

Tips for Innovative Meetings and Events (T.I.M.E.)

Topic: Teambuilding

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WELCOME

Although January is about over, let me wish everyone a Happy and Prosperous New Year. We have had many new referrals so welcome all our new subscribers. We will continue to send this monthly newsletter with ideas for all types of meetings throughout 2002. Our first issue is on the many faces of teambuilding.

What does teamwork really mean?? All across business, associations, and the non-profit world, organizations have put into place Teams. Quality improvement teams, customer service teams, Team Xerox, cross-functional teams, the Taurus team, and new product teams.... The list continues as organizations re-arrange themselves to realize the benefits of teamwork.

Face-to-face meetings are a perfect time to improve teamwork because (quite simply) you have people together! Furthermore, teambuilding can be a great way to energize a meeting (and your participants) and break up the agenda. And importantly, teamwork cannot be lectured, motivated or read about. Teamwork must be experienced to be learned.

Team up with me as this issue of T.I.M.E. talks about the many faces (and facets) of teambuilding.

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1. THE PARADOX OF TEAMWORK

Especially in a corporate environment, the need for teamwork creates a paradox. Business is competitive, teamwork is cooperative. Many times compensation is individual, teamwork is interdependent. From an organization perspective, the need for teamwork causes people to struggle between opposing values.

Anne Donnellon in her book, [Team Talk: The Power of Language in Team Dynamics](#), identifies the 4 paradoxes of teams:

The Paradox of Individuality: The only way for a group to become a team is for people to express their individuality, yet they must also accept and develop their connection to the group.

The Paradox of Identity: Over time people come to identify with their work group. Membership in multiple groups causes people to experience internal conflict, stress and uncertainty.

Consider the team member who said, “As a marketer, I’m supposed to push the customer’s interests relentlessly but as a member of this team, I have to take the other’s circumstances into account.”

The Paradox of Interdependence: Effective teams are both independent and interdependent. Team members must balance their dependence on other team members and their independence associated with their own personal responsibility and pride.

The Paradox of Trust: Trust is built upon an existing base of trust. Before we are willing to trust others, we want to know how they will act and respond. The paradox of trust is particularly acute when you are working for the first time with other professionals in another discipline (or another company/division).

Specialized teambuilding can help teams grapple with the balance required in these 4 areas. What type of teambuilding program will depend on the “group” and the objectives.

2. WHO IS ON THE TEAM?

Types of Teams:

- Senior management teams
- Cross-functional teams
- Learning teams
- Virtual teams
- New teams
- Intact work teams
- Poorly performing teams

The size of your team influences the optimal type of teambuilding (or what you can realistically hope to accomplish).

The composition of your group definitely impacts your teambuilding selection – are they an existing group, what are their ages and demographics, what organizational areas or disciplines do they represent.

How will they interact as a group after the teambuilding event? Will a group go onto to work together daily? Intermittently? Across organizational boundaries (those silos)? Or are you holding a company-wide teambuilding event? Each of these scenarios dramatically changes the dynamics of a successful teambuilding event.

3. TEAMBUILDING WEARS MANY GUISES

When clients ask to me to provide a teambuilding solution, I need to ask them what they mean by the word “teambuilding”. Teambuilding can mean many things to different people.

The first question to ask to insure you use the right teambuilding program is, What is the purpose of the team building event? In other words, what should people feel like afterward and what should they take away from the experience? What are the new behaviors you want to achieve? What are the new attitudes you want people to have as a result of going through the teambuilding program?

Here is a list of the types of issues that you can touch on during a teambuilding program:

- Achieving high performance
- Adaptability
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Commitment
- Confidence
- Conflict resolution
- Dependability
- Facing adversity
- Following through
- Fun
- Providing feedback
- Honesty
- Identifying and developing leaders
- Jumpstarting new teams
- Increasing Productivity
- Individual vs. team goals
- Innovation
- Leadership

Managing through abundant and often superfluous information
Measuring team performance
Morale boosting
Observing team members
Planning
Pride
Problem Solving
Relationship building
Removing hierarchical barriers
Resolving team conflict
Resource utilization
Respect
Risk
Spontaneity
Supporting one another
Thinking creatively
Trust
Value Alignment

Team performance is dependent upon:

- Skills
- Accountability
- Commitment

([The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the](#) High-Performance Organization by Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith)

Teambuilding is not a panacea. (More on that later.) Teambuilding may not be the best solution for:

- Creating different skill levels
- Developing organizational processes and systems to support teams
- Transitioning from a traditional organizational structure to teams

4. THE MANY FACES OF TEAMBUILDING

After you have your objectives and group defined, you can begin to choose among a myriad of teambuilding options. In addition to the all-important objectives (use my list from above to hone in on what you want to accomplish), other items to consider include:

- Timing (Time frame for event and time of day)
- Budget
- Size of the group
- Group make-up (demographics including, age, male/female ratio, profession/division, organizational culture, fitness level, handicaps)

- Participation (Will every person participate equally? Will the event include a competitive element so that a team will be the winner?)

Armed with this information, you can explore these many options:

Adventure-Based

- Rock climbing
- Car racing
- White water rafting
- Extreme sports programs
- Mountain biking

Simulated Physical Challenges

- Inflatable courses
- Wacky team races
- Paint Ball wars
- Team Olympics games
- Orienteering/Camping

Ropes Courses

- High courses
- Low courses

Problem Solving Missions

- Scavenger hunts
- Road rallies
- Murder mysteries

Simulations

(Complex situation in which several groups of people interact. The setting for the simulation creates the challenge. Simulations promote experimentation, create a dynamic process and promote the participants' understanding of reactions and influences their future behavior and actions)

- On Track's Journey Home or Planet X are examples of simulations
www.ontrackusa.com
- Another example might be a group challenged to produce news broadcast under pressure

Social

- Wine tasting
- Tribal drums

Teambuilding exercises

- Design and construction games
- Jigsaw puzzle events
- Experiential learning games

Team Projects

- Team walks/runs
- Team cookbook
- Scrapbook

Metaphoric

(Metaphoric teambuilding uses an idea or framework as a metaphor for teambuilding. In these real world situations, participants explore teamwork in an unusual and perhaps unlikely venue.)

- Military
- Musical
- Culinary activities
- Artistic challenges (painting, sculpting, video, music, photography, etc.)

Miscellaneous

- Impromptu theater
- Game show games

There can be crossover between these categories (my own system for organizing various types of teambuilding.) Moreover, there can be crossover between what a type of activity will achieve. However, fundamentally, different teambuilding will stress different issues and skills:

- Scavenger hunts promote group problem solving by challenging team members to work together on strategy and planning.
- Designing shoes that can walk on real eggs calls for creativity, resourcefulness and execution.
- Ropes courses require trust, confidence and total participation.
- Games shows reinforce meeting information and are icebreakers for a group.
- An outdoor adventure program, like a sailing challenge, demands everyday business skills of communication, the ability to respond to changing conditions and teamwork.

5. WHY DO IT?

“Playing well with others” is a simple concept. Why is even necessary to devote valuable meeting time to teambuilding?

Makes it Real

The concept of teamwork can be abstract for individuals who have spent their lives living by beliefs like:

- I've got to do it myself if I want to be successful
- It's a dog eat dog world

The realities of performance evaluations, merit raises, forced rankings, reward processes (especially promotions), aggressive supplier policies, and combative union relations have tended to reinforce competition and individual accomplishment.

Building a team requires a different focus. Individual team members must be committed to the team, but they must also know that their management support for their efforts.

Builds Awareness

Team building is a process of awareness building. It helps people to understand that they are greater collectively than individually. It promotes an understanding that all of decisions will be better when some degree of collaboration is applied. It allows bringing people to have an honest appreciation of each other's skills, background and diversity.

Adds Value

Nancy Kay Olson, director of Meeting Services for the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine elucidates this point in the Winter issue of Illinois Meetings & Events when she states, "I think team building will be high on the list of important activities. The economy is having a major change on everyone and teambuilding and strategizing will be important issues for awhile."

Practice Makes Perfect

A teambuilding event allows people to see and experience of a team. Teambuilding allows people to practice in a less-threatening, less-risky environment than the workplace. Team members can find an effective role for themselves in a group. Individuals will learn more about the different skills and aptitudes of their fellow members. People also have the opportunity to see firsthand the typical stages of team development and how to build and maintain an effective team at each stage.

Caveat #1 – This comes from my associate and friend Dieter Ammann -- people will practice what they know. During teambuilding, people are likely to act as they always do – the natural leaders will be the leaders of the team, the introvert will remain introverted. Hence the need for setting the stage and giving people the tools to be successful. A good teambuilding program will allow people to examine their own behavior. This is why allowing time for a Debrief or Discussion is critical. Real changes take time...Onto caveat #2.

Caveat #2 – A single effort to build a team, whether you spend 20 minutes or 2 days will not be effective. Any successful teambuilding event must fit into the context of the organization and its culture and must be reinforced repeatedly after the event. The repeated reinforcement will include messages from management, support in processes and systems, ongoing training, etc. Also see my comments about teambuilding elements.

6. ELEMENTS

Every teambuilding event should include these elements

1. Identify session objective -- Ensure that everyone understands and agrees on what is to be accomplished by the end of the meeting.
2. Introduction -- Identify the concepts of team building to your team members, the purpose of team building, and what skills are important to the organization and within the teambuilding event. Often times the teambuilding has an element of surprise within the program. You still want people to understand the formula for success. This is also the time for skill building so that people CAN be more successful.
3. The reflection -- The debrief focuses on the skills and techniques they used during the event. Some teambuilding will include a Diagnostic Assessment, a tool for each team member to score that will summarize for the group. (There may even be a pre- and post-assessment. A great way to measure the Return on Investment.)
4. Application/transfer -- How the topics are related to the workplace. How can the participants implement changes at work based upon their experience. The changes might take the form of:

Team plans
Implementation timetables
Group agreement
Commitments

For intact work groups, this section may focus on identifying the root problems that are holding back the team. In this scenario, people can focus on finding solutions. The correct exercise will have, in all probability, yielded areas of weakness and sources of dissatisfaction, with potential for improvement.

After the event, teams should monitor their progress on implementing your solutions. Without follow-up, monitoring and delegation of responsibility the teambuilding effort will have been in vain.

7. TEAM UP WITH THE EXPERTS

These books offer you some help with building a team:

[**The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High-Performance Organization**](#) by Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith

Katzenbach and Smith cite research and examples in 47 specific organizations on what makes teams work.

[**The Team Handbook**](#) How to Use Teams to Improve Quality by Peter Scholtes

This is an easy-to-use, comprehensive reference book with great graphics and an easy design. I like the sections on Dealing with Conflict (Chapter 7) and the great Appendices (Storyboarding and teambuilding activities)

[**Team Talk: The Power of Language in Team Dynamics**](#) by Anne Donnellon

Donnellon analyzes teams from a socio-linguistic perspective. By analyzing dialogue, language, and conversation, she is able to distinguish what made teams successful. I especially like the "team talk audit," a tool for analyzing interactions among team members. The book offers advice for both team members and managers on how to make teams work better.

If you are ready to plan a teambuilding activity, call us for some advice and guidance. Or consider using the following sources for easy to implement teambuilding activities.

[**101 of the Best Corporate Team-Building...**](#) by Simon Priest and Karl E. Rohnke

[**50 Ways to Teach Your Learner: ...**](#) by Ed Rose and Steve Buckley

[**More Team Building Challenges**](#) by Daniel W. Midura, Donald R. Glover

[**The Big Book of Team Building Games...**](#) by Edward Scannell and John W. Newstrom

[**Executive Marbles & Other Team Building...**](#) by Sam Sikes

We are also available to help you define what type of teambuilding program will work best for you, search for the right program (either using our resources or finding another company), building a customized teambuilding event or series of events or importantly helping you structure the follow-up after a teambuilding event.

8. PERSONAL TIDBITS & FREEBIES

How can you be sure you are contributing to your team? Here are some guidelines for you when you are a team member. As a valuable team member, people should:

- Contribute ideas and solutions
- Recognize and respect differences in others
- Value the ideas and contributions of others
- Listen and share information
- Ask questions and get clarification
- Participate fully and keep your commitments
- Be flexible and respect the partnership created by a team -- strive for the "win-win"
- Have fun and care about the team and the outcomes

For a list of characteristics of a high-performing team, email us with the words HIGH PERFORMING TEAM in the subject line. stinnish@ameritech.net

9. T.I.M.E. GONE BY

Past issues of T.I.M.E. can be downloaded as a MS Word document. Here is an index of topics and “freebies” offered in the past:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| May 2000: | Teambuilding and (freebie) New York Times reprint and summary on why teambuilding programs miss the mark. May |
| June 2000: | Green Meetings and (freebie) list of books that have 20-30 minute exercises for meetings and events. June |
| July 2000: | American (Values) and (freebie) Meeting Analysis, a 1-page document that will outline the scope and needs analysis for your next meeting. July |
| August 2000: | Minimum/Minimal Meetings and (freebie) Web Winners (web resources to make you and your meetings more productive). August |
| October 2000: | Evaluations and (freebie) sample evaluation questions. October |
| November 2000: | Politics and (freebie) on-line experiences. November |
| December 2000: | Toys and (freebie) brainstorming ideas. December |
| January 2001: | Sales, Award Presentations and (freebie) sales tips. January |
| February 2001: | Change, Change Management and Communicating change and (freebie) Change Bombs (reasons change management fails). February |
| March 2001: | Open Space Technology. March |

April 2001:	Adult Learning Styles and (freebie) Learning Style Questionnaire April 2001
May 2001:	Trade Shows and (freebie) Trade Show timeline May 2001
June 2001:	Emotional Intelligence and (freebie) EI quiz June 2001
July 2001:	Presentation Skills and (freebie) Speaker Introductions July 2001
August 2001:	Ice Breakers and (freebie) Resource List August 2001
September 2001:	Facilitation and (freebie) Problem Personalities in a Meeting September 2001
October 2001:	Humor and (freebie) The Benefits of Laughter October 2001
November 2001:	Customer Care and (freebie) Complaints November 2001
December 2001:	Slack and (freebie) Quiet Time December 2001

10. FUTURE T.I.M.E.

Many people have complimented me on the value of T.I.M.E., please share with your colleagues, associates, and clients. It's a simple and free gift and easy way to say "I was thinking about you."

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