make way for the millennials

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activities designed to...
model the way
inspire a shared vision
challenge the process
enable others to act
encourage the heart

The 2009 Leadership Challenge Forum
Activities designed and inspired by The Student Leadership Challenge by Kouzes and Posner
Instruct the team to design the best paper airplane possible. They will have 5-7 minutes to create their plane. The object is for the pilot (standing behind the start line) to fly the plane to the co-pilot (standing behind the finish line). Do not elaborate on the instructions.

Give the teams 5-7 minutes to create their plane. They can use as many sheets of paper as they want. When time is called, have the pilots and co-pilots line up across from each other behind the appropriate start and finish line. Instruct them to launch their planes when you say “BLAST OFF.”

Once they have been launched, ask them if they would like a few moments to collaborate with their co-pilot to make modifications. Give them 2-3 minutes to discuss and re-group.

Line them up and BLAST OFF again. After the second attempt, have participants sit with their partner and plane and facilitate a discussion based on the following questions:

- What was your first course of action when you were given your paper? Did you discuss flying strategies, spend time discussing how each of you interpreted the directions or immediately begin making planes?
- What leadership skills were needed to make this event a success?
- Did you feel confident in your first plan?
- If your first plan was not successful, what were the first modifications you made to your plan? Was it to re-evaluate the plan or re-model the plane?

The debrief for this activity can be found on the following page!
Paper Airplanes
debrief:
The directions you give are very vague and very specific. It is designed to see how well they are listening. You are not telling them HOW to get the plane from one point to another; you are telling them that it must get there. Some will attempt to literally launch it and hope that it flies all the way across. Some will fly it themselves in “third-grade” fashion. Some will crumple it up and throw it like a paper wad. The interpretation comes from them listening to the most basic of instructions which are to make a plane and get it from start to finish. The students who chose to creatively interpret the instructions (like physically walking their plane to their partner) will be the ones that achieve greater results!

• Based on the skill needed to be successful (listening), what are your feelings about your attempt to succeed?
• Why or why not did you feel that you couldn’t move past your “start and finish lines?”
• Why is listening such an important skill needed in leadership?
• Why is it important to challenge the process in an organization and with your leadership skills?