

Chinese Tower

FACTSHEET

An effective team activity highlights the need to listen to what the customer wants rather than relying on what they *think* the customer will be happy with.

-  **1 hour + debrief**
-  **6-24** (up to 4 teams of 3-6 per team)
-  **For staff at any level**
-  **No computer required**
-  **395 ex VAT**



Learning objectives

- working as a highly effective team
- being clear on what the customer's objective
- meeting the customers' needs
- getting all the facts and figures available
- avoiding making assumptions
- being wary of taking short cuts to save money

About the activity

Teams are instructed to build a Chinese Tower using the resources at their disposal. The customer has given specific instructions on how the finished tower should look.

At the start, the construction resources are hidden so teams do not know what they have to work with. However, they can view them, but at a cost to their point score. Teams start with 250 points and it costs 25 points to send someone to view the resources and report back. Is it worth it? Is one visit enough? As soon as teams collect their resources they lose points at a rate of one per minute until the tower is built.

Detailed plans of the tower's design are available but again it is at a cost: this time 75 points. Also available, for 100 points, is a sketch of the finished tower that the customer desires. The dilemma is that the Team Brief seems to give enough data to allow teams to get started, so why incur an unnecessary loss of points?

The clearly-stated objective in the Brief is to meet the customer's precise specification. It does not say anything about retaining maximum points. However, many teams are keen to save points and believe they can succeed in building a satisfactory tower without further clarification. Chances are they should have taken more account of what the customer really wanted instead of working on their own ideas!

Pack contents

- Trainer's Notes
- Trainer's Log
- Team Briefs
- Sets (4) of Information Cards
- Handout: Key Points
- Sets (4) of Team Resources:
one set comprising scissors, sticky tape, 30cm ruler, blue sticky-tac, 3x A2 card, 3x artstraw

Ideally suited to

Highlights the No.1 priority of listening to the customer, then working to fulfill the customer's objective.

Thinking you know what's wanted is not the same as *knowing*. A great lesson in listening and exploring before taking action.... and if you're looking for a construction element, *Chinese Tower* is the perfect choice.

See Trainers' comments on the next page.

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Customer reviews

” I co-facilitated the Chinese Tower game recently.... absolutely *brilliant* at understanding the importance of taking an accurate customer brief.
Paul Parish, Advanced Business Software & Solutions

” We have used Chinese Tower on a number of occasions. It allows delegates to understand the *importance of listening* to the 'customer', fully understanding the brief and having all the information available at the start of the project.
Lisa Gritton, Head of Talent & Development (UK), Nobia AB

” Nearly all teams showed the need to *go that bit further* to ensure the customer gets what was asked for.
Peter Mistretta, Learning & Development Manager, Aspire Defence Services Ltd



Trainer's role (full guidance supplied in Trainer's notes)

- Issue Team Briefs, explain the mechanics of the activity and allow teams time to study the task.
- Stand by to issue further details and use the Trainer's Log to record exactly what teams ask for and the number of points spent.
- Observe teams in action and note examples (good and bad) of teamwork, communication, planning - and customer focus.
- Bring the session to a close when all teams have completed their constructions.
- Score teams as per the guidelines. Compare the different towers, total the scores for each team, announce scores and the winning team (which might not be the team with the most points).
- Discuss key issues that emerge around the importance of effective teamwork - and keeping a customer focus.
- Compare what happened in the activity with what typically happens within an organisation (optional). Ask teams to complete an Action Plan for introducing specific and real changes back at work. Stress the need to always listen to customer needs.

Northgate says...

The finished Chinese Towers provide a very visual result - and it's highly likely that no two towers will look the same! It's very clear when teams have gone full steam ahead on the construction without making all the necessary checks!

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