



Potentials Realized

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Team Building Tips: Take Your Team from Great to Extraordinary

Whether you are an organization, or a professional responsible for facilitating the team building process of a team or group, the following tips are ensured to give you some new ideas on how to accelerate your team building initiatives:

1. Create a Common Vision

A common vision for all team members is essential for team building and organizational success. Spend time visioning as a team – what you want to create and where you want to go. This visioning time should also enable you to celebrate your current successes!

Ask Yourself: How clear is our vision? Do all team members hold the same vision?

2. Develop Common Goals

Ensure that your organizational/project and program goals are understood and supported by all team members. All team members need to understand how their efforts are feeding into the larger objectives.

Ask Yourself: Do all team members know what role they play in supporting our larger team/organizational goals? Is everyone clear on what those goals are?

3. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities

One of the main challenges for organizations and groups to move ahead to where they really want to be is due to a lack of clarity on individual roles and responsibilities. Clarifying these roles can help in supporting and achieving your common vision and goals.

Ask yourself: "How clear is our staff in understanding their specific roles? Their specific responsibilities? Where do roles and responsibilities overlap between individual team members? Where do roles and responsibilities overlap with other departments.

4. Ensure Management Support

Supervisors and managers play a key role in "keeping the learning alive". Ensure that supervisors, managers and owners are following up with staff regarding what their needs are, and how team building efforts can be enhanced. Managers also play a key role in ensuring that the learning from team building initiatives is brought back to the office.

Ask yourself: What systems do we currently have in place to ensure that the learning is sustained? Can we discuss this in staff meetings? Do we have a coaching program in place?

5. Use Engaging Exercises

Team building can be fun and challenging, supporting teams to reach their highest potential. Ensure that participants are engaged and challenged through the process. Consider bringing in an experienced external facilitator to support your efforts, and even run a train-the-trainer program with your staff.

Ask Yourself: What types of activities or exercises would work best for our team members? What are the topics of relevance for them?

6. Take it out of the office

Holding team building sessions in the office can be disruptive and distracting. The lure of email, voice mail and urgent items often take precedence to a full team in-office experience. Reduce everyday distractions by holding team building sessions outside of the office.

Ask Yourself: What type of environment would our staff team benefit from? Some organizations prefer a more "corporate" formal team building session, while others embrace nature and the outdoors.

7. Create An Action Plan

Create an action plan to make the team building part of your everyday work or life. Often retreat days or team building programs have few links with everyday business or organizational objectives. Ensure that when designing the program you create links to the organization or to everyday life so that participants can "bring the learning home". This can be done by building into the program formal action planning time, and having managers follow up during regular staff meetings. Coaching can be leveraged to keep the "learning alive" after team building events. Research whether individual, team or group coaching will work best for your organization.

Ask Yourself: What can we do to support and sustain individual and team action planning? What current systems do we have to revisit the action plans? Some examples may include staff meetings, manager check-ins, internal/external coaching.

8. Spend time learning what your team members need

Creating a group or organizational context where communication is open, and individual team members feel comfortable bringing their needs up, will make teambuilding efforts more focused and productive.

Find out exactly what team members are looking for to enhance their work and efforts before the team building event. This can be done by the facilitator and/or the team building committee, through email questionnaires, focus groups, or individual meetings

One of the most common pitfalls of team building initiatives is that it does not match the needs of the team. Ensure you invest enough time before the event itself to assess what team members really want.

Ask Yourself: What are the top three priorities for our team members? What is the best way to find this out from individual members?

9. Keep it Regular

Once a year team building programs can do a lot for boosting morale on the short-term, but ask yourself, "What would it be like if we did something more often?". Imagine the results!

Using the same facilitator over successive programs can often give added traction to the event. Trust and understanding of the team is usually higher each successive event, when using the same facilitator.

Ask Yourself: What amount of time can we commit to team building efforts in our organization this year? What will that look like?

10. Have Fun!

Most importantly, team building initiatives should be fun and engaging for all staff members. They should be relevant and meaningful for the team. Design with the facilitator(s) what structure and topics will give your team the most leverage.

Ask Yourself: What would fun look like for us, given our organizational culture and philosophy?

Look to integrate some of these ideas and systems into your next team building initiative, whether it is a retreat, team coaching, or a workshop, to build a more extraordinary, sustained, productive team.

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Jennifer J. Britton is the founder of Potentials Realized and a co-founder of Integra Leadership Inc. Jennifer works with corporate clients and business owners to achieve the success and impact they desire in teamwork, business, balance and performance issues, through the provision of coaching, consulting and training services. She regularly facilitates team building sessions and retreats (virtual, on and offsite) with governmental, nonprofit and corporate clients. As a performance improvement specialist, she works with leading edge organizations across North America and the Caribbean to take their performance to extraordinary. She is a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach, a Certified Performance Technologist and a Certified Human Resource Professional. Jennifer provides team, group and executive coaching programs. Jennifer also consults on Human Resource, Team and Performance issues. Jennifer is known for her engaging, results-oriented, customized collaborations.

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