



## Activity: **Puzzling Problem**

### Overview

Anything and everything can be an experiential activity. Something as simple as putting a puzzle together can lead to a great conversation. *Puzzling Problem* asks three teams to put three different puzzles together in as little time as possible. To make this challenge more interesting, the pieces for the three puzzles are all mixed up, and the teams switch puzzles twice during play. This can be one of the longer activities on this CD-ROM, but well worth the time.

### Set Up

#### Props

- 3 75 to 100 piece puzzles (use fewer pieces to shorten the activity)
- 3 Stations, either on tables or on the floor for groups to work

#### Set Up

Pour the pieces from all three puzzles into a bag and mix them up. After they are well mixed, distribute the mixed pieces back into the boxes evenly. Place a box of pieces at each station, being sure to leave the lid to reference the puzzle image, and divide your team into 3 groups.

### Instructions

The team must complete all three puzzles in the quickest time possible, or in a designated timeframe. It is often helpful to set the timeframe, usually 20 to 30 minutes.

Each individual workgroup sets out to complete the puzzle at their station. The groups will find that the pieces they were given don't necessarily match the puzzle on which they are working. They must share resources and knowledge with other groups to complete the puzzles.

The stations may not be moved closer to one another, but pieces may be transferred between groups.

Twice during play, stop the teams and have them rotate clockwise one station and pick up where the other team left ended. This forces groups to inherit another groups' successes and/or problems.

### Sample Story Line

"Unlock success by unlocking the secrets of the puzzles. Using your wit and skill, your team must put all of the pieces in place for all three puzzles in a few minutes or less. This will take focus, teamwork, and attention to detail. I believe you have what it takes, and know that you have everything you need to be successful. Good luck and time starts NOW!"

### Variations

One variation is to spread out the random pieces at each station and not provide the box. This way the participants won't have a clear vision of what they are trying to accomplish. Hand out black and white, poorly photocopied versions of each puzzle solution only when the groups ask for more information. After they struggle with the black and white version, if they ask again, give them a well-copied, colored image of the puzzle and have them finish. The purpose behind this variation is to explore clarity in how we communicate a message. The clearer the vision, the easier it is to work toward making the vision a reality.

### Safety

Psychological safety is the largest safety concern with *Puzzling Problem*. Create an environment that encourages people to share their input with the group. Let everyone know that every contribution is valuable.

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**Reflection**

*Puzzling Problem* introduces the group to some interesting problem-solving dynamics. The questions below explore how the group overcomes change while trying to solve problems.

**Discover:** “How did you react when you were first given the challenge? How did your reaction change as you discovered your group did not have all the correct pieces? And finally, how did you respond to moving to an entirely different puzzle?”

**Connect:** “What are some examples of how you have coped with change in the past? How was this exercise similar? How was it different?”

**Create:** “What has this exercise taught you about change? How will you view change in the future? What can you do to prepare for a life of ongoing change?”