Anyone who works in an NYLT setting is automatically hooked - they love the people, they love the atmosphere, they love the productivity. Have you ever thought of why? It’s because we GET IT! Staffers know how teams are supposed to work together - I mean its what we teach after all! We, without fail, value each others input. We know what comes first, second, and third when a team forms. We know what to do when conflict arises among our team members - and we know what to do when things don’t go according to plan. The NYLT Community is undoubtedly poised to be one of the most successful groups of people out there - if only we could work with solely each other for the rest of our lives.

So how can we deal with this dichotomy between the “professional teammates” that we work with at NYLT, and the peers we work with everywhere else in our lives? How can we take NYLT material and truly apply it to groups of people who don’t know what forming, storming, norming, and performing mean? The NYLT Academy staff sat down for a discussion about this, and we came up with some interesting ideas.

What do we do at NYLT to start the team building process? Trust falls, name tags, and getting to know me games are all within the arsenal of anybody at a Scouting function. Have you ever tried to start a game of “Captain on Deck” with your research team in chemistry class though? Sometimes what we are comfortable doing in the scouting world doesn’t translate 1 to 1 in the “real world”. Instead, what about simply getting to know them through conversation?

Staffer Elyse agrees, she believes that the very beginning is probably the best time to simply get to know the members of your team. She says that a leader must know their team so that “he or she can play to their strengths and weaknesses.” The amount of information you can find out about someone through a simple conversation is amazing! In the case of a team being formed to complete an experiment & report for a chemistry class, try starting out your meetings with simple conversation - ask how everyone’s day is going, what did they do over the past weekend - anything to begin the process of building a report because that eventually leads to trust. A team that knows each other and cooperates will be far more efficient than a group of people who are simply working together on a project.

However, the team needs to form a vision of what they want their final project to look like. How does an NYLT alumnus start that conversation without simply asking “What should our vision be guys?”? Instead, Staffer John Zanin said that you should have the team think about what their final product will be. Will your group be making a tri-fold poster, or a PowerPoint presentation, or maybe even a video to present your project? Staffer Patricia added that this is definitely part of the process that translates directly from NYLT to everything else - active discussions.

Team members must have an open mind, ask follow up questions, contribute to the conversation, and respect each other’s ideas - this will not only lead to a vision for the whole team to feel proud of, but it’ll also builds your teams trust and furthers their development. Once a vision has been informally established, continuing simple conversation about what goes into completing the project should be utilized to see where each teammate sees them self contributing to the project.

Once your team gets started, constant communication is going to be the difference between success and failure. It may be tough to work with individuals who may not have the leadership toolbox that you have, but leading by example, and constantly talking about the vision that you want your teammates to achieve is the best way to success.
A new year brings a new set of NYLT courses and in most cases, new staff members or entirely new staffs. This new team needs to develop in order to be in the norming or performing stage by the time the first day of a course rolls around. Are you in need of some tips for forming and bonding your new staff? Look no further, we’ve got some ideas!

CREATE A SPECIAL PLACE
This may be the most important step in facilitating the bonding of a team. Remember that everybody acts differently when faced with a new group of people. Be sure each individual knows they won’t be judged on their personal opinions, hobbies, or interests. They’ll be more open to sharing their thoughts whether it’s a personal or business related conversation, which will make bonding much easier from the start.

GET TO KNOW YOU GAMES
Get to know you games are more personal than team building games. They allow your staff to get to know each other not only as fellow staff members, but as friends. These don’t have to be hands on. Get to know you games can be as simple as a name game, time for short story telling, or question asking in a group. These games should help your staff bond as they get to know more about each other as well as learn how each individual communicates with others. As a senior staff member, this is a key time to observe your staff’s personalities for future TG pairings, role assignments, etc.

TEAM BUILDING GAMES
We’ve all played team building games. You’ve probably played quite a few in your day, maybe some too many times to count. There are always new games out there. Ask around your council or check the internet - or if you’re feeling creative, make up your own! Even playing a game you thought you’d mastered with a different group of people may bring different viewpoints or strategies. Games not only allow you to see each staff member’s true personality, but also how well they work and interact with others...with a few laughs along the way! Be sure to debrief after each game. Team building games may be a great tool to get people talking to each other and working together, but throwing in a reflection will reinforce the skills we teach at NYLT and with different minds working together you all might learn something new! Another key time to observe staff.

*The Line Between Silly and Serious NYLT is fun, but at certain points, staff has to lead by example. This means that by training your staff to analyze the situation and act accordingly during staff development, you’ll be less likely to have problems and distractions during the few serious times throughout the course. With a closely bonded staff, members will feel more comfortable reminding each other to set the example if needed.

KEEP THE LINES OPEN
Staff development doesn’t end when the weekend or meeting is over. Though everyone is busy, fun get-togethers like bonfires or a tool such as a Facebook group can keep your staff in touch on the off hours. This will allow your staff to get to know each other more than once a month. If you think your staff needs to bond more, but has little time to meet up, post in the group a little more often to keep them chatting. Be sure to follow the youth protection guidelines in creating this social media group, which you can find here:

It has been a great year for the Boy Scouts of America in the training of youth leaders around the country. Leadership courses are growing and expanding to new locations within the blink of an eye. With the growth and expansion more youth are able to receive quality leadership training. The youth leaders are able to take the skills they have learned back to their unit and community and put them to the test each and every day, by making decisions and leading using the youth led method. The growth has helped to reach more of the Scouting’s youth leaders, and teaching them skills that will last a lifetime.

NYLT
This past year 183 councils had 285 NYLT Courses, in 43 States, Germany and Taiwan. That is an incredible amount of NYLT courses held! It is also great to see that you can find an NYLT course in almost any state, and a few places around the world. NYLT truly gives you the foundation and tools necessary to build yourself as a leader.

NYLT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY
This past summer the NYLT Leadership Academy had its biggest numbers come through the program. 108 Scouts and Venturers came to Washington, DC to participate in the premier leadership training for NYLT youth staff nationwide. This summer the NYLT Leadership Academy will be hosting two courses in Washington DC from July 5 - 11, and July 12 - 18, as well as course in St. Louis, MO from July 26 - August 1, 2015. This will be the first year that NYLT Leadership Academy will be offered in two cities. For more information visit: NYLT-LeadershipAcademy.org.

NAYLE
This year the National Advanced Youth Leadership Experience will be offered at all of the BSA’s High Adventure Bases. Meaning that you can have the NAYLE experience at Northern Tier, Philmont, Florida Sea Base or the Summit. For more information on NAYLE visit, www.scouting.org/NAYLE.

2015 is setting up to be a great year for youth leadership training within the Boy Scouts of America. It will be great to see where all these courses go in the future, and if 2014 is a sign, we can only expect great things.

Logan Echard, NYLT Leadership Academy Marketing Director contributed to this entry.
“TELL ME AND I FORGET, TEACH ME AND I MAY REMEMBER, INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Well known for his study on electricity, Benjamin Franklin was an engaged politician, writer, and inventor. One of his popularized quotes details how to fully succeed in a learning environment. As you go about in forming your 2015 NYLT course staffs, may you always remember to involve your staff and provide them the stepping stones to achieving great success.

For myself, this quote means more than it has to date after having an ‘aha!’ moment. As a leader, one of things we do is mentor our team; however, something that many, including myself oftentimes forget is that mentoring never has an end date. I’ve truly been blessed with the youth I have been able to work with over my past two years with the NYLT Leadership Academy and when sessions came to an end, it always felt more like a “farewell and do great things.” But that isn’t the case whatsoever. One of my former p-staff has remained in very close communication with myself since that “farewell and do great things” moment. To be honest, I never imagined that to be the case. Yet, as conversations became more casual rather than just formal evaluations, I realized, as a mentor you’re learning from them just as they are from you. As cliché as this sounds, it is absolutely is true. It’s something I even had to run to my own mentor to discuss about! Relating this back to Ben Franklins quote, by engaging someone to learn you learn as well.

I wish you all the best as you go about your staff development process this year and may we all learn something from those around us.

Namaste,

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