

The Critical Elements of Great Team Building

Companies today recognise that the concept of team building, that is, the idea that giving a team of employees the opportunity to experience activities together outside of the workplace will immediately improve their ability to work. Even though some team members may express concern over the choice of activity, the research suggests that there is a great deal of evidence that team building activities do actually improve productivity.

Whether you're a member of a large corporate team or a smaller group, the bottom line is that to be effective in whatever environment, you must be comfortable as an integral member of your team. Most corporate teams operate in a politically charged environment where degrees of self interest see people often behaving in non team ways. These types of behaviours can lead to mistrust and declining levels of respect amongst colleagues. When trust and respect are lost within any team, the level of collaboration declines and with declining collaboration follow declining productivity.

Historically, humans have always lived and worked as members of communities. As such we have team orientated behaviour ingrained on us through evolution. In modern society the number of people we interact with on any given day has dramatically increased. We are no longer dependant in the way we once were, on our community for day to day survival needs. Until of course in a crisis situation where we once again, put aside any differences and pull together to help one another. It is interesting to note, that it is in these often tragic crisis situations that communities bond to deeper levels and members of these communities remember how important team work is to their survival. Team building effectively creates a type of unfamiliar environment whereby team members, because they are out of their comfort zone, must once again rely on each other to create a successful outcome.

Today organisations are recognising this fact and managers and team leaders search for activities that enable employees to hone and sometimes develop the skills needed to function effectively in a team. There are several important factors to note when trying to bring a team closer together. In today's companies you often only bond with the people sitting next to you or in your specific department, leading to the common rifts between different departments. It is as important to put differing departments together in a team building event as it is to put established teams.

As well, establishing common learning outcomes is key to the success of any corporate team building process. Team leaders must explain to their colleagues the purposes for the event so that everyone involved has an understanding of why they are there. Team members can also have input into what they would like to achieve for themselves and the team as well as what they are prepared to give in order to make the process a successful one. By involving all team members in discussing team outcomes ensures each person has a sense of value and importance.

An effective team building process is one where the event itself creates a level playing field for all team members. As well the activity must rely on high levels of communication to create success. It is well documented that corporate teams achieve more when team members are enabled to openly express themselves and have ownership in all that concerns their performance.

Finally, if a team building process and event is enjoyable, then this creates a very positive anchor for the team to reflect back on and even do again in the future.