VANTAGE

# The Marshmallow Challenge Activity

Based on Peter Skillman's Marshmallow Design Challenge at TED 2006

## Goal

Build the tallest freestanding structure using only the materials provided, in 18 minutes.

## Instructions

1. Split evenly into small teams, preferably 4 – 6 individuals per group with representatives across different levels of seniority.
2. Distribute each team's building materials:
    a. 20 sticks of uncooked spaghetti
    b. 1 yard of tape
    c. 1 yard of string
    d. 1 regular sized marshmallow
3. Review the Goal and Rules.
4. Facilitators set a timer for 18 minutes.
5. When time runs out, facilitators measure each structure from the bottom of the marshmallow down. The team with the tallest freestanding structure wins.

## Rules

1. Build the tallest freestanding structure
    a. The winning team is the one that has the tallest structure measured from the tabletop surface to the top of the marshmallow.
    b. The structure must be freestanding, meaning that it cannot be suspended from a higher structure, like a chair, ceiling, or fan.
2. The entire marshmallow must be on top of the structure.
    a. Cutting or eating part of the marshmallow disqualifies the team.
    b. We will measure to the bottom of the marshmallow.
3. Use as much or as little of the kit as you like.
    a. Your team can use as many or as few of the 20 spaghetti sticks, tape, or string.
    b. You can break the sticks, cut the thread, and cut the tape.
4. The challenge lasts 18 minutes.
    a. Teams cannot hold on to the structure when the time runs out.
    b. Teams with members touching/supporting the structure at the end will be disqualified.

## Debrief Questions

About the activity

- How did your team perform?
- What project planning approach did you take (Waterfall, Agile, or something else)?
- What would you do differently?

Relating to your work

- In your most high-priority project, what would you define as your "marshmallow" (the risky assumptions we make)?
- How can the team more proactively consider your project's "marshmallow" throughout iterations of the work?