

**TIP #6 – APRIL 2006 – SNOWBALL TOSS**  
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Here is a quick energizer that allows the workshop participants to affirm and strengthen their learning. It is an “up-out-of-your-seat” exercise. And it is fun.

I call it the snowball toss, and I usually conduct it as a morning exercise to launch a second or third day of a workshop session.

### **The Exercise**

Here is how it goes:

- ❑ Ask the participants to reflect back on the prior day and to write down one “aha,” one significant learning.
- ❑ It is best if you ask them to:
  - jot down their thought on an 8-1/2 x 11 sheet of paper
  - write legibly - so that you would be able to read their writing
- ❑ When sufficient time has elapsed for everyone to write down their thought, invite the participants to get out of their seats and form in a circle (okay, something approximating a circle). Often times, I will have them form the circle outside of the workshop room, if I can find a nearby open space. (A brief “field trip” of sorts).
- ❑ I ask them to crumple up the sheet of paper in their hands into paper snowballs.
- ❑ With the circle formed, I interject a comment about winter or snow, and invite them to “have at it” with their snowballs. Here is an example from a recent workshop in Phoenix, where the temperature was 78°: “Last week, New England and New York experienced some of the heaviest snowfall on record. For those of you who are envious and missed the fun of the snowfall, I thought we’d create some of our own winter fun. So, let me ask you to crumple up your papers into paper snowballs, and have you own snowball fight.” The snowballs flew.
- ❑ I encourage the participants to pick up the paper balls and continue to throw them at one another for a few rounds (say 30 seconds). Finally, I ask everyone to pick up one the paper snowballs.
- ❑ Reforming the circle, I ask everyone, in turn, to read **ALoud** the thought that one of their colleagues wrote down.

### **The Benefits**

Each participant strengthens one learning from the prior day. I trust that the learning that is written down is an element of leadership that will serve them and their direct reports well. This is an opportunity to solidify the learning and not allow it to melt away!

The participant and the facilitator hear some key thoughts from all of the workshop participants, creating an opportunity to learn from one another.

The snowball toss safeguards the anonymity and privacy of the participant. (I do not tell the participants that they will need to personally share their thoughts with the group. Therefore, I trust that what they write down is authentic).

## **Experience from the Field**

The snowball toss is fun!

I, as the facilitator, become aware of the “ah-ha” moments that are important for the group, and can refer back to them during the course of the current day.

More recently, I have kept the individual paper snowballs after the exercise and recorded the comments in order to email them to the participants in the few days after the completion of the workshop.

So, let’s look at a live example from a recent seminar. On day one, we talked about Values, Credibility, and Inspiring a Shared Vision. Here are the “ah-ha’s” that the seminar participants recorded in those paper snowballs on the morning of the second day:

### Values and Credibility

- I found out how much my personal values help/hinder building relationships with certain direct reports. (Values don’t have to be so black and white, there can be common ground).
- The values I’ve been living out lately are not my stated core values - not against them, just not the same.
- You have to know who you are and what your values are before you can create a true vision for your team.
- Credibility and values must stay in alignment to make them true. Sanity check this!
- Credibility’s root is “credo” requiring consistent performance.

### Inspiring a Shared Vision

- Sharing thoughts and using group brainstorming is much more efficient than coming up with ideas on my own.
- Using the group to help me form images/metaphors is very powerful. It is also more inclusive.
- The metaphor/imagery must not only fit the situation, it must fit the group of people to whom the vision will be described. It must connect with them.
- I have a wealth of stories that apply to my job, and that excite me about my job when I tell them.
- I know now that I need to paint the picture of my factory into my work group vision so it becomes more clear and shows alignment from my team to the factory.

Have fun in the snow. “Ah-ha” is always in season!