

Volume 1

The  
HR  
Handbook

Editors

Elaine Biech

John E. Jones

# Assigning Priority: Make It All Fit

## Objective

- To creatively demonstrate the importance of assigning priority.

## Time

10 minutes

## Number of Participants

Any

## Materials and Equipment

- One tennis ball and container
- Five golf balls
- A Ziploc® bag of dried black-eyed peas (or dried beans)

## Procedure

1. Introduce this activity as a way to demonstrate the importance of identifying priorities.
2. Ask if anyone likes to play tennis—and throw the tennis ball to one participant.
3. Ask if anyone likes to play golf—and throw a golf ball to five participants.
4. Ask if anyone likes black-eyed peas—and ask the participant to hold the bag of peas.
5. Explain to the participants that the tennis ball is their "A" task—absolutely vital and *must be done*; the golf balls are their "B" tasks—important and *should be done*; and the peas are their "C" tasks—they *could be done*. We call these last tasks the "fast and friendlies."
6. Lead a discussion by saying, "Now when most of us begin (our day/to execute our plan) where do we start? We start with the fast and friendlies." (Hold the tennis ball canister out to the participant with the peas and ask the individual to pour some in the canister.) "Then what do we do?" (As the team says, A, B, or C, put the corresponding item in the canister. All the items will not fit in the canister.)

7. Ask, "But how *should* we start out (our day/to execute our plan)? We should start with the "A"s (put the tennis ball in the canister), followed by the "B"s and then the "C"s. And guess what? We can fit all the items in the canister!"
8. Lead a brief discussion that makes the following points:
  - All your priorities will fit in a day (just like the items fit in the canister) if they are completed according to importance.
  - If we complete "C" priorities first, the amount of time necessary tends to expand.
9. Summarize this activity by emphasizing the importance of determining priorities so that you can accomplish "more with less."

### Customization and Options

None

### Facilitator Expertise

None required. Conduct a dry run, to ensure that the canister and tennis ball, golf balls, and peas work and don't work!

### Topics

This activity could be content for a session that addresses the following topics:

- Decision making.
- Leadership.
- Problem solving.
- Self-management.
- Time management.

---

**Kristin Arnold** maintains a private consulting practice specializing in facilitation services and training, with an emphasis on strategic planning, strategic partnerships, collaborative problem solving, and team building. Ms. Arnold has extensive experience as both an internal and external consultant with a wide variety of manufacturing and service industries as well as the government sector.

Kristin Arnold  
Quality Process Consultants, Inc.  
18 Jayne Lee Drive  
Hampton, VA 23664-1545  
Phone: 804/850-4879  
E-mail: QPCINC@aol.com