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**PURPOSE** Many workshop participants attend training and, while having good intentions about using the learned skills, only sporadically apply the learning when they are back on the job because they are not really convinced of the need to change. This often occurs because they are blind to areas and habits that need improvement in their own lives. Weighed and Measured provides a fun way to help participants see exactly how their behaviour helps or hinders team processes.

**TIME** Forty minutes to 1 hour, depending upon the size of the group and how quickly they solve the problem.

**SUPPLIES** For each group: 6 yards of string; 1 1/2 foot long metal rod, 1/8 inch in diameter (available from a hardware store); 2 egg cartons; 2 dimes; 1 quarter; 1 pair scissors; 1 orange; 6 rasps with triangular body shape (optional); 1 glue gun with glue sticks; and six paper clips.

**PARTICIPANTS** 12 - 45 participants divided into groups of six to eight.

**METHOD** Inform participants that they have been working hard and need some fun. They are going to participate in an entertaining activity that will help develop their team-building skills.

Divide the participants into equally sized groups of six to eight participants. If there are engineers within the group, try to divide them evenly between the different groups. Assign one person from each group to be an "observer/timer."

Advise the groups that their task is to race against the other teams in developing a scale made entirely out of the equipment given to each group. Emphasize that this is to be a team project. Also advise them that they need to work together to plan the solution before starting building the scale.

Assign each group a space within the room. Tell the groups to go to their areas but not to start building the scale or discussing strategy until you've been able to let the timers know what their duties are.

Tell the observers/timers that their duty is to observe the group dynamics, time how long the group spends planning, and how long it takes for the group to solve the puzzle, and then to report back on the process. Provide the observers/timers a sheet that lists the specific behaviors you want them to observe (this will differ depending upon the workshop content), such as:

- how long the group spent planning the solution
- who assumed leadership (one person/a group of people/shared between all members)

**METHOD  
CONT'D**

- if the person(s) in "power" positions listened to all participants or just some participants
- whether all people took part in developing the measure
- what roles various people assumed (leader/helper/thinker)
- what behaviors helped the process
- what behaviors hindered the process

Have the observers/timers rejoin their groups.

Supply each group with the required equipment. Advise the groups that they can start on the project. Allow at least fifteen minutes for the group to solve the puzzle (this is generally the minimum amount of time needed). If the groups have not solved the problem by the end of forty-five minutes, reconvene the groups.

Debrief the activity.

**DEBRIEFING**

Debrief the activity by indicating that not only were the participants creating a scale, but that their own skills at being an effective team member were being weighed in the balance.

The following unrelated points may be brought out in the debriefing:

The starting point for improving team skills is individual self-assessment. This activity revealed to participants their strengths and their weaknesses. These weaknesses will hold them back from achieving success and they should concentrate on improving those areas before trying to improve areas of strength. The workshop participants might want to take a moment to jot down what behaviours they want to stop doing and what they want to start doing. They should put this sheet of paper in a place where they will see it each day (such as the back of the medicine cabinet door or taped to the inside cover of the phone book). This will help them focus on acquiring the "right" skills while also reminding them of their need to change.

An often de-emphasized but critical part of successful teamwork is planning. Research shows that the most innovative and successful solutions result when more time is spent in the initial planning stage. Did the group spend sufficient time planning? Did the groups that spent more time planning have a more effective building time or a more innovative scale? What can the participants do at work ensure that people feel they have more time to spend on the planning stage? What is holding them back from spending more time planning?

**SOLUTION**

This isn't a difficult puzzle to solve; the emphasis should be on the problem-solving process.

There are many possible solutions to the puzzle. The metal rod can be ringed with a thin circle of glue a 1/4 inch from the center, and then evenly suspended upon an opened and twisted paper clip (one side of the paper clip can be formed into a half circle - the ring of glue makes sure that the center of the bar stays in the half-circle). Cups made of string, egg cartons or orange peels can be hung from each side of the rod. The egg cartons can be cut up and then stacked to provide the necessary height for the scale.

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