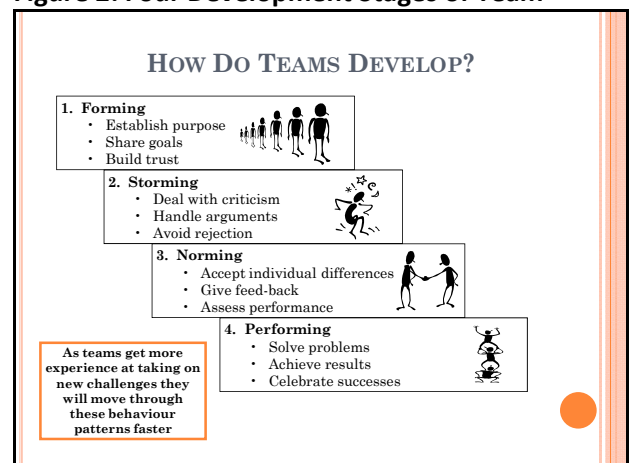
In order to create effective teams, a number of skills and abilities need to be adopted. Throughout her presentation, Samantha outlined 10 key factors that create a successful team.

These qualities include:

- Effective team members who all contribute;
- Run effective meetings;
- Good presentation skills;
- Effective team decision making and problem solving;
- Know how to deal with difficult people;
- Conflict Resolution is understood and practiced by all;
- Negotiation techniques are well understood by all;
- Appreciation for individual strengths and weaknesses;
- Competent at giving and receiving feedback; and
- The team is effective in its planning and prioritising of activities.

However, it is unlikely the team will possess all of these qualities immediately. According to Samantha, an effective team can take up to 2-3 years to develop to its full potential. However, the presentation outlined the four developmental stages that can assist the process, as seen in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: Four Development Stages of Team**



As explained by Samantha, using fun activities at the beginning of the cycle can be effective. "You find out a lot about a team when you put them to a challenge."

Now that the theory was out of the way, it was time for the Forum attendees to have some fun. The challenge set to the teams was to build the tallest tower they could using only 50 straws and a ball of Blue Tack in ten minutes. However, the tower also had to stand on its own for a whole minute to pass the test.

**Figure 3: Tower building activity**



After ten minutes of watching grown men and women attempting to outbuild each other, it was time for the judges to decide the winner. After walking around the room measuring each structure, it was concluded that the team consisting of representatives from Rambor and Sugar Australia had won, with their tower standing at 210cm and remaining up right for the required minute!

**Figure 4: More tower building activity**



Despite there only being one winner, the activity was valuable for all participants and allowed them to demonstrate their planning, cooperation, problem solving, delegation, working to deadlines and critical thinking skills. Therefore, not only did this activity provide some extra fun to the Annual Forum, it also contained some valuable lessons regarding team work.

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