

Building a Team Identity

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Building a team's identity is not an easy task, that is, if you can even call it a task. It takes time and depends a lot on the characteristics of team members. Providing an environment and specific times for interaction among the children is a big step in enabling the team to develop this identity.



Look for the balance. Since I started in FLL, in 2013, I realized that most members of Brazilian teams were older children, with few or no younger ones. As a coach, it seems to me that it's easy to work with the "older" students than with younger ones, because they already have some experience, independence, etc. The first team that I coached only had boys 14-15 years old; it was a year of significant learning and also good results, but the team, because it was new and with very similar members, did not have a well-defined identity. A good example was the choice of the team logo:

The team's first logo in the Nature's Fury season:

People we meet ask us about this logo. The logo consisted of the team name (INSABOTS - INSA is the name of the school that we represent and BOTS, Robots ...) with a volcano (because of that season's theme) exploding pieces of LEGO. Badaboom!



My first team produce this logo in less than 2 months and they didn't do so bad in competition. They did a good job and managed to qualify for the national tournament, in their first season!

But there was something missing. Balance! Balance in terms of age and gender. Let me explain. I have learned over time that we achieve really cool things when we mix ages and, consequently, different ideas. The addition of girls on the team was a very big step, and this mix brought numerous learning experiences for everyone. The younger children have super cool ideas and think "outside of the box;" the girls bring a different view, greater integration, organization and attention to detail for the material produced by the team. Thus, in the second season, the team's progress increased.

In this image we can see the second logo, used in the World Class season.

Each item had a meaning for the members of the team: the colors, the font, the numbers were all decided together, during defining moments.



Time to bond. Ensuring there's a daily or weekly time for debates, conversations, and brainstorms is very important for the establishment of the team identity and also for practicing of the Core Values. During these times, students can relax, talk to each other and get to know each other better! (We have children of different ages and school grades, remember?)

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Encourage them to be together outside of robotics. They can attend each other's birthdays parties, practice a sport at school, go to the movies, etc. These are great and natural opportunities for creating affinity and identity!

Inspiration from the movies. It was because of a movie that the team took another step toward the creation of their identity during the Trash Trek season. We were watching the Penguins of Madagascar movie together. Then, we discussed some scenes of the film that we could apply in our lives and what values were present in the situations that the movie characters lived and what we learned from it! And that's how came about the current team logo which shows a lot of the features of the team.

The current logo: The INSABOTS name was kept, bringing back the original identity, and characteristics incorporated in the second season. However, other elements were introduced: the shield and Rico, the penguin from the film. The shield represents the team and Rico represents the joy that we should have which is the trademark of his character. In addition, in nature, penguins are very close each other, a characteristic that students recognize in themselves; that's why it was adopted as mascot of the team, with the following motto: INSABOTS, We're like a Penguin's family!

Why evolve? Is it always necessary to evolve the logo? Does the team identity boil down to a drawing? No! But we found a way to externalize what we do and how we feel. The daily life of students in practice and the moments we spend together are paramount to the development of their identity and not just copy or what the "coach told us to". The role of the coach, as I said earlier, is to provide time for the team to interact and develop that identity itself, and to be around when the students need guidance!

We travel together! During the Trash Trek season, we represented Brazil in the APOC-Asia Pacific Open Championship in Sydney, Australia, in July 2016, where we won the award "The positives."

In the midst of our celebration, you also see our flag ... which was created by the students themselves, representing the individual and collective features of the team.

To conclude, the identity of the team is not limited to a logo and does not happen overnight. It takes time. They need patience, hard work and encouragement, as they strive *to find solutions with the help of their coaches and mentors. They know that we don't have all the answers, but we learn TOGETHER! =)*

