

WHY TRADITIONAL TEAMBUILDING FAILS

What makes the least difference in team effectiveness?

The personality and style of the team leader!

Teams that have the talent and skills to manage themselves do better!

(100 Things you need to know. Best People Practices for Managers & HR. Eichinger, Lombardo & Ulrich)

Traditional teambuilding exercises often fail because the emphasis is on the medium used and having fun together rather than on how what has happened mirrors the everyday work situations and is then translated into doing things differently for better results. Remember that one definition of insanity is to try to get different results by continuing to do the same things with more urgency.

The best way to change performance is to change the behaviours that drive that performance and enable the team members to manage themselves. The outdoor environment coupled with the skilful application of the Experiential Learning* (see footnote) process provide the most powerful partnership to create a realisation that things need to change and then to ensure that plans are executed that will create traction back where it matters.

Send them on a Team Building Course?

It is important to identify the specific needs of your team and ensure that the right kind of provider is used to deliver the results. It is unrealistic to expect your team to develop as a result of completing some common activity together without engaging them in a process that helps them to express their feelings and perceptions and which then builds on this to ensure positive outcomes and ownership by the individual members of the team.

The term "team building" now seems to be used to cover a multitude of sins. Anything from whispering in the ears of horses to a group of people baking a cake together; to a 5 day intensive workshop. All seem to qualify. This is not particularly helpful and can often lead to confusion at best and the client receiving entirely the wrong service at worst. To clarify this, we define three different categories of service that are related to improving the ways in which teams work and perform.....

▶ **TEAMBONDING**

▶ **TEAMBUILDING**

▶ **TEAMDEVELOPMENT**

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TEAM BONDING

The objective of a team bonding session is to give people who work together an opportunity to share in a common experience through which they will have fun and get to know each other better. It will usually be designed around activities that are popular with the individuals in the team and thus fun! It could be an evening of bowling, but more usually will involve some form of "theme" and activity during a working day. Such events might involve, sailing, learning to play polo, driving buggies/Honda pilots, candidly the list is as long as your imagination.

FUN FACTOR	IMPACT ON TEAM PERFORMANCE	SUSTAINABILITY
Immediate/High	Short-term/Low	Poor

TEAM BUILDING

Team building is designed to address a specific need within the team. It may be that it is newly formed and needs to be "built". It may be that it has been in existence for some time and has become dysfunctional, or it may be that there have been some changes in personnel and the team needs to reform.

A team building event therefore needs to go deeper than a team bonding event. It needs expert facilitation and usually more time to help the team uncover and address the issues that they face and develop a plan for moving forwards. Roles and responsibilities are clarified and behaviours are understood. It will be "experiential" in nature and may involve the use of activities as part of the process; it is just that the activities will be carefully chosen to meet the development needs of the team, rather than simply for fun. They will be activities that lead to a specific learning output.

FUN FACTOR	IMPACT ON TEAM PERFORMANCE	SUSTAINABILITY
Reflective/High	Aimed at specific objectives	Good

TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Team development is one step beyond team building, it involves taking a team that is already performing and helping the members move their performance to another level. It will involve an analysis of the talents within the team in order that they can be released to deliver better performance. It will also involve each member of the team learning much more about themselves and developing as an individual.

These programmes again require expert facilitation and more time than Team Building. The programme may consist of several interventions over

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a period of time and may involve individual as well as team coaching. The specific needs of the team are paramount and so each intervention may be unique in its style and process.

FUN FACTOR	IMPACT ON TEAM PERFORMANCE	SUSTAINABILITY
Early challenge leads to later satisfaction.	Demonstrable changes in behaviour and results.	High

***Footnote**

Experiential Learning is not a new concept and has been successfully used in the “corporate world” for several decades. It is all too often characterised as “outdoor training” in which groups of people in brightly coloured anoraks, yomp across rain swept hills and valleys in pursuit of the holy grail of High Performance Teamwork. Actually Experiential Learning is exactly what it suggests, it involves the creation of an experience, whether that be real or metaphorical and then, with expert review and facilitation, providing individuals and teams the opportunity to understand and assess their behaviour, its impact on their own success and the success/results of others.

The participants could for example engage in a brief activity in which a certain task has to be achieved in a specific time period and they are then challenged to improve their performance in subsequent attempts. The review might then focus on their ability to manage process improvement, and change. Or it could, as is often the case when using the outdoors, involve the team in completing a major project in which different elements of the team have to complete specific tasks that are linked and interdependent; just like working for a client. Their abilities to communicate relevant information, use appropriate resources at the right time, gain commitment from others and meet an overall client need, might then form the focus of the review.

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE OUR WEB-SITES

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