

5 Team Problem Solving: The Zin Obelisk

Purpose:

- I. To experience and examine the sharing of information in team problem solving.
- II. To study leadership, cooperation, and conflict issues in team problem solving.

Group Size

A team of five to eight participants.

Time

Approximately fifty-five minutes, including a maximum of twenty-five minutes for completing the activity and between thirty minutes and one hour for the process review.

Materials

- I. A copy of the Zin Obelisk Group Instruction Sheet for each participant.
- II. A set of Zin Obelisk Information Cards for the group (thirty-three cards per set).
- III. A large newsprint pad and felt-tipped markers, or a chalkboard and chalk.
- IV. Blank paper and a pencil for each participant.
- V. A copy of the Zin Obelisk Review Sheet for the facilitator.

Physical Arrangement

A quiet room in which members of the group are seated in a circle.

Method

- I. The leader distributes to each team member a copy of the Zin Obelisk Group Instruction Sheet, paper, and a pencil.
- II. After the members have had time to read the instruction sheet, the leader distributes a set of Zin Obelisk Information Cards randomly among the team members. The team begins the task.
- III. The team completes the task, or is interrupted by the leader after twenty-five minutes.
- IV. The leader reviews the experience with the team, posting a large copy of the Zin Obelisk Review Sheet, and, if necessary, the Answer and Rationale information.

Variations

- I. Any number of groups may be directed simultaneously. A set of Zin Obelisk Information Cards should be provided for each group.
- II. Participants may complete the Review Sheets individually before the group process takes place.
- III. Extra irrelevant information may be introduced to complicate the task.

ZIN OBELISK INFORMATION CARDS

Make a set of thirty-three cards by typing each of the following sentences on a 3"x5"

1. The basic measurement of time in Atlantis is a day.
2. An Atlantian day is divided into schlibs and ponks.
3. The length of the zin is 50 feet.
4. The height of the zin is 100 feet.
5. The width of the zin is 10 feet
6. The zin is built of stone blocks.
7. Each block is 1 cubic foot.
8. Day 1 in the Atlantian week is called Aquaday.
9. Day 2 in the Atlantian week is called Neptiminus.
10. Day 3 in the Atlantian week is called Sharkday.
11. Day 4 in the Atlantian week is called Mermaidday.
12. Day 5 in the Atlantian week is called Daydoldrum.
13. There are five days in an Atlantian five days in an Atlantian week.
14. The working day has 9 schlibs.
15. Each worker takes rest periods during the working day totaling 16 ponks.
16. There are 8 ponks in a schlib.
17. Workers each lay 150 blocks per schlib.
18. At any time when work is taking place there is a gang of 9 people on site.
19. One member of each gang has religious duties and does not lay blocks.
20. No works takes place on Daydoldrum.
21. What is a cubitt?
22. A cubitt is a cube, all sides of which measure 1 megalithic yard.
23. There are 3 ½ feet in a megalithic yard.
24. Does work take place on Sunday?
25. What is a zin?
26. Which way up does the zin stand?
27. The zin is made up of green blocks.
28. Green has special religious significance on Mermaidday.
29. Each gang includes two women.
30. Work starts at daybreak on Aquaday.
31. Only one gang is working on the construction of the zin.
32. There are eight gold scales in a gold fin.
33. Each block costs 2 gold fins.

ANSWER AND RATIONALE

The answer is *Neptiminus*.

Rationale

1. The dimensions of the zin indicate that it contains 50,000 cubic feet of stone blocks.
2. The blocks are 1 cubic foot each, therefore, 50,000 blocks are required.
3. Each worker works 7 schlibs in a day (2 schlibs are devoted to rest).
4. Each worker lays 150 blocks per schlib, therefore each worker lays 1050 blocks per day.
5. There are 8 workers per day, therefore 8,400 blocks are laid per working day.
6. The 50,000th block, therefore, is laid on the sixth working day.
7. Since work does not take place on Daydoldrum, the sixth working day is Neptiminus.

ZIN OBELISK GROUP INSTRUCTION SHEET

In the ancient city of Atlantis, a solid, rectangular obelisk, called a zin, was built in honor of the goddess Tina. The structure took less than two weeks to complete.

The task of your team is to determine on which day of the week the obelisk was completed. You have twenty-five minutes for this task. Do *not* choose a formal leader.

You will be given cards containing information related to the task. You may share this information orally, but you may not show your cards to other participants.

ZIN OBELISK REVIEW SHEET

1. What behavior helped the group accomplish the task?
2. What behavior hindered the group in completing the task?
3. How did leadership emerge in the team?
4. Who participated most?
5. Who participated least?
6. What feelings did you experience as the task progressed?
7. What suggestions would you make to improve team performance?