

**TIP #43 – MAY 2010**  
**GAME OF THE GENERALS**  
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Objectives:

- To help each participant see the value of experimenting and taking risks as a leader
- To foster teamwork and team strategy toward the attainment of team goals

Audience: 25 to 30 participants who are working on risk taking and experimenting

Time Required: 30 to 45 minutes

Materials and Equipment

- Music of drum beats or actual drumming
- Strips of paper for the ranks/positions created from rank table (copy and cut up)

Area Setup

A large room, but no chairs and tables are required. A park, beach, or other outdoor setting is an option.

Facilitator Note: The **Game of the Generals** is an educational “war chessboard game” invented by Sofronio H. Pasola, Jr. in 1970. It is also called “Salpakan” in Filipino, or simply “The Generals.”

Process:

1. Divide participants into two battalions (teams). Ask each battalion to assign a leader. The leader will assign the ranks/positions to members by providing each team member with a strip of paper with a rank written on it (see below). Each person should keep his or her rank secret. The table <<link to table>> allows for 15 group members (note that there are two Three-star General strips and two One-star General strips). *Should you opt to involve more than 15 members, you may assign more than one of any rank, such as three Privates and three Spies.*
2. Explain that the goal is for each battalion to capture as many war prisoners as it can. As the facilitator (arbiter), determine how many series of “war rounds” will occur. Tell participants the number of rounds and provide the rules:
  - No one from the other camp should know the ranks of those in the opposite camp.
  - After the first round, the leader should strategize before sending men to the battlefield, based on which ranks were taken prisoner.

- The facilitator (arbiter) will decide how many men should be sent to the battlefield and will state, “Leaders, send X troops to battle.” You will select two to four each round.
  - Once sent forward, troops who take prisoners may be used again.
  - After the first round, tell the leader he or she may confer with the entire team.
  - No leader knows the rank/designation of the opposing team members. The facilitator (arbiter) identifies which battalion captures the opponent’s soldiers to become war prisoners.
  - The battalion with the most number of prisoners of war at the end wins.
3. Share this example with the group. (Link to example embedded in the web version of activity.)
- Facilitator (Arbiter) says, “Send four troops to the battlefield!”
  - Five-star General of Battalion 1 will be war prisoner of Battalion 2. (The Spy takes the Five-star General.)
  - Private of Battalion 1 will be war prisoner of Battalion 2. (The Four-star General takes the Private.)
  - One-star General of Battalion 2 will be war prisoner of Battalion 1. (The Three-star General takes the One-star General.)
  - 1st Lieutenant of Battalion 2 will be war prisoner of Battalion 1. (The Major takes the 1st Lieutenant.)
  - In this case, each battalion was able to capture two prisoners of war.
4. Play the stated number of rounds, identifying how many members should be sent to each battle.
5. Once all rounds have been played, count up the number of prisoners. The team with the most prisoners wins.
6. Debrief the activity by asking these kinds of questions:
- How did each team feel when they were capturing their opponent’s soldiers? Responses might be similar to these:
    - Sense of victory
    - Impending celebration
    - Strategy is working
    - Should not be complacent at any point in time
  - How did each team feel when they were losing their men? Responses might be similar to these:
    - Starting to lose morale
    - Desire to continue to fight and gain the upper hand
    - Suggest reviewing strategy
    - Not to lose hope

- For the team that won, what was your strategy? Responses might be similar to these:
  - They were observant and took notes of the ranks of the opposing soldiers as they were engaged in the battlefield, based on which ranks were captured
  - Took the risk in sacrificing some of their men to win the war
  - Leader listened to the suggestions of his members
  - Team members trusted and cooperated with their leader
  
- For the team that lost, what could have been done to avoid losing your men? Responses might be similar to these:
  - Better strategy
  - Risk taking is part of the process of attaining the goal
  - Members should be willing to forward suggestions to the leader, and the leader should cultivate an atmosphere of openness
  - Learn from the mistakes of the past
  
- What values did you learn from this activity and why? Responses might be similar to these:
  - Taking risks and experimenting is an integral part of leadership
  - Goals are achieved through teamwork
  - In the real battlefield, suggestions from everyone are most welcome
  - You can never experience triumph without sacrifice
  
- As a leader, how would you relate this to your work? Responses might be similar to these:
  - Organizations should keep abreast of current and future trends
  - Change is a leader's best friend. It makes the organizations relevant and sustainable
  
- What's the attitude of people toward change? Draw out thoughts, feelings, and sentiments and lead them into the realization that change is an organization's friend.

The **Game of the Generals** is excerpted from the recently-published *The Leadership Challenge Activities Book*, a contributed volume containing over 100 activities designed to engage and ignite your learners.