



How to do Team Building Right

Research compiled by Run Brain Run, Inc.
Portland, OR
September, 2009

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Why Competitive Events Can Work Against Cooperation Among Employees

Imagine, if you can, this team building event: employees of a California home security company were paddled with rival companies' yard signs as part of a contest that pitted sales teams against each other. The winners threw pies at the losers, feeding them baby food, making them wear diapers and swatting their buttocks. Sound like team building gone berserk? Unfortunately, it's all true. The facts come straight from court documents, the result of an employee suing the company for these sanctioned actions (Wiscombe, 2006).



Business gurus have long touted the necessity of cooperation in the workplace to ensure a competitive edge. Many managers have taken this to mean that spending time together away from the office is a great way to build teamwork.

Unfortunately, a lot of team building events borrow elements from the style preferred by the California home security company, setting up meaningless competitions that pit coworkers against each other.

More mainstream competition can also backfire.

Activities such as white water rafting, ropes courses, laser tag, paint ball, and even golf tournaments most often require a level of physical prowess or results in someone winning, and most people not. Like television's *Survivor*, these competitions can be the corporate equivalent of getting voted off the island.

What works, what doesn't

While competitive activities have their place, in the workplace they can create anxiety or a reluctance to participate. And if team members resist taking part, or have no desire to partake in the activity, the event cannot build sustainable cooperation.

Alexander Kjerulf, a management consultant with the title of Chief Happiness Officer, offers seven criteria of what the result of a good team building event should be:

- A deeper understanding between co-workers
- Co-workers like each other better than before
- An experience of having performed well *together*
- A feeling that 'we're good at what we do'
- An increased desire to cooperate and help each other out
- Specific learnings that can be applied at work
- And maybe most of all: A sense that the event was 'time well spent.'

No more fake team building: go for the authentic

Authentic team building inspires co-workers to achieve a common cause with "yes we can" camaraderie. Run, Brain, Run, a leading team-building event company, offers a proven team-building solution: the clue-based hunt, a modern version of the scavenger hunt. As the hunt progresses, team members discover that diversity is their greatest asset. By pooling talents and individual



smarts, and by helping each other solve clues, they gain the lasting experience of having performed well together in the pursuit of a common goal. Unlike the previously mentioned and ill-fated buttock-swatting-fest, clue-based hunts create a sense of cooperation that can be carried over into the workplace, with lasting, positive effects. It's team building done right.

About Run Brain Run

Run Brain Run creates clue-based hunts that encourage cooperation among colleagues and a feeling of time well spent. Hunts can take place indoors or out, accommodate small or large groups, and be customized to suit your company's brand. Run Brain Run is a division of Hometown Advantage, a leading provider of private and public hunts and in-bound tourism programs. For more information on Run Brain Run, visit www.runbrainrun.com, or call (800) 604-3350.

Wiscombe, Janet. (May 4, 2006). Lawsuit reveals team building gone berserk. *Workforce Management*. <http://www.workforce.com/section/00/article/24/35/90.html>

Kjerulf, Alexander (2008). <http://positivesharing.com/>