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You Want Me to Trust You? Using Adventure Learning to Teach Millennials About Trust

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Management educators are confronted with a variety of teaching challenges as they attempt to distill and instill practical knowledge. Compounding this overarching challenge is millennial students' desire to be actively involved in their own learning and their need to receive immediate feedback regarding the practical implications of their course material. One particularly difficult topic to teach millennial students is trust. Adventure learning provides a medium to address these student desires and to explore trust in an emotionally, socially, and physically safe environment. This article explores adventure learning and looks at specific activities being used at a medium-sized, northeastern university to teach millennial students about trust. *Organization Management Journal*, 9: 255–267, 2012. doi: 10.1080/15416518.2012.738532

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Educators in the fields of management, business administration, and organizational behavior are faced with many challenges and competing demands. One specific challenge that stands out is that of teaching applied subject matter and related content in a controlled classroom environment. Included in this challenge is the charge to instruct students about the four functions of management—planning, organizing, leading, and controlling—and related areas such as communication, critical and reflective thinking, decision making, team work, risk taking, leadership, creativity, innovation, and personal values and beliefs.

This challenge is compounded by the fact that business instructors are confronted with a “new breed” of student and face the very real possibility of intergenerational classroom settings. The present cohort of students brings with it unique challenges and potentially new opportunities for developing

and preparing for leadership and management positions in the ever-evolving business world. This group of students also challenges business instructors' ability to find new ways to reach out to them and affect their hearts and minds. Foremost among these challenges is finding teaching approaches and methods that hold the potential to compel this cohort to question their existing models and beliefs about what they already believe to be real, unchangeable, and immovable in their lives and life experience.

The expectations placed upon management educators are also evolving. In various academic outlets, increasing and changing student expectations are cited and even management instructors' teaching standards are in a state of flux. Auster and Wylie (2006), for example, have noted that student expectations exist and that the opportunities and activities provided in management courses are being considered more actively than in past generations. These authors state:

Students are demanding more engaging learning experiences that are worth the opportunity costs of putting their careers on hold. They seek classroom environments where they can not only obtain knowledge but also can learn how to apply that knowledge and exercise the judgment they need to succeed in the unpredictable business environments they will face in their careers. (Auster & Wylie, 2006, p. 334)

The remainder of this article explores these ideas in greater detail and resurfaces a teaching tool that may provide the means for addressing many of the challenges encountered in contemporary business classrooms. Specifically, this article explores and provides an overview of what is known about the current undergraduate population, explores adventure or active learning, examines outdoor education, and presents an overview of the techniques and process that are being used at a medium-sized, public Northeastern university to teach undergraduate and graduate students about trust. While adventure learning and outdoor education are not new approaches to teaching and learning, the authors believe that the method being employed at the highlighted university and discussed in this article provides opportunities for learning, teaching, and touching the hearts and minds of management students that other techniques and approaches do not.

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TRUST

Trust is a topic of contemporary interest. Perhaps the greatest impetus for the recent discussion and exploration of the concept stems from the global economic and financial downturn triggered by the collapse of the financial markets and related risky investment and banking practices.

Among the many reasons given for studying and teaching trust are that trust “helps facilitate cooperation, lowers agency and transaction costs, promotes smooth and efficient market exchanges, and improves firms’ ability to adapt to complexity and change” (Wicks, Berman, & Jones, 1999, p. 99). Trust has also been studied to understand the role it plays in “communication, leadership, management by objectives, negotiation, game theory, performance appraisal, labor-management relations, and implementation of self-managed work teams” (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 709). Kramer (1999) sums up the recent interest in and potential utility of trust by stating that “The ascension of trust as a major focus of recent organization research reflects, in no small measure, accumulating evidence of the substantial and varied benefits, both individual and collective, that accrue when trust is in place” (p. 581).

Given the fact that trust is an area of multidisciplinary study many different definitions of the concept exist (e.g., Fugelli, 2001; Jones & George, 2011; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Mayer et al., 1995). This article uses Deutsch’s (1958) definition, which defines trust as follows:

An individual may be said to have trust in the occurrence of an event if he expects its occurrence and his expectation leads to behavior which he perceives to have greater negative motivational consequences if the expectation is not confirmed than positive motivation consequences if it is confirmed. (p. 266)

This definition is used because of its emphasis on the interpersonal relationship(s) and its applicability to the adventure exercises students are asked to engage in as part of course requirements. In this definition,

The essential features of a situation confronting the individual with a choice to trust or not in the behavior of another person are: (i) the individual is confronted with an ambiguous path, a path that can lead either to an event perceived to be beneficial or to an event perceived to be harmful; (ii) (s)he perceives that the occurrence of the beneficial or harmful event is contingent upon the behavior of another person; (iii) (s)he perceives the strength of the negative path to be greater than the strength of the positive path. (Deutsch, 1960, p. 124)

In terms of the adventure experiences, participants are placed on an ambiguous path where they possess some understanding that actions on the part of others can lead to potential positive or negative outcomes. This understanding is further enhanced via completion of the various tasks or challenges. Participants learn and perceive that success and failure are contingent on the action (or inaction) of their fellow participants. Finally, in most cases, the preference of outcomes is on the positive path rather than the negative. The negative path, even with risk management protections in place, holds greater risk via

potential physical, social, or emotional harm than the positive path of success for most if not all participants. Since a course is composed of multiple events, participants gradually learn about one another and the process of developing or enhancing group trust results as participants gain additional insight into and understanding of the knowledge, skills, abilities, preferences, and dislikes of their fellow participants via first-hand experience, observation, and even the nuances of verbal cues.

CURRENT UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT COHORT: THE MILLENNIALS

For a number of years now, much has been said and written about the unique characteristics and learning styles of the present undergraduate student cohort—the millennials. Among the notable qualities and characteristics of this group, millennials have been described as being very sociable, optimistic, talented, well-educated, collaborative, open-minded, influential, and achievement oriented (Raines, 2002). Additionally, Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil (2004, p. 196) note that the millennials are risk averse, expect a lot, stress good outcomes, use social norming, and create the expectation of success for all.

In discussing millennials at work, Raines (2002) notes that millennials possess characteristics that are liabilities and assets for prospective employers. These liabilities and assets are presented in Table 1. The supposition is that these assets and liabilities would also be present and in play in classroom learning. The contents of Table 1 provide insights into skills and abilities that can be leveraged in teaching, as well as areas in which improvement and development can be undertaken in the course of classroom instruction and practicum.

As for how this cohort learns, Eisner (2005) indicates that this new generation is “likely to perform best when its abilities are identified and matched with challenging work that pushes it fully” (p. 6). Hence, millennial learning preferences “tend toward teamwork, experiential activities, structure, and the use of technology” (Oblinger, 2003, p. 38). Eisner (2005) adds that “speed, customization, and interactivity—two-way nonpassive engagement—are likely to help” the focus of this new generation (p. 6).

TABLE 1
Raines (2002) millennials’ work characteristics

Liabilities	Assets
Distaste for menial work	Multitasking
Lack of skills for dealing with difficult people	Goal orientation
Impatience	Positive attitude
Lack of experience	Technical savvy
Confidence	Collaboration

Based on the prior descriptions of millennial characteristics, there are several seemingly apparent reasons why active, experiential learning and, more specifically, adventure learning may fit well with the learning styles and approaches held by this cohort. First, Jonas-Dwyer and Pospisil (2004, pp. 198–199) note that millennials want to be challenged and to try new things, work with friends, experience social interaction, have fun, and value flexibility in their learning environment. The teaching/learning process involved in this form of learning is very much tied to social interaction and processes. In many instances it is only through collaboration that the requisite task or challenge can be completed. Furthermore, at the heart of this form of training is a significant amount of introspection or reflection that can lead to or contribute to personal discovery and growth. The introspective nature of the training process theoretically provides a mechanism for addressing several of the liabilities that Raines believes this cohort presents to prospective employers.

Second, millennials prefer to learn in environments that are entertaining and exciting, are structured, and allow opportunities to experience learning (Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004, p. 200). To this, Oblinger (2003) adds that millennial learning more closely resembles that of Nintendo than the logic approach often used in classroom settings. Millennials tend to learn through trial and error and believe that “losing is the fastest way to master a game because losing represents learning” (Oblinger, 2003, p. 40). To this end, active learning piques millennial involvement and interest as it is directed at them, and the processes involved in adventure learning contribute by taking learning out of the classroom and permitting them to learn from not only individual and group successes, but individual and collective losses as well.

Finally, one of the biggest reasons for the approach discussed in this article is that these students see “little relevance of the traditional instructional delivery of content to their own experiences and reality” (Woempner, 2007, p. 4). Active learning, and more specifically adventure learning, provides an avenue for students to learn and experience course material in a way that is exciting, fun, and collaborative. Adventure learning accomplishes this by placing students in foreign environments and challenging them to overcome unfamiliar obstacles. In addition, it places more of the burden for learning on the individual student as that student comes to question her or his own attitudes, beliefs, values, and ideas regarding many foundational topics and issues within the business curricula.

ACTIVE, EXPERIENTIAL, AND ADVENTURE LEARNING

Active, experiential learning approaches appear to be complementary to the demands placed upon the educational system by millennials. The Association for Experiential Education (AEE, 2008) notes that “experiential education [a subset of active learning] is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values.”

Overall, this active approach to learning emphasizes the application of theory and concepts by involving students in the learning process through the use of “problem-solving exercises, informal small groups, simulations, case studies, role-playing, and other activities” (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p. xi). Furthermore, adventure learning repositions the learner and the learner’s role in the educational process from passivity, absorption, and knowledge regurgitation to one of activity, reflection, and knowledge application. In the end, the degree of learning that occurs in adventure learning is ultimately determined and controlled by the individual for the purpose of achieving personal development (Thompson, 2008).

A key feature of adventure learning is the involvement of students in “doing things and thinking about what they are doing” (Bonwell & Eison, 1991, p. 2). In the course of learning, students are presented with opportunities to experience and use the various theories they have learned or heard of in classroom settings. To facilitate learning and skill building, opportunities are scripted into the learning activity and actively promoted that present students with opportunities not only to perform and do, but also “to talk and listen, read, write, and reflect as they approach course content” (Meyers & Jones, 1993, p. xi).

This approach diverges from the traditional approach used in education by emphasizing the learner’s needs and interests rather than organizational or program needs, standards or goals. Some differences that exist between these approaches can be seen in Table 2. Thompson (2008) adds:

In conventional teaching and training the needs of the ‘organization’ (which might be an employer or school or college, etc.) are the primary driver of the learning content, design, delivery and assessment. In experiential learning the starting point is quite different—the starting point is the person, and the primary driver is to help the individual grow and develop in their own direction and in their own way.

In reinforcing the need and potential power of this teaching strategy, Estes (2004) adds that “for education to be at its best the learner must be the one who processes the information from educational experiences” (p. 142). By developing people as individuals—rather than simply transferring arbitrary capabilities—we develop people’s confidence, self-esteem, personal strengths, and crucially a rounded sense of purpose and fulfillment, which fundamentally improves attitude, life balance, and emotional well-being (Thompson, 2008).

A key factor in using an experiential learning approach is creating a safe environment in which learners feel motivated to explore and learn. N. Tichy, for example, has stated that “the key in action learning is [that] you have to create performance anxiety [with] the illusion of pretty high risk” (in Froiland, 1994, p. 29). This is where the practices and processes in adventure learning come into play.

ADVENTURE LEARNING

As noted previously, the theory or idea underlying adventure learning is that a “person can only learn so much through

TABLE 2
Conventional versus adventure learning

Conventional learning	Adventure learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Content-centered/focused—theoretical ● Prescribed fixed design and content ● Purpose: external needs (e.g., organization, exams, etc.) ● Transfers/explains knowledge/skills ● Fixed structured delivery/facilitation ● Primarily time-bound measurable components ● Suitable for groups and fixed outcomes <p><i>Examples:</i> attending lectures, presentations, reading, exam study, observation, theoretical work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learner-centered/focused—really doing it ● Flexible open possibilities ● Purpose: internal growth and discovery ● Develops knowledge, skills, and/or emotions via experience ● Not delivered, minimal facilitation, unstructured ● Not time bound, more difficult to measure ● Individually directed, flexible outcomes <p><i>Examples:</i> games and exercises, doing an actual job or task, “outward bound” activities, teaching others, learning a physical activity</p>

Note. Adapted from Thompson (2008).

listening, then one must test that knowledge by doing” (Laabs, 1991, p. 56). Adventure learning is an experiential learning process in that it uses “hands-on challenge or adventure usually in the outdoors, combined with review and feedback to improve work place performance” (Miner, 1991, p. 59).

Outdoor education has a long history. Weigand (1995) and others note that the first attempts are credited to Kurt Hahn in the 1930s (e.g., Irvine & Wilson, 1994). In 1941, Hahn was approached to address the poor survival rate of young British merchant sailors (Irvine & Wilson, 1994, p. 25). The program that resulted from this request was ultimately named “outward bound” (Weigand, 1995, p. 2). While some, like Laabs (1991), note that “outdoor- and wilderness-based training programs have been conducted in the U.S. since the early 1960s” (p. 56), others such as Weigand note that Hahn’s ideas were adopted in the United States by the Civilian Conservation Corps as early as the 1930s (Weigand, 1995, p. 3). From the mid-1980s to early 1990s outdoor and adventure learning programs proliferated across and through the United States (Weigand, 1995, p. 3). Most recently, *Fortune* magazine has acknowledged the use of this type of program at General Mills (Kimes, 2008) and Seagate Technology (O’Brien, 2008).

Over the course of time, these programs have adopted many different names. Among the labels and names employed are adventure learning, challenge programs, outdoor education, outdoor-based training, outdoor management development, outdoor experiential development, professional development programs, challenge programs or courses, and experience-based training and development (Dufrene, Sharbrough, Clipson, & McCall, 1999; Goltz & Hietapelto, 2006; Miner, 1991). For the sake of parsimony, these programs are referred to in this article as adventure learning programs.

Though the names differ, the activities involved in this type of training tend to reflect similarity in design, purpose, and practice. Miner (1991) notes that while the media have often portrayed these programs as being “highly adventurous,” in reality they largely consist of “initiative games, ropes courses,

and processing” (p. 64). Laabs (1991) indicates that these programs “set up challenges or ‘initiatives’ which the participants must solve on their own” (p. 56). Finally, Dufrene et al. (1999) add that this type of training “involves having a group navigate a course of mental and physical challenge activities” (p. 24).

The “outdoors” is seen to play a role in this learning as it compels people to challenge, reframe, and adapt their models to new and unfamiliar situations, surroundings, and circumstances (V. Marsick in Froiland, 1994). Because of the potential “foreignness” of the training environment and event, “each event or element of the course becomes a metaphor for life’s events” (Mendel, 1993, p. 32). To this sentiment, Dainty and Lucas (1992) add:

Management developers cite many reasons for using the outdoors. For example, it is believed that in unfamiliar surroundings managers are stripped away from using learned ‘organisational behaviour’ and fall back on behaviours that are undistinguished by hierarchical or ‘classroom’ norms. Additionally, by placing managers in a situation of unfamiliarity, the outdoors provides a living workshop for managing uncertainty or change—something textbooks and lectures just cannot emulate. As a vehicle for learning it can be more powerful than classroom simulations, in that real consequences are produced by the actions (or inactions) of those involved. (p. 107)

The goals for adventure learning are very widespread and address a variety of skills and abilities. Within the learning that may be achieved are improvements in communication, conflict resolution, decision making, leadership, problem solving, risk taking, strategies, role clarity, self-awareness, team building, trust, cooperation, group dynamics, value clarification, ethics, and diversity (Dufrene et al., 1999; Miner, 1991). In commenting on the potential benefits to business education, Goltz and Hietapelto (2006) state:

Challenge courses experiences at the business school level facilitate student trust, jump-start the forming stage for student teams, enhance individual and team self-esteem and self-efficacy, facilitate

self-reflections and self-development, teach team concepts, and enhance the development of a cooperative learning environment, particularly when accompanied by other partnership learning techniques such as contract grading. (p. 221)

According to proponents of this type of training program, to achieve success at least two things have to occur or be set in place. The first is that there needs to be a sense of risk. Gall (1987) indicates that “True physical risk taking is not the goal here; emotional and intellectual risk taking is” (p. 55). Additionally, it has also been noted that “The physical risk, the intellectual problem, and the emotional intensity are all part of what makes adventure learning programs effective” (Petrini, 1990, p. 27). This technique and associated risk taking enable people to see and gain insight into how they act and react under pressure, how they behave when they are not “winning,” and what happens to their values and beliefs when they are confronted with challenges. Laabs (1991) sums up the use of and need for risk and stress in the following: “By examining what happens to oneself under duress in a controlled situation, employees can learn and build on that self-knowledge so they’re much more grounded in the relationship between what they think and what they do when they return to work” (p. 60).

Second, ownership for learning has to be shared among the various parties involved. Goltz and Hietapelto (2006) note that these activities “enhance the learning environment and facilitate knowledge discovery, and facilitators, teachers, and students partner and share ownership of and responsibility for the learning process” (p. 221). To further facilitate the learning process, individuals, groups, and facilitators/teachers typically talk about what they have learned via a group reflection session, and explore how they can apply their new-found knowledge at work (Laabs, 1991, p. 56). In some training, students are also encouraged to keep a journal of their experiences for the purpose of recording their thoughts and reflections on what they have learned and experienced (Laabs, 1991, p. 56).

A MEDIUM-SIZED NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY’S EXPERIENCE

A medium-sized Northeastern university has used adventure learning to successfully teach the essentials of trust as part of upper-level undergraduate and graduate organizational behavior and strategic management courses. This 1-day, 6-hour challenge program is scheduled as close to the beginning of the semester as possible. While coursework preparation is not required for the challenge course, it is helpful for students to have a basic understanding of the concept and importance of organizational and individual trust. The university course instructor sets the challenge course learning objectives and works collaboratively with the adventure learning facilitator to select the appropriate adventure exercises to fulfill the course learning objectives. Table 3 illustrates the introductory, trust-building, and group reflection exercises used in this effective challenge program.

Introduction

To facilitate student learning and buy-in, an overview of the 1-day, 6-hour adventure learning program’s goals and the specific activities that will be engaged in by the participants should be conducted. It is also good practice to set ground rules for the activities and exercises before introducing activities. In general, the ground-rules discussion should include challenge by choice, caring restraint, full value contract, and the win/win philosophy.

Goals Review

It is important to frame any challenge course experience so all participants can work to attain the learning goals. The university course instructor/group leader outlines the challenge course experience’s intent and what the instructor intends the students to learn from the challenge course experience. At the beginning of the challenge course experience, participants are informed by the head facilitator and course instructor of the challenge course’s purpose and goals. After the goals have been relayed, the facilitator will set the challenge course’s tone by reviewing the challenge course philosophy and agreed-upon “ground rules” to ensure that all group members (i.e., students and facilitators) are safe physically, emotionally, and socially.

The specific goals of the associated course (e.g., strategic management or organizational behavior) should also be reviewed. In the case of a course in strategic management the specific goals for the course might include the following:

- Develop a framework of analysis to enable students to identify central issues and problems in complex environments, suggest alternative courses of action, and present well thought-out recommendations for action.
- Develop conceptual skills so that students are able to integrate previously learned aspects of corporations.
- Develop skills to analyze and evaluate the performance of people.
- Bridge the gap between theory and practice by developing an understanding of when and how to apply the concepts and techniques learned in prior business courses.
- Develop a better understanding of the present and future unfamiliar environments in which corporations must function.
- Develop analytical and decision-making skills for dealing with complex conceptual problems in an ethical manner.

Specific goals for an organizational behavior course might include the following:

- Examine the nature of organizational behavior.
- Review basic human processes.
- Examine and summarize the individual in the organization, specifically concerning motivation, work attitudes, careers, and stress.

TABLE 3
Trust-building challenge course activities and related learning outcomes

Activity name	Anticipated learning outcomes	Optimum number of participants	Preparation time (minutes) required	Materials needed	Suggested exercise length (minutes)
Goals Review	Understand the challenge course goals	Any	30	—	5–7
Challenge by Choice	Understand that personal engagement is a choice	Any	10	—	5
Full Value Contract	Learn to value self, others, and the group	Any	10–12	—	5
Caring Restraint and Safety	Learn to care for group's physical, social/emotional safety	Any	5	—	15–20
Win/Win Philosophy	Learn to be more successful through working with others	Any	10	—	5–7
Safety Introduction	Learn emotional and physical safety (i.e., spotting) rules	Any	10	—	15
Name and Favorite Movie	Learn group members' names and some personal information	15–30	10	—	15
Object Toss	Reinforce group members' names	15–30	10	Various medium-sized objects	15–20
Have You Ever?	Learn personal information about group members	15–30	10	Various small objects	15–20
Car and Driver	Learn to trust another group member	Any number of groups of 2	10 – 15	—	10–15

Human Spring	Learn to work together with another group member	Any number of groups of 2	10	—	5–7
Partner Fallback	Learn to trust another group member	Any number of groups of 2	15	—	10–15
To and Fro or Three-Person Trust Rock	Learn to trust two other group members	Any number of groups of 3	15	—	10–15
Willow in the Wind	Learn to begin to trust 9 to 12 group members	Any number of groups of 9–12	10–15	—	15–25
Willow to a Lift	Learn to begin to trust 9 to 12 group members	Any number of groups of 9–12	10–15	—	15–25
Trust Fall	Learn to trust 12 to 15 group members	Any number of groups of 12–15	10–15	Safe, low-height location	20–30
Trust Fall From Height	Learn to ask for support from and trust 12 to 15 group members	Any number of groups of 12–15	15–30	Safe, low-height location	20–30

- Describe group processes.
- Examine and explain influencing factors in organizations.
- Explain organizational processes.

Challenge by Choice

Project Adventure's "Challenge by Choice" (Rohnke, 1989) credo has been widely adopted by most challenge course programs including university programs. The Challenge by Choice philosophy, also known as "Challenge of Choice," is that no one is forced or coerced to do a challenge course activity and it empowers the participant to choose her or his level of engagement. The Challenge by Choice concept is not intended to allow a participant to opt out of activities, but rather to find the level of challenge that is appropriate for each person. It is vital that each participant determine the degree and extent of participation he or she feels able to handle. Additionally, the group should provide a supportive atmosphere where all participants are willing to challenge themselves and step out of their individual comfort zone. When participants work beyond their personal comfort zone, true growth and insight may occur.

Full Value Contract

The Full Value Contract philosophy (Schoel, Prouty, & Radcliffe, 1988) is used in many adventure programs. The three main parts of the contract ask participants to:

1. Value themselves and not be afraid to speak up.
2. Value others and *listen* to what each person has to say.
3. Agree that if a person's behavior is deemed detrimental to the group, that person will be willing to change behavior so the group can move forward.

Discussion, understanding, and agreement to abide by this contract and philosophy are critical to ensuring the safety of course participants.

Caring Restraint and Safety

Caring restraint is introduced to remind participants that it is important for each person to care about all group members. Acceptance of this ideal enables the group to play hard, play fair, and minimize physical and emotional injury. Caring restraint may require some participants to physically and emotionally restrain themselves in some situations and activities to ensure the physical and social/emotional safety of all group members.

Win/Win Philosophy

It is important for participants to understand that the success of the adventure learning exercises is dependent on the contributions and behaviors of all the participants. All participants should select a partner and assume the typical thumb-wrestling position while standing. The facilitator then states, "Each time you pin your partner's thumb you will receive a \$5.00 bonus

in your first pay check. You have 20 seconds to see how many times you can pin your partner's thumb. Go!" After the 20-second period is over, the facilitator asks how many people were able to pin their partner's thumb at least five times, eight times, then 10 or more times. The facilitator then asks, "Did you ever consider working with your partner and thinking win/win instead of a win/lose scenario?"

The facilitator then states, "You again have 20 seconds to see how many times you can pin your partner's thumb. Go!" The partners then thumb wrestle and after the 20-second period is over, the facilitator asks how many people were able to pin their partner's thumb at least five times, eight times, then 10 or more times.

By working together with a win/win philosophy, compromising and allowing your partner to pin your thumb and then your partner allowing you to pin her/his thumb, each will be more successful. By working together, all participants are working to achieve a common goal and are winners. However, participants need to think out of the typical box they are used to and compromise their competitive side a bit.

Safety Introduction

Safety during an experiential exercise is paramount. The facilitator should explain to the group that the success of the experiential exercises is dependent on both emotional and physical safety. The facilitator should explain that the participants will need to trust each other so each participant can gain the most from the activities. Additionally, the facilitator should explain how to properly spot other participants to ensure physical safety.

Name and Favorite Movie

It is also a good idea to have participants introduce themselves and tell something interesting about themselves to other group members. The interesting trivia, knowledge, or insight about the individual could be a favorite movie, a favorite book, a favorite food, or something that people might be surprised to know. Be creative and use a feature that the group members will find interesting. Group members participate in this exercise until all members have introduced themselves and revealed something to the group.

Object Toss Exercise

While challenge programs often start with a name game to begin the learning and sharing process within the group, group member names can then be reinforced with an object toss exercise. The facilitator starts by calling a group member's name, making eye contact with them, and then tossing them the object. The group member thanks the person who threw them the object using their name. The object toss continues for a while slowly adding objects so that more group members can be involved at once. By adding more objects slowly, this exercise provides

an opportunity to also discuss multitasking and the need for participants' concentration and focus. The facilitator reminds the group members that even if they don't have an object they should be concentrating on learning as many group members' names as possible.

Have You Ever?

Participants get into a circle and place a plastic or rubber character as a spot marker on the floor in front of each person. Select one person to start in the center of the circle with no spot marker. The person in the center completes the question "Have you ever . . . ?" describing something that this person has personally done. For example, the person in the center of the circle might state, "Have you ever baked cookies?" Then anyone who has done whatever the person in the middle of the circle states must move to any spot in the circle other than next to the spot where the person began. The person who ends up without a spot will be in the center of the circle. That person then completes the question, "Have you ever . . . ?" describing something different that they have personally done. Variations for this exercise include "Have you ever dreamed or wished . . . ?" or "Like my neighbor, I like"

Trust and Team-Building Exercises

Prior to commencing trust activities, the facilitator should talk about trust with the group. The facilitator should ask questions to help group members reflect on who they trust, how trust is developed, and the ways trust can be undermined. Additionally different levels of trust, depending on each group member's relationship with a person and how important it is to expand the trust and how the trust benefits, should be discussed. Finally, a discussion about the trust that comes with titles and positions (i.e., pilot, policeman, teacher/professor, chief executive officer, manager, administrative assistant, etc.) should be lead by the facilitator. Sequencing of trust experiential exercises is very important so trust and spotting abilities can be developed as the adventure exercises progress.

After warming up the group in preparation for the day's activities, a large portion of the challenge course will focus on activities geared to build trust. Trust is an important part of the university curriculum due to the reliance on and use of team and group exercises and projects throughout the upper-level business courses.

Trust-building exercises are discussed in the following appendices: Appendix A, Car and Driver; Appendix B, Human Spring; Appendix C, Partner Fallback; Appendix D, To and Fro or Three Person Trust Rock; Appendix E, Willow in the Wind; Appendix F, Willow to a Lift; Appendix G, Trust Fall From Ground; and Appendix H, Trust Fall From Height.

Group reflection led by the facilitator should occur after each adventure exercise. The facilitator might ask the participants questions like these: "What have you learned about yourself from this exercise?" "What have you learned about trust in

groups?" "How might this exercise help you trust better in groups?" "Does the group need to change the line around to be more efficient and 'stronger' in different areas for different group members?" "Should all group members be in a 'catching' position at some point depending on each group member?" "Should all group members share the responsibility of playing the different roles of the group?" "How do the various group roles provide a 'safety net' to the faller?"

Lunch

It is important that the entire group eat together to facilitate the bonding and active/experiential learning process during lunch. This period is a great time for participants to discuss with their peers and reflect upon their morning experiences and activities.

While lunch can consist of almost any food either provided by the program or participants, it should include some form of protein (e.g., meat, meat substitute, peanut butter), some form of carbohydrates (e.g., snack chips), and fruits (e.g., apples, oranges, bananas, fruit cups) or vegetables (e.g., carrot or celery sticks and salads). Participants seem to especially enjoy some type of chocolate dessert (e.g., brownies, chocolate chip cookies, M & M's) to top the meal off!

As this program is an active program, maintaining hydration is a critical factor. There should be plenty of water available for lunch as well as throughout the program.

Group Reflection

Each group should discuss each activity after it is completed. There should also be a final reflection in smaller groups at the end of the day's activities. Chiji cards (i.e., a deck of cards with 52 different pictures that participants can use to share and express the positive or negative experiences they had or can relate to) or miscellaneous objects can be used for each participant to discuss and explore the general challenge course experience. There are many things that can be examined in the final reflection, including:

- Thoughts and feelings about the total experience.
- What each participant gained from the experience.
- How the experience relates to the business world.
- How the challenge course learning can be transferred to participant's everyday life.
- What each participant learned about themselves or someone else in the group.
- How the challenge course experience can enrich each participant's life.

It is best to have a list of questions to ask the participants prepared ahead of time to stimulate participant discussion.

Finally, each small group can be asked to name one thing that was most important for its members to effectively have trust as a group or to obtain the group's goals. When the small groups reform into the larger, complete group, one person from each

group can report out the group's one asset that was most important for the group to work efficiently or effectively and why to the entire body of participants.

ADVENTURE LEARNING CHALLENGE COURSE STUDENT COMMENTS

Students felt the adventure challenge course taught them about "being patient, listening, working together, getting to know other group members," and was viewed as "relevant in the business world and everyday situations." One student indicated that they learned to have an "open mind to listen better to others' ideas and try things out." This type of learning helped students "be a better group member" by "trusting people they don't know, and think outside the box to develop a win-win." The adventure learning "added to [students'] theoretical thinking in management," and "showed [one student] many new principles and ideas that will be applied in the workplace," and pushed [one student] to evaluate [her/his] own beliefs about trust."

The student comments on the adventure challenge course focused on the activities as well as group work experience. Students saw the group experience as a "chance to really 'dig-in' to team work" to build "cohesiveness as a team" while "meeting/working closely with a diverse group of people" which "prepared me to get along with other people in the class openly." Students commented that "the group experience went very well," "prepared me for real life work situations," and "involved every student in the class." However, students indicated that "more group problem solving activities would help build group cohesiveness," as well as a desire to "let us pick our own groups."

RISK MANAGEMENT

Modern challenge courses make use of a variety of materials and platforms, including natural platforms such as trees and manmade platforms and structures made from utility poles and steel. These courses can be conducted in wooded areas, open fields, and even inside large temperature-controlled buildings.

Challenge courses pose inherent physical risks to participants and staff. Great effort is taken to protect participants and manage these risks through the incorporation of sophisticated belay and safety systems using wire rope, friction devices, and climbing harnesses. Technological advances in pole hardware and climbing equipment along with industry-accepted installation and design practices have greatly reduced risks to participants and the natural environment.

Prior to engaging in challenge course activities, participants typically must sign a liability waiver and complete preexisting health issues and health insurance information forms before being allowed to participate on the course because of the risk of injury. This information not only protects participants and the course administration site, but is useful in planning and controlling "risky" situations. All participants are permitted to complete all trust-building exercises on the ground. If a

participant does not have medical health insurance, that person is not permitted to participate in any exercises above the ground.

This formal process of risk management is also coupled with the initial goal overview for the day's activities, the full value contract presentation, a discussion of the win/win philosophy, caring restraint, and challenge by choice. When these efforts are viewed in combination they provide a safe physical and emotional environment in which participants can challenge themselves to achieve and learn.

CONCLUSION

Students who have participated in a university-based challenge course have overwhelmingly found the experience to be a memorable and engaging learning experience. Students have commented that they learned "how to work with people they are not familiar with and trust them" and that "teamwork is better than individual work." Additionally, one student commented that they had learned that "trust is key for successful teamwork." The instructor noted that the teams that learned to trust each other during the challenge course were notably more successful in working on complex case analyses and business simulations throughout the semester.

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APPENDIX A: CAR AND DRIVER EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

With the group assembled together, each participant should select a partner. One partner will be a car with bumpers up (i.e., arms outstretched in front) and eyes closed. The other partner is the driver. The driver will communicate with the car by:

- Hands on car's shoulders = Brakes
- Hands off car's shoulders = Acceleration
- Tap on car's right shoulder = Right turn
- Tap on car's left shoulder = Left turn
- Pull on back of car's shirt = Reverse
- Tap on car's head = Horn

Keep in mind that the car is a brand new, dream car. Tell the car not to move too fast until the driver gets used to how the new car accelerates. Each driver tells the car what type of car and color they are. Remember the car is a brand new car and that the driver is driving off the sales lot into downtown traffic, so no fenders benders. Ask to hear the car's horn. After approximately five minutes, partners should switch positions.

While this exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors, a specific course with stop signs, crosswalks, and so on could make the exercise even more interesting.

This exercise can be used with any size group and has been used with groups up to 75.

APPENDIX B: HUMAN SPRING EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

Ask the group members to select a partner about the same height. Each partner should start with their feet shoulder width apart with spread hands touching the partner's spread hands, but fingers should not be interlocked. Then in successive turns, each partner falls into their partner and springs back. Each pair should attempt this exercise several times, each time moving farther apart. Pairs should challenge themselves while working within each partner's limitations.

This exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors and can be used with any size group with any number of members. If there is not an even number of participants, group members can work their way into a group. Alternatively, the activity can be taken to the next level where this activity is completed in a small group of 3–9 group members more in a circle-type shape.

APPENDIX C: PARTNER FALLBACK EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

This is a two-person activity that involves the faller falling backward into the arms of the spotter.

Ask the group members to choose a partner about the same height and weight. The spotter should start in a good *spotting position* with their feet staggered with one foot forward and one foot back, knees bent, hands up, and eyes focused on the person falling. Additionally, the spotter should have their hands flat on the falling person's shoulder blades. The falling person should assume the *falling position* by standing straight and tall with their feet together, arms crossed over their chest and hands on their shoulders. The falling person then initiates the *spotting contract* by asking "Spotter ready?" When the spotter is ready, (s)he will answer "Ready." The faller then asks "Falling?" and when the spotter is ready (s)he will answer "Fall away."

After completing the full spotting contract, the "faller" falls backward into the spotter. The spotter should absorb the faller's fall, bending his/her elbows to allow the faller to slowly fall backward and absorb the fall with his/her arms. It is important that the spotter take the faller back a little ways before standing him/her back upright.

If both the spotter and faller feel comfortable, this process should be done three to four more times with the spotter moving further back each time. The faller can initiate the spotting contract again with the spotter taking the faller back a little further each time.

Note. If the falling individual is moving his/her feet, then the spotter is taking the faller beyond his/her personal limit.

This exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors and can be used with any size group with an even number of members.

APPENDIX D: TO AND FRO OR THREE-PERSON TRUST ROCK EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

This activity is completed in groups of three people. The faller stands between two spotters—facing one spotter and with their back to the other spotter. The faller should assume the falling position with arms crossed over his/her chest and hands on his/her shoulders. Spotters should be in good spotting stance with their hands on the faller either on the faller's shoulder blades or the faller's upper arm (i.e., bicep) area. The faller then initiates the spotting contract and asks, "Spotters ready?" When the spotters are ready, (s)he will answer "Ready." The faller then asks "Falling?" and when the spotters are ready (s)he will answer "Fall away."

After all three participants have gone through the full spotting contract, the faller rocks back on his/her heels (i.e., falls backward) toward the spotter behind him or her. The spotters should absorb the faller's fall with their arms by bending their elbows, allowing the faller to slowly fall backward. It is important that the spotters only take the faller back a little distance before returning the faller to an upright position. The faller then rocks onto his/her toes (i.e., falls forward) toward the front spotter, who absorbs the faller's fall with his/her arms by bending his/her elbows allowing the faller to slowly fall forward. The rocking back and forth or pendulum motion continues each time with the spotters taking the faller a little further backward or forward on each fall.

The faller should initiate falling in each direction. The spotters *should not push* the faller into the other spotter's arms, but rather return the faller to the upright position. To stay within their personal strength abilities, it is also important that the spotters not take the faller further than the spotters can handle the faller's weight. Likewise, it is important that the faller is not taken any further than he or she is comfortable so as to remain in the faller's comfort zone.

Note. If the faller is moving his/her feet, then the spotters are taking the faller beyond his/her personal limit and should come closer to the faller.

This exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors and can be used with any size group divisible by three.

APPENDIX E: WILLOW IN THE WIND EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

This activity is completed in a group of nine to eleven people standing shoulder-to-shoulder in a circle. One group member *volunteers him- or herself* to be the faller by stepping into the middle of the circle and assuming the falling position with arms crossed over their chest and hands on their shoulders. The remaining group members assume spotting positions in the circle, making sure all the spotters are shoulder-to-shoulder.

The faller then initiates the spotting contract by asking, "Spotters ready?" After the faller and spotters have gone through the full spotting contract, the faller falls forward or backward and the group gently passes the faller around the

circle. No single spotter should be holding all the faller's weight but instead the spotters should be working with the spotter on either side of them to share the spotting responsibility.

The faller may be passed around or across the circle as long as the faller's falling is kept under control. Remember this exercise is titled Willow in the Wind, not Twig in a Tornado.

Note. If the faller is moving their feet, then the faller *probably feels uncomfortable*. The group spotters should move closer to the faller so the faller is not falling as far.

This exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors and can be used with smaller groups of 9 to 12 people.

APPENDIX F: WILLOW IN THE WIND TO A LIFT EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

This activity is an extension of the Willow in the Wind experiential exercise with the group designating a leader.

After the faller is "willowed" around the circle for a period of time, the leader will signal to the group that it is time for the lifting component. The leader is placed behind the faller and is responsible for ensuring that the faller's head is properly spotted. The faller is slowly laid back and the group spotters place their hands and arms underneath the faller's body. The spotters that are by the faller's feet will then pick up the faller's feet so the faller is now laying flat in the group spotters' arms about four feet above the ground. The group spotters can then raise the faller higher if the group spotters can handle the faller's weight safely. It is important that the faller remain stiff and not try to sit up so as to ensure the faller's weight is distributed among the group spotters.

The group spotters then slowly rock the faller forward and backward while slowly lowering the faller to the ground. The group spotters continue the rocking motion until the faller is lying flat or on the ground. It is important for the spotters to bend their knees while lowering the faller to the ground.

Note. If the ground is wet or the group spotters are not physically fit, the spotters may only lower the faller to about two to three feet above the ground. The group spotters then stand the faller up by lowering the faller's feet to the ground and supporting the faller's upper body to the upright, standing position.

This exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors and can be used with smaller groups of 9 to 12 people.

APPENDIX G: TRUST FALL FROM GROUND EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

This activity needs to be completed with a group of a minimum of 11 to 12 people, with some groups needing more people to catch the faller and conduct the activity safely.

This activity begins with a *willing* participant (i.e., the faller) standing on the ground.

The group spotters stand shoulder-to-shoulder facing each other in two equal lines. The group spotters stand with their

arms extended and their palms facing up and hands open. The group spotters' hands are alternated with group spotters' hands from each line of group spotters.

The faller must keep their body rigid and straight throughout the entire exercise. Additionally, the faller should not only cross their arms across their chest, but also clasp their hands together to help resist flailing her or his arms.

The faller initiates the spotting contract by asking, "Spotters ready?" After the spotting contract is complete, the faller falls backward into the group spotters' arms. After the faller falls into the group spotters' arms, the group spotters can then stand the faller up or move the faller down the group spotters' line chanting the faller's favorite cookie revealed to the group at the beginning of the exercise to make the experience fun for the faller. It is important when moving the faller down the group spotters' line that the spotters are strategically placed to be able to support the faller's weight (i.e., all the weak spotters cannot be standing next to each other) to catch the faller and move the faller down the group spotters' line after the faller has been caught.

This exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors and can be used with smaller groups of a minimum of 11 to 12 people to be conducted safely.

APPENDIX H: TRUST FALL FROM HEIGHT EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

This activity is a variation of the Trust Fall From Ground experiential exercise and needs to be completed in a group of a minimum of 11 to 12 people, with some groups needing more people to catch the faller and conduct the activity safely.

In this activity, the faller addresses the group and asks for the group's support. Each faller stands on a stump, picnic table, or platform approximately three to four feet above the ground in front of the group spotters and states, "I choose to fall from height" or "I do not choose to fall from height" and asks, "Do I have the group's support?"

It is important for the group spotters to support the faller by saying *yes* in unison, no matter which decision the faller makes. The group's consensus helps all participants understand that it is important to support group members in their decisions.

Should the faller decide to fall from height, the group spotters stand shoulder-to-shoulder facing each other in two equal lines. The group spotters stand with their arms extended and their palms facing up and hands open. The group spotters' hands are alternated with group spotters' hands from each line of group spotters.

The faller must keep their body rigid and straight throughout the entire exercise. Additionally, the faller should not only cross

their arms across their chest, but also clasp their hands together to help resist flailing his or her arms.

The faller initiates the spotting contract by asking, "Spotters ready?" After the spotting contract is complete, the faller falls backward into the group spotters' arms. After the faller falls into the group spotters' arms, the group spotters can then stand the faller up or move the faller down the group spotters' line chanting the faller's favorite cookie revealed to the group at the beginning of the exercise to make the experience fun for the faller. Each group member's favorite cookie should be revealed even if he or she chooses not to fall. It is important when moving the faller down the group spotters' line that the spotters are strategically placed to be able to support the faller's weight (i.e., all the weak spotters cannot be standing next to each other) to catch the faller and move the faller down the group spotters' line after they have been caught.

This exercise can be completed indoors or outdoors and can be used with smaller groups of a minimum of 11 to 12 people to be conducted safely.

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