



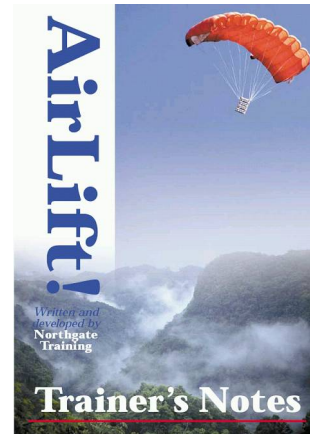
NORTHGATE

ACTIVITIES FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

AirLift!

Problem Solving & Teamwork

An 'under-pressure' situation that tests participants' teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills. Only well-organised teams, with a sound approach to the main problem, will succeed!



KEY SKILLS

- Teamwork & Leadership
- Problem-solving
- Organisation skills

TIMING	1 ½ hours
NUMBERS	up to four teams of 4 to 6 participants
COST	£395 plus VAT for UK. Delivery £9.75 for UK, £29 or less for elsewhere

THE CONTEXT

Teams are responsible for co-ordinating an airlift of emergency supplies to a number of remote villages desperately in need of shelters, food and medical supplies. These materials: tents, rice, medicines etc are represented by a number of coloured, and different-shaped **wooden blocks**. Teams have lists of the various resources required by each village.

Their task is to construct packing crates (from **card**) to contain each village's supplies, and mark them clearly with their destination. They then pack the crates into a **cargo hold**. Before packing, the delivery route must be planned for the plane so that crates are loaded into the hold in the right order. It's no good, for example, taking the crate for the first drop and packing it at the back of the hold! The problem is compounded by the limited size of the cargo hold.

Teams are told that one objective is to minimise the use of resources - which means using as little fuel and as little card as possible.

Teams have 60-90 minutes to complete the task. At the end they complete a **Pilot's Log** to record their chosen route. The Trainer inputs these into the computer and an assessment and score is printed out (*If you do NOT wish to use a computer there are instructions for manual analysis*).

Effective groups will be successful and score highly. Less effective groups can fail at various levels – including running out of fuel and having to make an emergency landing!

IMPORTANT TEAM LESSONS

Key lessons arising are the need for groups to:

- **define the problem**
- **be aware of the constraints**
- **set an objective**
- **plan the work**
- **think before acting**
- **structure the process**

AirLift! clearly demonstrates the value of using a structured approach to problem solving – and a model is suggested in the Trainer’s Notes that come with the pack:

*Define the problem → →Specify the objective → →Specify the constraints →→
Identify possible solutions →→ Implement the best solution*

But **four additional elements make this activity successful with participants**: the *apparent* simplicity of the task, the simplicity of the calculations, the construction component and the potential for lateral solutions.

Airlift! appears deceptively simple. In fact, it has hidden depths that really put the team’s skills to the test. Many groups jump right in and begin allocating resources and building crates. When they later plan a route they find that the crates they have constructed will not fit into the hold in the right order. They may be able to change their route to accommodate their crates but finish up with a worse route in terms of fuel consumption.

AirLift!

WHAT TO DO

1. Divide the group into team and introduce the exercise – using the presentation slides.
2. Issue a **Brief, Pilot’s Log, Cargo Hold, Wooden Blocks** to teams and allow teams 60-90 minutes to work on the task.
3. Collect the Pilot’s Log and issue short questionnaires - to consider how they tackled the problem.
4. Enter the data from the Pilot’s Logs into the computer and print out a **Results** for each team (or refer to manual version).
5. Lead discussion on how teams tackled the problem, using their questionnaires as the basis. Ask each team how well they think they did and list their rankings.
6. Issue the Results that summarise performance and give a score.
7. Lead a general debriefing on the key lessons learned in the exercise - and encourage teams to adopt the problem-solving structure at work. Full **Trainer’s Notes** provided.

TRAINERS’ QUOTE

*“We used **Airlift!** on a leadership course with 32 participants aged 24-40. The exercise brought out very clearly the need for teamwork in setting objectives and controlling the work of a group. The greatest learning points were that any team needs to spend time planning a structured approach to a task and ensuring that everyone is totally clear on what has to be achieved. The exercise proved to be an excellent learning platform and was one of the highlights of the course.”*

E Davidge RAF Hereford

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