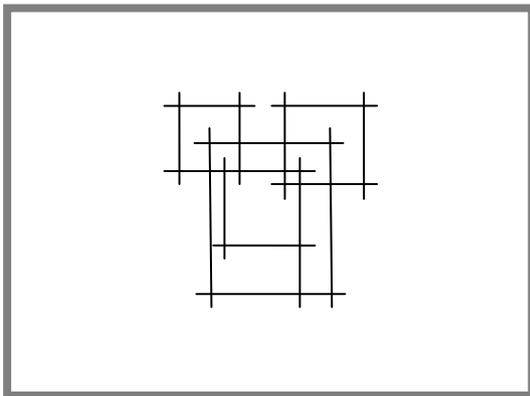


## The Planks

There are many ways to simulate the activities of a work team but few have quite the same impact as 'The Planks'.

*I had the pleasure to take part in the "The Planks" exercise as both a participant and observer with some of my teams – the energy that was generated, the enjoyment that people felt and, importantly, the lessons learnt through an effective debrief made it one of the most valuable training exercises I have been involved in. We are still using the lessons learnt today as part of our drive for continuous improvement and helping everyone understand the benefits of "standard work". – George Farrell, Regional Operations Manager, Sonoco-Alcore*

During the initial 15-minute briefing phase, you will agree upon the criteria which define a successful team – whether at work, at leisure or with your family. When you have completed the exercise, after 90 minutes, you will use these same criteria to debrief your performance and decide how you will put the learning experience into practice.



In groups of three to six people, your mission is to recreate the shape shown, using the set of fifteen planks provided. They range in length from 900mm to 1,900mm, weigh up to a kilogramme and have a substantial feel about them.

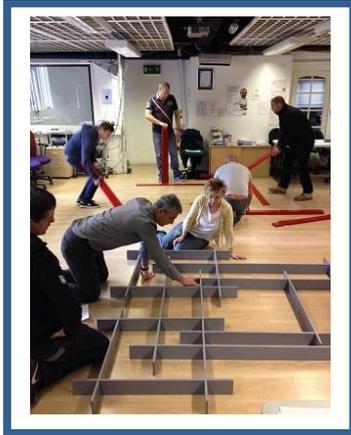
Due to the design characteristics of the materials, this is an activity that works best on the ground and, once you have got the hang of the assembly, you will need to get inside the framework to be successful.



Here are the blue planks arranged in starting order, longest on the bottom and shortest on the top, and fanned out to show more of the detail and the notches will enable the planks to be fitted together.

45 minutes will be allocated for you to work together with your other team members, to firstly assemble the fifteen planks – no mean achievement in itself – and then be able to repeat the assembly in a consistent manner, so that you can begin to improve the assembly time and how you work as a team.

*'The Planks' levels the playing field and removes barriers that would normally divide individuals within and across a normal working environment encouraging people to step outside their normal comfort zone. Martin Lucking, Production Manager, De La Rue*



After the 45 minutes, you will probably have successfully assembled the planks in less than ten minutes and repeated this a few times. Now it is time to introduce a bit of time pressure and go against the clock!

When there is more than one team involved, it might just become a little bit competitive and your times will be recorded for all to see.

The Planks			
	#1	#2	#3
Blue	6:37	5:38	1:57
Red	5:04	3:27	1:50
	Speedy	Team	CP
	PLC	SPS	

When all competing teams have successfully completed their first run, they now have ten minutes to discuss their performance, within their own teams, and look for ways to improve.



What went well? What didn't go so well? Are we missing anything? What would an F1 Pit Crew do? How shall we assemble them on the next run? During this time, you can assemble the planks as often as you like, whilst you devise your optimum way of working.

There will be two further timed assemblies, and another ten minutes between them, to achieve your best time.

All high performing teams use debriefing – where all participants are involved in deconstructing the event and the experiences of each individual – to improve their individual and overall team performance. During the debrief, you will have time to think about how this game relates to the real world and what you can take away from this event to put into action to get different results.

Communications, problem solving, leadership, management, continuous improvement, they are all revealed in this fast-paced, exciting, highly effective team activity.

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