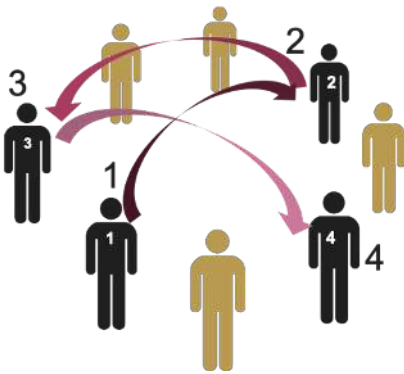


## Tennis ball challenge

To play the game you will need 3 tennis balls, timer and flipchart to write the results on.

### Start by creating the ball sequence using ONE ball



1. Ambassador introduce the game: “Now we are going to play a game with **tennis balls** to learn some of the things these teams do to achieve these amazing results.” Ask the team to stand in a circle (about 3-4 meter in diameter) and say we are going to create a process where everyone touches the ball once.

2. You as Ambassador stand next to someone in the circle and say: “I am going to pretend to be a team member and pass the ball to someone else” Throw ONE ball to someone on the opposite side of the circle from where you are standing and ask that person to pass the ball to someone else and ask them to remember who they passed it on to.

3. Have the next person pass the ball to someone new. Say: “you can’t pass back to the same person or someone who already touched the ball, so keep on passing until everyone touches the ball once.
4. Say, “let’s see if we can remember the sequence “, and hand over the ball to the person who will start the sequence. You step out of the circle.
5. If they struggle with the sequence, so another round asking them to remember who touched the ball after them. **Be sure to use the word TOUCH and not pass/throw/toss or anything else.**

### Complicate the game: THREE balls, rules and timing

1. Say: “We never do one thing at a time – we’re always multitasking”. Explain that you are going to add two other balls for them to pass around in the same sequence as with the one ball.
2. Carefully say the rules: **”Remember the simple rules (1)everyone must touch each ball, (2)one at a time and in the (3) same sequence**
3. Ask the first person to pass the first ball and as they pass it, hand them the second then third balls. They may well drop the balls a few times.
4. Get them to do it a couple of times if need be, then introduce speed as an objective.

### Adding timing

1. Ambassador say: “OK now we’d like to see how fast you can do this. We will start timing you. The other Ambassador time the group.
2. Say, “to make it simple, I’ll hand all three balls to Jane, but remember the rules: “Everyone must touch each of the three balls, in the same sequence we established, One ball at a time”
3. Call START when the first ball leaves the hand of the first person, and STOP when the third ball touches the hand of the last person. The other Ambassador time the round
4. Call out the time and record it as the baseline on the flipchart or paper.
5. Tell them that’s pretty good and ask if they think they can do it any faster. Let them repeat a few rounds and announce and note their time after each attempt. Repeat the rules.

**Additional tips**

- ★ Keep the pace fast. Don't give them time to think.
- ★ You do not want them to start thinking creatively yet. Notice how some will implicitly start blaming others for not catching the ball.
- ★ Repeat the rules fast. Speak fast.
- ★ Show excitement as they get the time down by sheer speed and skills

**Introduce the 3-second challenge**

1. Say: "You should be proud of getting your speed down to \_\_ seconds. However, we have worked with hundreds of teams all over the world, and every group that has done this exercise has been able to bring it down to less than 3 seconds (with the exception of two teams actually...)"
2. Don't give any hints! Play it straight.
3. If they are not coming up with any new ideas, ASK: "Do you think you're going to get drastically better results by doing the same thing faster?" or "Are there any additional resources you could be using to help?"
4. Continue to record their time - if they beat 3 seconds and you still have time, tell them that about 50% of groups were able to get it to less than 1 second!

**Additional tips**

- ★ Slow down the pace a little. Speak slower. Repeat the rules slower (someone will invariably ask: can you repeat the rules). Emphasize the word TOUCH in the rules.
- ★ Remember what they say when you first mention 3 seconds. It will be various expressions of disbelief and skepticism. Ask them afterwards if they remember what they said.
- ★ If they are getting frustrated, help them with gentle hints and by encouraging the ones with new ideas to speak up. Be subtle but supportive.

**Debrief from the tennis ball game and ask what the team experienced.**

Debrief questions	Key points to highlight
What was different about this group operated towards the end of this exercise, versus the beginning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Where the ideas were coming from: "everyone"</li> <li>● Whose ideas got traction: it did not matter who said them</li> <li>● How people who had been quiet suddenly were speaking up and being listened to</li> <li>● Energy - and noise - level</li> <li>● How fast they were trying things out - versus debating them</li> <li>● How some ideas did not work, but they opened up the possibility of other ideas</li> </ul>
What triggered this shift in the how this group operated?	When the facilitator said, "Every group has done this under three seconds."
What was it about the '3 second assertion' that caused the shift in this group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Became a challenge for the group. We are naturally motivated and energised to solve challenging problems, not by followoign instructions.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This clearly could not be achieved in the same old way. Was really tough. Yet it was believable because others have done it.</li> </ul>
<p>“What would have happened if the facilitator had told you that most teams do this in less than three seconds right at the beginning?”</p>	<p>Goes to believability... the teams have to try it a few times and become entrenched in the game... even though they can't figure out how they will do it by the time the facilitator mentions it, they've already bought in.</p>
<p>“Did anyone tell you, ‘you HAVE to do it in less than three seconds?’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. I just presented data. You made it your own goal, so the implementing team needs to set its own goal!</li> <li>• Did you notice that everyone was throwing ideas in, everyone had a voice and in this team an equal voice?</li> <li>• Do you recall how many different things you tried once the 3-second challenge was adopted So it is important for the team to experiment and try different solutions in the project</li> </ul>

**Common challenges you might encounter during this exercise**

People are satisfied with an average time and don't want to keep trying to improve the process

- Try to coax them. “Are you sure, others are still trying”. “We have seen about 20 different ways to do this...”
- Don't push too hard. If they want to quit - it is fine. Use it in the debrief. “Not every team will want to go there. And that is OK”. “What might have helped shift things for you”. What might the coach have said or done to stimulate you to stick with it?”

One voice takes over and leads the team in the wrong direction

- Emphasize the fact that this is a group effort and that there is not one way or one specific technique needed to get it right.
- When team members are making suggestions that are being ignored, try drawing their attention to it by asking them “Do we want to try that?” The point is to gently encourage them to keep experimenting and iterating - even if an idea isn't likely to get the time down, shifting their thinking might spark other ideas.

They start reorganizing before you put out the 3-second challenge.

- Go with the flow. After they do it once in a reorganized fashion (they may get it down by a few seconds), put the challenge out and proceed.
- In the debrief, be sure to mention that the team jumped ahead before the challenge, which is unusual and shows that a high propensity for innovation - without the usual impetus for innovation.