Your organization is ready to roll! Your officers are enthusiastic about beginning the year, and your returning and/or newly recruited members are eager to contribute. The manner in which you successfully channel this group energy is important for your organization. Knowing the stages of group development (See Best Practice on *Group Development*) coupled with the team building process can help you point your group in the right direction. There are two important steps to take before you just plunge into the year's activities - building your group into a team and determining your team goals for the year.

A team is an energetic group of diverse individuals committed to achieving common objectives that enjoy working together and produce quality results.

Characteristics of an effective team:
- Common vision
- Clear objectives each member is committed to in order to accomplish the shared vision
- Open communication
- Specific roles each member assumes to accomplish the group objectives
- Energy and enthusiasm
- Distributed participation and leadership
- Appropriate and effective decision making
- Trust, acceptance, and support among members
- Members who feel significant and are motivated
- Cohesion and comfort among members

In order for your team to work together effectively, they need to feel comfortable around each other. The more they know and appreciate each other not only as people but as contributors to the organization as well, the better they'll work together.

Much of this information and appreciation will evolve naturally over time. However, in order to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings or difficulties that may arise during the group development stages and since the school year is so short; it is very helpful to the organization to speed up the team building process. And it's easy to do!

Team Building Process:
One of the most efficient and effective ways to build teams is to set aside a two or three hour block of time very early in the year. A comfortable, informal environment works best - someone's living room, a carpeted meeting room where you can all sit on the floor, a quiet lounge with comfortable furniture. Make team building your only agenda item.

Your task is to share information with and about each other (e.g., who you are, what you think about the organization, how you expect you'll fit in). The following questions are examples of those you can ask to start the discussion and keep it on track. Make sure each person answers every question. The point is to listen to each other and look at the things that are different amongst you as well as what you have in common.

- The purpose of team building is to get members listening and discussing in order to mold them into an understanding and cohesive team
- Involves individuals sharing information about each other, including what they think about the organization, their expectations, and role in the group
- Set aside two or three hours of time at the beginning of the year to focus on team building. Also infuse team building exercises into your meetings throughout the year. It's not only fun to break away from "normal business," but this time also helps to refocus and reenergize the team!
- Begin your time together by answering the following questions with your team members:
  - Why were you interested in becoming an officer or member?
  - What do you expect to learn from this experience?
  - What is the biggest asset you bring to this organization?

- What is your biggest fear about what could happen during your term of office?
- What is your own perception of yourself as an officer or member?
- What did you feel best about last semester/term/year? What did you feel worst about?
- Share any special interest areas, skills, or areas of expertise. Also, share areas you feel weak in and would like information about, support, or training in.
- What emotion is the most difficult to express?
- What's going on in your life right now?
- What do you want to see this organization do?

When to Utilize the Team Building Process:

While team building is essential to newly formed groups or an organization with a large number of new members, there are other times it can be effective as well. You might find it helpful to use team building techniques when:
- Members seem bored or not focused
- Members appear to be going off in different directions or drifting away from the group
- There is a great deal of conflict (i.e. storming stage of group development)
- Members have been apart for a while (i.e. breaks, vacations)
- You want to take a break from the normal routine or boost team spirit

Assorted Team Building Exercises:

The following provides you with ideas for team building exercises to use with your officers and members. Be sure to pick a team builder that meets the needs of your group.

Self-Disclosure/Relationship Building Exercises **-** helps break down barriers and allows members to get to know one another on a personal level. Very appropriate for groups where people will be working closely together and/or for groups where members will be together for a long period of time.
- *Interview*s**:** members pair off and interview one another for 5 minutes each. Partners then introduce their partner to the rest of the group, covering some or all of the following topics. Feel free to add your own!
  - Name, hometown, year in school, major, family
  - Why he or she chose to join our organization
  - Favorites: food, color, sports team, hobbies, animal
  - What he or she would do if they won the lottery
  - Hopes for our organization
- *Personal Crest*: members make a personal coat of arms or crest in which they express important aspects about themselves through drawings or short phrases. Possible topics/questions to include in the crest: the most significant event in your life; how you react when upset; your primary goal for the year; where you would like to be in 5 years.

Trust Exercises - generally rely on some form of physical contact and have the added element of requiring participants to trust one another in order to complete the activity. These exercises are appropriate for most groups, but they can be physically dangerous if not handled properly. Special attention or care needs to be given to those individuals who are really afraid to participate. It is important that they not be pressured into participating and that their decision of not to do the exercise be treated in the same manner and tone as those who are participating, especially during the processing of the exercise.
- *Trust Walks***:** members take turns being blindfolded and led by another on a short walk.
- *Trust Falls***:** members stand on a raised platform (a chair will suffice) and fall backwards in the arms of the other members. (Please have someone with experience facilitate the

Physical Exercises - helps eliminate tension and distance between people, makes them more relaxed and comfortable with one another. These exercises are appropriate for most groups, but beware of individual reactions to touching/ being touched.
- *Human Knot***:** members stand in a circle and extend their right hands into the middle and clasp the hand of another. Repeat process using the left hand. (Do not hold the hand of the person standing next to you) Untangle the knot without unclasping hands.
- *Human Circle***:** members form a circle by holding hands with the persons next to them. Without letting go of each other's hands try to turn the circle inside out.

Cooperation Exercises - helps people learn to work together. These exercises can give an indication about the roles group members will play in group situations (e.g., thinker, leader, organizer, dominator, follower, encourager) and are appropriate for any group, especially if the job tasks demand teamwork.

- *Perfect Square***:** squares of construction paper of different colors are cut into odd shapes. Each member takes their piece (or odd shape) and then works with other group members with their odd shaped pieces of like color to form a perfect square. This exercise is better if it is done in silence with no verbal communication permitted. This collaborative exercise may also be placed within a competitive framework if more than one group is constructing perfect squares at the same time.

Actual Group Tasks - everyday tasks that must be accomplished by the group are done rather than contrived or forced activities. This is an effective method for increasing member involvement and commitment in any group. Sometimes these tasks are a necessity if a group is to remain a group or team.

- Brainstorming**:** members are asked to contribute ideas regarding a specific problem/question facing the group. Ideas are recorded without judgment.
- Group Goal-Setting**:** members participate in reviewing and setting the group's goals and objectives. People are more committed to a course of action they actually help to choose.
- Other Actual Tasks or Activities**:** parties, potluck dinners or meals, and retreats done together as a group help to break the monotony of regular meetings and provide an opportunity for members to get back in touch with each other on a social basis. These activities are appropriate anytime in any group, but are particularly helpful when motivation is lacking, morale is low, or members appear to be drifting apart.

Debriefing the Team Builder
After you have completed your team building exercise, it is necessary to spend time as a group discussing this experience. Take time to reflect on the team building process and debrief the actual activity. Part of any team building process is sharing what has been learned and experienced; what members liked and disliked; and, most importantly, how they felt while participating. Team building is hindered if inadequate time is allotted for discussion, or if individual feelings surface and are not addressed.

More Resources for Team Builders
This list is just a brief overview of team building exercises. It is certainly not exhaustive of all of the team building exercises you can use with your organization. For more ideas, chat with the Center for Student Involvement's CODE Program team or visit our Leadership Library to check out the following team builder books:

- Arch, D. & Meiss, R. (2000). *Warming up the crowd*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bordessa, K. (2006). *Team challenges - 170+ group activities*. Chicago: Zephyr Press.
- Forbes-Greene, S. (1983). *The Encyclopedia of icebreakers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gray, D., & Brown, S.M. Game storming, a playbook for innovators, rule breakers, and change makers. James, O'Reilly.
- Icebreakers – Loose sheets booklet
- Pfeiffer, W.J. (1990). *Warm-ups for meeting leaders*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pfeiffer, W.J. (1991).*The encyclopedia of team-building activities*, Vol. *1*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pfeiffer, W. J. (1991).*The encyclopedia of team-development*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Pfeiffer, W. J. & Jones, J.E. (1981). *A handbook of structured experiences for human relations training*, Vol. *8*. San Diego: University Associates Publishers and Consultants.
- Pike, B. & Solem, L. (2000). *50 creative training openers and energizers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ragsdale, S., & Saylor, A. (2007). *Great group games*. Minneapolis: Search Institute Press.
- Pufett, M., & Blair, M. (2009). *300+ Sizzling Icebreakers*. Monarch Books
- Scannell, E.E. (1980). *Games trainers play*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Scannell, E.E. (1983). *More games trainers play*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Scannell, E.E. (1991). *Still more games trainers play*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Scannell, E.E. (1994). *Even more games trainers play*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- West, E. (1999). *The big book of icebreakers*. New York: McGraw-Hill
- West, E. (1997). *201 icebreakers - group mixers, warm-ups, energizers, and playful activities*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

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    http://getinvolved.uky.edu/