Team Dynamics Exercise-LOST AT SEA

You are adrift on a private yacht in the South Pacific. As a consequence of a fire of unknown origin, much of the yacht and its contents have been destroyed. The yacht is now slowly sinking. Your location is unclear because of the destruction of critical navigational equipment and because you and the crew were distracted trying to bring the fire under control. Your best estimate is that you are approximately one thousand miles south-south-west of the nearest land.

Below is a list of fifteen items that are intact and undamaged by the fire. In addition to these items you have:

- A serviceable, rubber life raft with oars which is large enough to carry yourself, the crew and all the items listed below.
- The total contents of all survivors’ pockets are a package of cigarettes, several books of matches and five one-dollar bills.

Your task is to rank the 15 items in terms of their importance for survival. Using the scoring sheet provided place number one (1) by the most important, and so on through number 15, the least important.

- Sextant
- Shaving mirror
- Five-gallon can of water
- Mosquito netting
- One case of U.S. Army C rations
- Maps of the Pacific ocean
- Seat cushion (flotation device approved by the Coast Guard)
- Two gallon can of oil-gas mixture
- Small am/fm radio
- Shark repellent
- Twenty square feet of opaque plastic
- One quart of 160-proof rum
- Fifteen feet of nylon rope
- Two boxes of chocolate bars
- Fishing kit

You and the other members of your “design team” will take this test individually, without knowing each other’s answers, then you will re-take the test as a group. When working as a group you will share your individual solutions and reach a consensus - one ranking for each of the 15 items that best satisfies all group members.
# LOST AT SEA – Scoring Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Expert’s RANKING</th>
<th>YOUR RANKING</th>
<th>ERROR POINTS</th>
<th>GROUP RANKING</th>
<th>ERROR POINTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sextant</td>
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<td>shaving mirror</td>
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<td>five-gallon can of water</td>
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<td>mosquito netting</td>
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<td>one case of C rations</td>
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<td>maps of Pacific ocean</td>
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<td>seat cushion</td>
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<td>two-gallon can of oil-gas mixture</td>
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<td>small transistor radio</td>
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<td>shark repellent</td>
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<td>twenty square feet of opaque plastic</td>
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<td>one quart of 160 proof rum</td>
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<td>fifteen feet of nylon rope</td>
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<td>two boxes of chocolate bars</td>
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<td>fishing kit</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ERROR POINTS --&gt;</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ERROR POINTS --&gt;</strong></td>
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</table>

Experts’ ranking will be provided at the completion of the exercise. Error points are the absolute difference between your ranking and the survival experts’ ranking (disregard plus or minus signs).
Notes on decision by consensus

After everyone has finished the individual ranking, work together with the rest of the team to produce a TEAM CONSENSUS RANKING. The time allowed is 30 minutes.

**DECISION BY CONSENSUS**
This is an exercise in team decision-making. Your group is to employ the method of TEAM CONSENSUS in reaching its decision.

This means that the prediction for each of the 15 survival items MUST be agreed upon to some extent by each group member before it becomes part of the group decision.

Consensus is difficult to reach. Therefore, not every ranking will meet with everyone's complete approval. Try, as a team, to make each ranking one in which all team members can at least partially agree.

**Here are some guides to use in reaching consensus:**

1. Avoid arguing for your own individual judgments. Approach the task on the basis of logic.
2. Use your own and others’ logic.
3. Avoid changing your mind only in order to reach agreement or avoid conflict. Support only solutions with which you are able to somewhat agree.
4. Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as majority vote, averaging or trading votes in reaching decisions.
5. Stick to your point of view even if the going is rough and the group disapproves.
7. View differences of opinion as helpful rather than as a hindrance in decision-making.
8. Use a win-win approach.
9. View your initial agreement as suspect.
Lost at Sea Suggested Answers / Rationale

According to the experts (United States Coastguard), the basic supplies needed when a person is stranded mid-ocean are articles to attract attention and articles to aid survival until rescue arrives. Without signaling devices, there is almost no chance of being spotted and ultimately rescued. Furthermore, most rescues occur within the first 36 hours and a person can survive with only a minimum of food and water during that period. So, the following is the order of ranking the items in their importance to your survival:

1. The shaving mirror would be critical for signaling.
2. The oil / petroleum mixture would also be critical for signaling. The mixture will float on water and could be ignited with one of the pieces of paper currency and a match.
3. The water would be necessary to replenish fluids lost through perspiration.
4. One case of army rations would provide basic food intake.
5. The opaque plastic could be used to collect rain water and provide shelter from the elements.
6. The chocolate bars could provide reserve food supply
7. The fishing kit is ranked lower than the chocolate since ‘a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush’, and there is no guarantee that you will catch any fish.
8. The nylon rope could be used to secure people or equipment to prevent them from being washed overboard.
9. The floating seat cushion could serve as a life preserver if someone fell overboard.
10. Shark repellent
11. The 160 per cent proof rum contains 80% alcohol, which is enough to be used as an antiseptic for any injuries; otherwise, it is of little value.
12. The small transistor radio would be of no use without a transmitter. You would also be out of range of any radio station.
13. Maps of the Pacific Ocean would be worthless without navigation equipment.
14. The mosquito netting would not be necessary, as there are NO mosquitoes in the mid-Pacific Ocean, and the fishing kit would be more effective for catching fish.
15. Without tables and a chronometer, relatively useless.
Debrief Questions (choose a few to discuss):
- How were decisions made?
- Who influenced the decisions and how?
- What behaviors helped/hindered the consensus-seeking process?
- What patterns of decision-making occurred?
- How could better decisions have been made?
- Did people listen to each other, if not – why?
- What roles did group members adopt?
- Who were the influential group members and how were they influential?
- How was conflict managed?
- How did people feel about the final decisions? Rank satisfaction level among group and discuss.
- What have you learned about the functioning of this group?
- How would you do the activity differently if you were asked to do it again?
- What situations at work do you think are like this exercise?

Using in a workshop: This exercise can be used at the beginning, middle, or end of a workshop. It can be the practical application related to team function, collaboration, cooperation, conflict resolution, consensus, group function, etc. This is a great exercise to help facilitate positive group function and professional collaboration.