

The importance of a corporate retreat



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Corporate retreats can be of any type, such as a sport retreat, or a seminar-style retreat. They are to promote a feeling of teamwork and to build a better understanding among company employees. Corporate retreats can also help employees gain some problem-solving skills that lead to better teamwork and better overall productivity.

These team-building activities focus on events where everyone has to work together to reach a common goal. The examples are river rafting, rock climbing, mountain climbing, everyone hiking blindfolded while holding on the same rope, team scavenger hunts, friendly competitions between company departments, etc.

Corporate retreats can be customized to fit the company's need. They can make the employees learn about what the temporary retreat goals are, as well as the long-term results that the company is striving for.

Do you believe that team-building activities such as mountain climbing increase productivity? Why or why not?

We do believe that team-building activities such as mountain climbing increase productivity. We can find several evidences from the case study given. Firstly, according to Howard Atkins, chief financial officer at Wells Fargo, the company earned double-digit gains in earnings as an effect of corporate retreats.

Secondly, according to Merianne Liteman, a professional corporate retreat organizer: "Where good retreats have a quantifiable effect is on retention, on morale, on productivity." Daryl Jeperson, CEO of RE/MAX International, also

said that there is a productivity boost anytime you have one of these. People feel better about themselves, they feel better about the company, and as a result they will do a better job.

Why corporate retreats can increase productivity? This is because organizations can derive some valuable skills from corporate retreats. These skills include team spirit, problem-solving, leadership, innovation and creativity.

Team Spirit

Corporate retreats promote a feeling of teamwork among company employees. Take the example from the case study, Wells Fargo organized a corporate retreat where the employees had to build a bridge out of boxes and unstable wooden planks. The employees are working towards a common goal which is building a bridge. This will get them to see the power of acting like a team. They will be able to understand success in each activity depends more on teamwork than individual effort. Under the pressure of reaching a difficult goal, each individual undergoes rapid growth. This growth occurs in group efforts then enhancing the relationships between employees.

Employees become connected by shared experience. They share commitment and help form one another. Trust can also be built through corporate retreats.

Problem-solving

The second skill gained from corporate retreats is about problem-solving. Take rock climbing as the example. Rock-climbing is a problem-solving in the vertical world. We can see varying degrees of linear thinking skills, pre-

planning skills, impulsivity vs. thoughtfulness, decision-making skills, focus and concentration, frustration, tolerance, self-confidence vs. insecurity, introversion vs. extroversion, emotional ability, risk-taking vs. caution, and the list goes on. Rock climbing offers the added mental element of continuous problem-solving in the midst of a physical workout. The climbers attempt to ascend a selected route without falling. Through rock climbing, they can be trained on those skills.

Leadership

Through corporate retreats like mountain climbing, rock climbing, river rafting, etc. individuals gain an awareness of faith in their own ability to lead and follow. They have opportunities to test their ability in critical group decision-making and thereby become more confident leaders. Besides, team building events often allow people who are not usually in charge at work to take the reins and direct their teams. This can not only help them work on their leadership skills but also give them a better understanding of what it means to be a leader. The result of this is that they can have a better understanding of their superior's working situations. They can also aid communication channels within the workforce.

Innovation and Creativity

Another skill derived from corporate retreat is innovation and creativity. Employees are more able to think out of the box outside the working environment. In outdoor settings, they are taken out of their 'comfort zone' and immerse in a changing environment. By handling new circumstances, team learns to turn problems into opportunities for success. Each challenge mastered is a satisfying achievement that prepares them for even more

opportunities. Besides, some team-building activities may require innovation and creativity. For example, Wells Fargo's corporate retreat is about building a bridge out of boxes and unstable wooden planks. In this case, in order to build a better and safer bridge with those limited resources, the employees need to be innovative and creative.

Corporate retreats have negative side too. From the case given, we know that Burger King's corporate retreat in 2001 is a failure. A dozen Burger Kings employees burned themselves while participating in a fire walk-a team building exercise that requires teammates to walk barefoot across an 8-foot pit of burning-hot coals. The results were injured employees and some very negative publicity for Burger Kings. The concept of this corporate retreat was that when the employees experience humiliation together, they will feel bonded. In fact, organizations should steer away from ridiculous physical challenges, and then they can get benefits from corporate retreats.

In conclusion, team-building activities can increase productivity because organizations can derive valuable skills from corporate retreats.

2. 0 ii) What other factors might be responsible for increases in profitability following a corporate retreat?

2. 1 Increases in Revenue

2. 1. 1 Increase the number of new customers (Doyle, B 2005)

After corporate retreat the employees will have a wider global perspective and confidence in dealing with people from different cultures and countries. With this values learned, the employees are able to increase the number of

new customers. By increasing the number of new customers the organization is the most direct approach to increase the revenue of the organization. With a wider perspective the employees are able to look into more opportunities and have a larger target market. When the target market is enlarged the employees are equipped with the confidence in dealing with people from different cultures and countries which makes them have better opportunities to capture the market. Also, the organization is able to increase the market share due to the huge diversity of the target market. As a result, they can be the market leader of the industry as they are able to capture the most diversity of customers.

2. 1. 2 Increase the value of each sale made to customers (Doyle, B 2005)

The communication and influencing skills gained after the corporate retreat are able to help an organization to increase the revenue by increasing the value of each sale made to customers. It means that the employees will have the power to communicate, influence and persuade the customer to increase the value of each purchase. For example, if the customers normally purchase 500 units, the employees can persuade and influence the customers to increase the value of each purchase to 800 units. The employee might come out with packages to convince the customer to purchase more. Therefore, the employees can apply the innovation and creativity skill to design valuable packages to generate more revenue for the organization.

2. 1. 3 Increase the number of times that customers buy from you (Doyle, B 2005)

Besides, corporate retreat trained employees in building and maintaining relationships. Through this skill the employees are able to utilize this skill to generate more revenue. By building and maintaining a good relation can increase the number of times that customers buy from you. The employees are should keep in touch with the customers so that the customers will do purchasing more frequent with you. For example, many organizations such as Genting which come out with Genting card where have a lot of strategies to increase the number of time you visit to Genting. There are various ways to build and maintain relation with the customers such as e-mail, mail, text messaging, phone call and point and benefit given to attract the customers visit Genting often. Hence, innovation and creativity play important roles in developing strategies in building and maintaining relationships.

2. 2 Decreases in Cost

2. 2. 1 Employee feedback for cost reduction (Thayne 2010)

After the corporate retreat, the employee will be motivated. So this will be the best time to get their contribution for the company. The managers can get feedbacks through personal interview, daily communication or improvement box. The reasons the managers should get feedbacks from the employees because employees have direct relation with the work process and have more experience regarding the daily operations of the company. On the other hand managers make cost reduction decisions based on theories such as studies, reports, and charts. But, the company has to start using feedbacks given by the employees so that they will contribute more as

they feel they are part of the solution. Besides, rewarding them is very important to encourage feedbacks.

2. 2. 2 Decrease in Turnover Rate

The main key to decrease the turnover rate is through job satisfaction. The satisfied employees will show positive attitude and morale during the job. In order to create job satisfaction, the organization should fulfill the employees' needs.

Hence, after the corporate retreat the employees relationships was build or maintain, communication & influencing skills are enhanced and more towards team focus. Therefore, the employees will have job satisfaction as the company fulfilled the social need of the employees. According to the Maslow's hierarchy, human beings have social need.

Moreover, the employees will be more loyal to the company as they feel sense of belonging. This is because they are given attention, opportunities and recognize in the company. According to Maslow's hierarchy this fulfilled their self-esteem need. Besides, according to the Herzberg's Two Factor Theory, it wills the motivators factor for the employees which will create satisfaction.

As a result of job satisfaction through the skills develop from corporate retreat which fulfilling the need of employees, the organization will be able to reduce the turnover rate in the organization.

Question 3

What should companies do about employees who lack athletic talent but are still pressured to participate in physical activities with their colleagues? How might poor performance by those with low athletic ability affect their status within the organization?

At the first part of the question what should companies do about employees who lack athletic talent but are still pressured to participate in physical activities with their colleagues? First of all, when the company organizes this kind of cooperate retreat that's required a strong physical attribute, company must encourage and explain to those who are lack of athletic talent to participate and let them understand that those activities such as mountain climbing is not a competition for them to show how strong are you either in the office or outside the office. It's a chance for the entire employees to enhance their relationship, there is no win or lose during the event. For examples, how might those employees who lack of physical attribute will get benefit from those physical activities? During the mountain climbing those who are low in physical attribute carry less equipment during the climb, as soon as they reached the top of the mountain, they can start to build the camp, build the camp fire, cook food and etc for those who had done the hard part during the climb. This will definitely show the team spirit in them and eventually build up a better relationship among employees.

When the company has employees could not participates those physical activities due to heath problem and etc. Company should consider of using the method provided in above question. It may require less physical attribute. Such as the team simulation business games like monopoly, team building games and etc. During employees playing these games, they

require teamwork to figure out what strategic to complete the game.

Eventually, it builds a better relationship among employees and they will understand that everyone has strength in difference field and everyone must work together in order to success.

Second part of the question how might poor performance by those with low athletic ability affects their status within the organization? There are two possibilities to be happened.

First, if the company's employees have strong team spirit and the company did explained well how the physical activities may helps all the employees it definitely bring a positive impact to the company's employees. Because through the cooperate retreat employee will understands that not everyone is perfect and everyone has their own role to play. It same goes to an organization, in a company we have cleaners, engineers, manager, clerk and so on. They have their own job to perform in the company, and all of them are working toward to achieve the company's goal. For examples, the cleaner in the company job is to keep the company's environment clean and fresh all the time. Lets imagine what will happen when the cleaners does not exist in the company. For sure the company environment will be mess up, and can the employees still perform while the company is messy and untidy?

On the other hand, of course it brings negative impact to the employees if the company's employee does not have a strong team spirit or refuse to help others who are lack of physical attribute during the cooperate retreat(mountain climbing). The poor performer definitely will felt left out and think that they are weak then others. As a result, they will felt de-

motivated and they will be alienated in the company. As we know that everyone has different strength, when you are good in physical, it does not mean that u will good in everything. Therefore, no one have the right to look down or discriminate those who does not perform well during the cooperate retreat. Because they might be good in others field as well.

Lastly, I would say that company play an important role when carry out the cooperate retreat event. In order to achieve the goal of cooperate retreat company have to make sure that every one of the employee understand the objective of the cooperate retreat.

4. How might you increase teamwork when team members are not often in direct contact with one another? Can you think of any “ electronic” team building exercises?

4. 1 Facebook

Facebook is a social networking site, in the short form called SNS that can let people connect with their friends and other who work, study and live around them, so that, people can use facebook to keep in touch with their friends, post photo, share links and exchange information. But the facebook users can see only the comfirmed friends and the people in their networks.

Facebook can allow the colleague share their information through the facebook, so that they can knowing well how about each other, this can improve relationship between the colleague.

Facebook provide many games that can improve teamwork within the team, it also can increase their intelligence.

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The leader also can upload some video in the Facebook that related to the job to motivate the employee.

4. 2 Intranet

Intranet is an internal network that within an organization. Intranet is means for the exclusive use of the organization and its associate with the customers, employees and suppliers. Intranet is protected from authorized access with security system such as firewalls, so that intranet is a safety electronic system.

Intranet provides service such as email, so every employee can share their information and tries to communicate with others through this service.

Intranet also provides urgent information about the organization, so every employee can get the information immediately by using intranet.

4. 3 Extranet

Extranet is different from the internet, intranet is the generic term for a collection of private computer networks within an organization, but extranet is a computer network that allows controlled access from the outside for specific business. But both of them also is a communication tools designed to enable easy information sharing within the workgroups.

4. 4 Video Games

This is an activity that suitable for employees after work. Mostly, people will think this kind of electronic system is useless for the employee, but actually video games can release their pressure from the working. Throught different

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kind of the video games, employees can increase their teamwork through the level of the games. Employees can also try to solve the problem that set by the video games, after employees try to solve the problem of the games, even the problem cannot be solved, but the reliance between the employees still can increase obviously. In addition, video games also can increase intelligence of the employees, this is helpful for them when solving problem.