
Paper Tower

A 30-minute team build against a clock and a book

Twenty sheets, one meter of tape, twelve minutes — the tallest tower that survives the book test wins.

When your project starts to lean
—
**does your team diagnose, or
build faster?**

The build

- Twenty sheets, one meter of tape, twelve minutes. Hands only.
- Paper may be torn, folded, rolled, crushed — never cut.
- The tallest tower that holds a book for ten seconds wins.

The run of show

- Three minutes of silent planning first — paper and pens, no tape, no building.
- Twelve minutes of building. At minute ten, announce: “two minutes left.”
- The book test: on top, counted out loud to ten. Then teams self-score the judge card.

What the room records

- Who talks, who builds, who ends up holding tape.
- How much of the silent plan survived contact with the tape.
- What happens at the first wobble — diagnose, or build faster.

Three ways it fails, three rescues

- One engineer, four spectators → freeze at minute eight: everyone names one thing the tower needs.
- A column and a hope, no folds, no triangles → no rescue; the collapse is the debrief's best exhibit.
- Silent planning skipped → enforce it gently: “planning is a round too.”

Three questions at the book test

- 1. What did the silent three minutes plan — and what survived the tape?**
- 2. Whose hands were on the tower, whose voices were at the table — same people?**
- 3. When it started to lean: did the team diagnose, or build faster?**

The measure

- Before teams form: six rows about how your real team works.
- After the debrief: the same six rows about this build.
- Report the delta per team — never rank individuals.

The tower is the transcript.

Point at it — do not describe it.

Keep every tower standing until the debrief is done.

The one change

- Restart with one change — materials, roles, or plan: which single change?
- One change, one owner, one date. One change survives Monday.

Print the cards · run the build · debrief beside the wreckage

The height is the scoreboard; the lean is the lesson.

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