

Teambuilding Events Don't Work

Have you ever attended a teambuilding event only to return to work and encounter the same team issues that existed prior to the event? So, why didn't the experience and bonding from the event stick? Why did it have an impact while you were there but little or no residual effect?

Were the participants not committed? Were the event activities lackluster? Was it just "too little, too late" for your team? The answer to all of these could be 'yes.' More likely, though, it's because **teambuilding events don't work.**

Now, don't get me wrong. I think teambuilding events are great and can be a powerful step towards greater team effectiveness. They are not, however, a silver bullet or magic solution. Building a team is a **process** not an **event**.

Are you looking for a one-day silver bullet or are you willing to look deeper at long-term solutions for the challenges your team is facing? If the latter is true, then keep reading.

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Do you have TEAMS that work?

Different Talents Create Powerful Teamwork

- You have teams at work – but do you have teams that WORK?
- Often the full potential of teamwork is blocked due to misunderstandings of different behavioral styles and motivators.
- Enable the success of teams in your organization by recognizing and leveraging the full spectrum of their different talents.

Our workplace has become a perpetually changing environment fueled by flexible teamwork. People are called upon to participate in teams to repeatedly rethink, restructure, reinvent, and redeploy business resources. The changing times in which we live require talented individuals skilled at working in teams.

Teams are enriched with individuals who offer a wide spectrum of talents in areas such as behaviors and motivators – that is a given. Or is it? After closer observation of teamwork in your organization, you may find a number of team members who are merely tolerating their counterparts due to what is commonly described as “personality differences.”

Gregory E. Huszco, author of *Tools for Team Excellence*, and *Tools for Team Leadership*, advises that successful teams must develop an awareness of the individual strengths each member contributes.

“Capitalizing on the natural strengths of your personality and enjoying interaction with people who are different from you are crucial for (team) success. Tolerating differences in the personalities of people you work with is not enough – you need to celebrate those differences. They provide the natural strengths you may need to benefit the team.”

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When I get requests to facilitate a teambuilding event, I begin the process by asking questions. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to begin the **process** of teambuilding.

- What do the words "teambuilding" and "teamwork" mean to you and in your organization? Teamwork is one of those innocuous terms that mean very different things to different people. Sometimes performance management issues are confused with a general lack of teamwork and teambuilding will not usually help you solve individual performance management issues.
- What are the current challenges that the group is experiencing?
- What is the source of these challenges, and are they truly teamwork issues?
- What are the environmental factors that may be contributing to the team's current situation (company culture, dept. culture, the management and leadership style for the team, etc.)?
- What behaviors constitute teamwork for you or your organization?
- What are the specific behaviors that you want to see displayed?
- How will you know the teambuilding was effective?

A day or two of teambuilding is a great START and can definitely give the team a kick "in the rubber parts". Teambuilding exercises get people thinking about the other individuals in the team and their strengths and weaknesses, they can build more cohesiveness and trust in a relatively short period of time and they can help individuals to consider what behaviors are most effective for optimum team performance.

Recently I facilitated a teambuilding event that utilized the DISC Behavioral Assessment to help participants understand, appreciate and begin to work better with the different styles in the team. One of the participants said, "This is all well and good, but how do we keep what we've learned here going? How do we keep ourselves from slipping back into the same behavior?" I gave a hearty 'AMEN, sister'! This person was seeking a **process**, not an **event**.

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TEAM!

If you really want to create a highly effective and performing team you must consider a long-term teambuilding plan. Teams aren't just created over night or via a one- or two-day offsite event.

Here are 5 ways to "keep the music playing" after a teambuilding event:

1. **Continue the conversation.** Plan follow-up events, discussions, reports or meetings and consider these part of the teambuilding event.
2. **Keep it regular.** Make room for regular, ongoing teambuilding in team meetings, along with your other business agenda items. As a leader, rotate responsibility to other team members to facilitate the teambuilding activity and increase "buy-in".
3. **Commit to it in writing.** With the team, create a Team Charter outlining the appropriate behaviors the team will engage in and post it during meetings or in the teams' work area.
4. **Train the team.** Hold periodic skill development training on topics that impact team effectiveness like conflict management, peer accountability, project management or receiving and delivering feedback. Issues like these have a direct impact on a teams' effectiveness.
5. **Special events.** As long you're also committed to an ongoing teambuilding **process**, special **events** are a great way to give the team a "booster shot" and sends the message to team members that what is accomplished is as important as how it's accomplished. These don't have to be full days, and they don't have to be focused only on teambuilding. Teambuilding can be mixed in with other agenda items to create a balanced and valuable team development event.

By approaching teambuilding as a process, not an event, you will achieve more lasting change that will have a greater impact on your teams' effectiveness and ability to produce results. ♦

~ Bill Burtch, SPHR, ACC, President, Harmony Coaching & Consulting. For more information on this topic or information on Bill's services contact him bburtch@harmonycc.net.

Teamwork – "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success!"

~ Henry Ford

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Personality conflicts are common, and they inevitably lead to “talent withdrawal” by team members who are experiencing them. As a result, these individuals most likely have opted out of actively contributing to attaining team goals. The team cannot perform up to its maximum potential until solutions are found.

How do you recognize talent withdrawal in your teams? It can be demonstrated in several ways. Here are two of the most common:



1) LIMITED PARTICIPATION in TEAM MEETINGS

If team members withhold contributions during team meetings, this signals talent withdrawal. Their energies are being directed elsewhere. Looking through their eyes, some reasons may be:

- One or two members consistently dominate meetings by talking all the time
- A member habitually uses the team meetings to promote personal successes and self-interest
- Too much theory and details are regularly discussed at length, with no practical applications
- A couple of members regularly engage in heated debate, perceived by others as undesirable conflict and aggressiveness

2) MISUNDERSTANDINGS between TEAM MEMBERS

No two people are exactly alike, and differences can contribute either great value or unwanted tension to any team. Misunderstandings between team members can often be a matter of the following:

- A team member with an indirect communication style feels continually “shut down” and resentful about another’s naturally direct communication style
- Another is not aware that his lengthy, analytical communication style regularly blocks his messages from being welcomed by others
- Someone consistently displays a lack of value for people-related topics, offending those whose motivators are more people-oriented

One team member is personally motivated to take the lead all the time, while others feel their contributions are consistently overshadowed

How can you take steps to prevent talent withdrawal in your teams? Many team leaders use behavior and motivator diagnostics to reveal how team members can leverage their different talents to work together most effectively. Individualized reports on behavioral styles and personal motivators reveal both strengths and potential weaknesses. With this knowledge, teams gain effective tools for addressing teamwork issues and maximizing performance.

Teams will continue to fuel progress in the workplace, and valuing and leveraging different talents will remain essential tools for achieving powerful teamwork. ♦

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One Minute Ideas

Three Key Roles In Team Leadership

Leadership roles involve many skills, from being a good compromiser, to functioning as the group conscience by keeping discussion moving toward the common goal. At your next meeting, try one or more of these techniques:

- 1. Be a catalyst.** Jolt the group's creativity by asking probing questions. Prod reserved participants and get them involved in the issues.
- 2. Be a gatekeeper.** Get the ball rolling and move the group off dead center with techniques such as questioning, repetition, or reflection. Learn to recognize when the group is ready to move on to another point.
- 3. Be a harmonizer.** This involves more than being the peacemaker who keeps the meeting friction-free. It also means recognizing points of agreement and encouraging supporting statements from different participants. ♦

Martin M. Broadwell with Carol Broadwell Dietrich, *The New Supervisor: How to Thrive in Your First Year as a Manager*, Addison-Wesley

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Which Is The Bigger Asset? People Or Teams

Why You Should Re-Consider the Importance of Teams

Many will agree that people are the most important asset of an organization. More importantly, however, is how well those people work together to accomplish the common goal. Whether an organization has thousands of people working in various locations worldwide or just a handful working in one small office, teamwork is vital to success. So, how can you ensure that your teams are performing at their fullest potential? How do people contribute to the team differently? Have you built effective teams?



To begin answering these questions, you must learn how to really understand each member of the team to identify their work style and how it compares to others in the group. You also need to look at the inherent strengths that each person brings to the table. Not their expertise or their background, but those things they seem to be good at just because that is who they are.

Once you understand the team members, you can not only build a team with the most effective combination of strengths, but you can also learn how to leverage each individual's strengths for a dynamic team that works at its highest potential. Only then will teams reach goals that have been unattained by individuals, work at levels of productivity no single person can achieve or impact the bottom line more effectively as a group. In fact, maybe we should revisit the assets of an organization. Perhaps TEAMS are more important than people on their own? ♦

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Schedule of Public Courses

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Course Title	Date(s)	Time	For More Information/Registration
SHRM Learning System® is the preparation course for the HR Certification Exam <i>(Every other Saturday)</i>	Every Other Saturday 9/22 – 12/1	8:30AM – 4:30PM	www.cbu.edu/shrm
The Coaching Clinic® is a two-day workshop for executives, managers and leaders to experience and learn coaching skills and competencies.	January 7 & 8, 2013	8:30AM – 5:00PM	www.harmonycc.net/coaching-clinic.php
Leading at the Speed of Trust™ is a two-day workshop for anyone interested in increasing revenues, decreasing costs, enhancing/repairing relationships, or improving their credibility with employees or customers.	TBD	TBD	Email: info@harmonycc.net

