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## Team Building Guide

As the recession bites hard many companies are making the mistake of casting their team building and team development plans aside.

Yet in this time of uncertainty and heightened stress - investment in those people that carry the future of your business in their hands is more important than ever.

Currently the team building market is experiencing a shift towards short term - 'knee jerk' planning, reduced and often unrealistic budgets and an all consuming fear of being seen to be doing anything which could be deemed frivolous or non-essential.

Yet the relevance and importance of making team meetings and teambuilding events engaging, memorable, relevant and fun cannot be stressed enough.

So here is a practical guide to planning and running a successful team experience. The key is to make it count!

### **Why team building?**

There are many reasons why companies bring teams together:

- Share information
- Review strategy
- Improve performance
- Change behaviour
- Launch new concepts
- Reward effort

Yet there are many other, much less clearly defined reasons why team events are so important. Most of us need and want face time with colleagues. We are tribal, pack animals - we like to hear what others are up to, to meet them, to smell them, to see what they look like, share war stories and enjoy the experience. We need our actions to be re-enforced by others and we need connection - we need to feel part of something - that we are members of an exclusive group - i.e. a team!

### **Outputs and Return on Investment (ROI)**

When planning your next team meeting or event - make sure you know exactly why you are bringing the team together. Be clear and realistic about how much ground you can cover and what you can realistically expect as an outcome....and remember - it's ok for it to be engaging and fun - in fact it's essential.

If you need / want to demonstrate a return on investment or some kind of measurable impact, always remember that less is more. If everyone in your team makes just 1 positive change to the way they behave or perform - the aggregate impact will be significant.

Have no more than three key objectives for the group.

### **Feedback & Measurement**

The ownership for feedback capture and measurement should be vested with participating teams.

Appoint team leaders with specific briefs to capture, copy and disseminate output and feedback data.

Get participants to produce a Personal Impact Grid. On each grid they must commit to four things that they will:

- Start Doing
- Stop Doing
- Keep Doing
- Change

These should be collected and published

### **Know your teams?**

Make sure the chosen themes, style and content of your team building activity matches the delegates needs and aspirations. Consider the teams profile in terms of:

- Age profile
- Sex profile
- Mobility
- Job function
- Geography
- Geo Demographic profile

(For example: a group of 18-21 year olds as part of a graduate intake programme might favour an energetic style of team challenge such as drumming or treasure hunt or outdoor command tasks whilst the Senior Executive Team of a global bank (age 40's – 60's) might prefer a more strategic activity based around food, wine or art.)

### **Timing / Duration**

Team building activities can be powerful whether used as the main focus of an entire event or simply as short burst activities to be used in between meetings as 'energiser', 'session shaker' or 'fire starter' sessions.

Teambuilding activities should never be too long!

Half day events should fit comfortably into a morning or afternoon (i.e. maximum 3 hours) allowing for a coffee break and / or prize giving / wrap up as required.

For full day events, the same principle should apply in that they should be deliverable within a whole day made up of two parts with ample time for lunch and wrap up / prize giving.

Week-ends should be avoided! A few companies feel that holding team building at a weekend helps to justify the process as it disrupts less the flow of daily business life, yet the reality is that it creates deep resentment. It sends out a message that whilst it may be mandatory to attend, it is not important enough to be regarded as a core business imperative and simply is seen by delegates as eating into their valuable, personal time.

### **Overnight Accommodation**

Wherever timing and budget permit – always include an overnight stay and - again wherever possible - make this the night of the event – not the night before. The value of drinking and dining together whilst basking in the bonhomie and post event euphoria of a team day is invaluable. Whether the day has been purely about team spirit or a mix of strategy and business - this is where real connections are made, where people are most likely to discuss at length the issues of the day or the business at large.

Try and avoid compromising a plan by insisting on twin occupancy. This is an invasion of personal space and should be avoided. Single occupancy at all times.

### **Physical Environment**

#### **Indoor**

Team building is about passion, connection, inspiration, connection, creativity and experience. This is very hard to achieve and in some cases impossible in badly lit rooms, poorly furnished or tired environments.

Natural daylight is always preferable.

Make sure sufficient floor space is allowed – e.g. if you are planning a day for 30 and the room is to be set cabaret style – make sure the room has a capacity for at least 50. Delegates should be able to move about freely.

#### **Outdoor**

As with all event management and meeting planning scenarios – make sure outdoor events are covered for wet weather options.

For venue based team building (i.e. hotels, conference centres) a combination of indoor and outdoor works well. In this scenario - request meeting rooms with direct external access.

### **Theming**

Create an umbrella theme for your event. Make sure the theme is simple, easy to understand, iconic and creative.

As an example - if you were running a team event focused on creating a better sense of team spirit – Call the event "SPIRIT". Create a small 'Spirit' logo. Use this logo on all subsequent communications relating the team event and the outputs from the

event. Depending on how far you wish to take it - the theme can evolve into an entire communications platform (newsletters, intranet sites, notice boards etc)

### Top 10 Tips for Organising a Successful Team Building Event

- Be clear about your objectives before you send out a brief.
- Have an idea of what budget you can make available and share this information with your suppliers. If budgets are tight see if the costs can be shared with other internal cost centres - ie. marketing, sales, training etc...
- Ensure you check the credibility of the agent you decide to work with.
- Try and avoid D.I.Y - recession or not team building is a specialist area best dealt with by specialists. If budgets are tight - it is better to do team building events less frequently but do them properly than to try and save money.
- A badly conceived or badly executed team event has exactly the opposite effect to one that is well planned, well conceived and well executed.
- Plan your team event around the profile of your group.
- Establish realistic, relevant and achievable objectives.
- Plan the communication, feedback and action strategy around the event in advance.
- Be bold - look for things that will inspire, delight, ignite!
- Make sure it is **FUN**. No matter how serious the message, the rationale or the reason for doing it - there is little enough fun in business now