

TIP #50 – MARCH 2011
SYNCHRONIZED CLAPPING
CONTRIBUTED BY
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This jolt emphasizes the difference between understanding something and applying that learning. It is perhaps our favorite jolt.

Synopsis

Participants learn the difficulty of listening and following directions required for even simple activities such as clapping their hands simultaneously.

Purpose

To emphasize that actions speak louder than words

Training Topics

Leadership

Learning

Participants

Any number over ten

This activity works best with groups of ten to one hundred

Time

2 minutes for the activity

3 to 10 minutes for debriefing

Flow

Conduct a practice round. Ask all the participants to clap their hands once. Pause while participants do this.

Brief the participants. Complain that the participants' clapping was ragged and unimpressive and that you want them to synchronize their claps so that those outside the room hear a single thunderous sound.

Provide performance support. Explain that you will provide a non – electronic performance support system to synchronize all the participants' claps: you will count “One, two, three” and then say, “Clap.” Ask everyone in the room to wait until you say, “Clap” before they clap simultaneously.

Conduct the activity. Count out loud, “One, two, three.” Immediately after you say “three,” clap your hands (without saying the word “Clap”). Most participants will follow your lead and clap their hands as well. Act surprised and say, “Clap.”

Debriefing

Ask the participants why they did not follow your instructions and wait until they heard the word “Clap” before clapping hands. Some participant will likely say, “But you clapped your hands. . . .” They will likely anticipate your response, “Would you jump off a cliff if I did?”

Ask the participants what they learned from the activity. Discuss the learning points that the participants offer.

Learning Points

1. Actions speak louder than words.
2. People follow your actions more than your words.
3. A big gap exists between understanding instructions and following them.

Field Notes

This is an effective jolt to use near the beginning of a training session. If this jolt follows other jolts, participants may suspect that you are planning to trap them and avoid following your lead.

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