

**TIP #51 – APRIL**  
**THE STAR TEAM! DETERMINING TEAM VALUES**  
**CONTRIBUTED BY CHER HOLTON, PH.D.**

**Activity Overview**

Team-focused activity requiring a high level of communication, leadership, followership, and team skills

**Goals**

- build skills of teamwork, leadership, and communication
- create agreed-upon team values and/or a code of behavior to ensure team effectiveness
- enhance camaraderie and team spirit

**Group Size**

8 or more members of an intact work group, in subgroups of 8 to 15

**Time Required**

25 minutes or longer, depending on the depth of the debriefing

**Materials**

- 100-foot nylon rope, tied together into a loop
- Flip chart and markers

**Physical Setting**

A space large enough for participants to create a large circle, with nothing in the way. If there are several subgroups doing the activity at the same time, you will need space for each subgroup to be able to form a large circle, with plenty of room between subgroups. (This activity works well in an outdoor setting.)

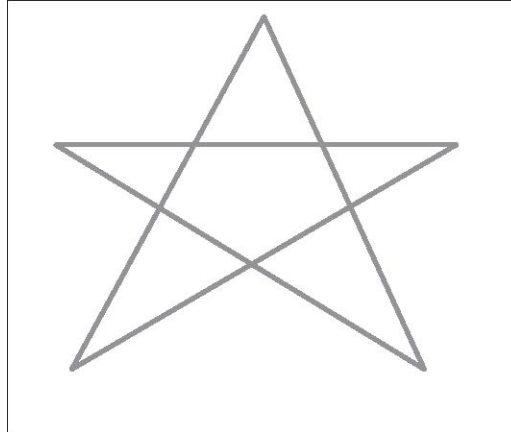
**Facilitating Risk Rating**

Moderate

**Process**

- 1) Introduce the activity by explaining that teams are most effective when all the members agree on their roles, values, and operating principles (code of behavior). Explain that this activity is designed to help team members examine how they function together as a team and establish their own operating principles.
- 2) If there are a lot of team members, divide the group into subgroups of eight to fifteen. Ask each subgroup to form a big circle, with enough distance between subgroups to allow discussion and movement without interference.
- 3) Once subgroups are organized into their circles, lay a 100-foot rope circle in the center of each subgroup. Instruct the team members to pick up the rope so everyone is holding it and it creates a circle the same size as the group.

- 4) Instruct the group that, from this point on, no one may let go of the rope, nor may anyone change places on the rope with anyone else. People may slide their hands along the rope as they move, but they may not let go of the rope.
- 5) The goal is to use the rope to create a 5-pointed star with lines intersecting. Emphasize that the star must have the lines intersecting. Remind them they are to use the entire rope to create their stars. Post a sketch like the one shown below on a flip chart to demonstrate what you mean.



- 6) Allow the groups to create their stars, observing the team dynamics. Be sure they do not let go of the rope or change where they are on the rope. As they move to create the star, they can simply slide their hands along the rope.
- 7) When a group feels they have achieved the goal, instruct them to lay the rope down on the ground, so they can step away and see their results.
- 8) Celebrate success or talk about the reasons why they were not successful, and then encourage them to make another attempt.
- 9) To debrief and use this activity for a more intense discussion, use the following questions:
  - What kinds of things happened as you went through this activity?
  - What were the benefits of the activity for you as an individual? As a team?
  - What was the most difficult thing in this activity? Why was it difficult?
  - What surprised you as you went through the activity?
  - How did leadership emerge during the activity? Did you see it change as you progressed through the activity?
  - What did you learn from the way you accomplished this task that relates to the way you work together as a team on the job?
  - As you look at the star, imagine the five points stand for the five most important values (or codes of behavior) you want to embrace as a team. What do the points represent?
- 10) Lead the teams to brainstorm, prioritize, and select their five top values or five operating principles.

### **Variations**

- Increasing levels of difficulty could be added to change the dynamic of this activity. For example, half the team could be blindfolded; only certain individuals could be allowed to speak; a time limit could be introduced; groups could be required to trade some team members with another group halfway through the activity. Any difficulty

factor that is added must have a relevant debriefing to go with it (e.g., if members are switched during the activity, you could debrief by talking about change and its impact on productivity as well as team camaraderie and functioning).

- During the debriefing, you can focus the five points on something different. For example, they could represent the five critical roles for team effectiveness; the five largest competitors and how to deal with them; the five beliefs the team stands for, etc.
- Instead of focusing on the points of the star, your debriefing could focus on the intersecting lines, as a representation of how different team members communicate and relate with one another to create the whole picture. This is particularly useful with a team whose members work in different locations.

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