



The Learning & Development Resource Centre.

TEAM ADVENTURE SERIES – SURVIVAL SIMULATIONS

How Team Survival Simulations Come into Play

No Time for Trial by Error

In today's hectic business climate, time runs short, resources are lacking, and the cost for poor performance is high. Now more than ever, organizations can't afford a lackadaisical, "trial by error" attitude. That's one reason why training simulations have become a popular choice for classroom training. Take team development, for instance. Survival simulations expose learners to important group process skills such as decision making under pressure – and then help them to build the skills they need to be effective quickly.

The learning experience starts with an imaginary trip to a faraway, exotic place such as the Australian outback or the Caribbean islands. But it isn't long before the adventure goes wrong and teams are faced with a life-and-death situation, forcing them to work together as teams to survive with only limited resources and each other.

Most of us can rest assured that we'll never encounter these types of situations. Unfortunately, though, the similar feelings of stress and conflict that accompany everyday organizational life are all too familiar. That's why it is critically important for teams to learn how to overcome common stumbling blocks in the safety of the classroom.

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The Challenge of Decision Making under Pressure

With practice and the help of training simulations, these seven actions can help teams improve their ability to make effective decisions:

Load up on Information

A key factor in making successful decisions under pressure is the ability to obtain and share a wealth of information. Listening to several sources counteracts any particular biases one individual source may have.

Push for Creativity

Generate new and innovative solutions rather than falling back on what has been done in the past. One method for generating new solutions is to split the group into subgroups and have each subgroup generate options.

Insist on Full Participation

Ensuring full participation in decision making promotes commitment to the final decision. In addition, including as many perspectives as possible increases the likelihood that an effective decision will be made.

Seriously Consider Alternatives

One of the stumbling blocks to effective decision making under pressure is the tendency to engage in groupthink — to seek group unanimity without a thorough discussion. One way to combat this problem is to insist on a discussion of alternative scenarios and solutions before a decision can be made.

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Play Devil's Advocate

In high-pressure decision making, people's assumptions may go unchallenged in an effort to reach a quick decision. A devil's advocate takes responsibility for challenging assumptions and urges careful consideration of any suggestion offered. The ideal situation exists when each team member takes the responsibility for playing this role during a discussion.

Divide Complex Problems

One problem with making decisions under pressure is that high-pressure situations can be quite complex. It helps to break down a major decision into smaller decisions. Handling a series of small decisions is less overwhelming than trying to tackle a complex decision all at once.

Reconsider Decisions

Decisions should be reviewed periodically or in the light of new information. The need to evaluate a decision does not end once the decision is made. The team should not ignore new, relevant information simply because it has already agreed upon a decision.