

Team work in seagate company

[Business](#), [Work](#)



What happened and why : Seagate is one of the largest digital content storage companies in the world and has business in about 15 countries around the world in Europe, Asia and the US (©2011

SeagateTechnologyLLC). To create the ultimate team-building experience, every year Seagate brings 250 high-performing employees to Queenstown, near Lake Wakatipu in New Zealand. This event tests all their physical and emotional boundaries of endurance (Max, 2006). This is a very popular program among Seagate employees and is known as “ Eco Seagate”.

The company spent a whopping sum of \$9000 per person, and the goal of this exercise is to boost the employee morale, support office amity, and encourage teamwork (Max, 2006). Seagate’s CEO Watkins wanted participants to experience the intensity that distinguishes an informal group from a high performing team. He also wants to strengthen his company’s culture by reinforcing these norms and attitudes that encourage team work, perseverance and endurance. Why did I decide to write about this? I have been working for Seagate technology for about 10 years and have been witnessing this herculean effort of team building since 2001. I attended a scaled down version of Eco Seagate in early 2002, which was equally rigorous and challenging but gave me a new way of thinking about team dynamics. The current form of Eco Seagate is a week-long teambuilding program, which includes a 10-mile trek, 12-mile bike ride through mountain terrain, navigating about 3 miles in a kayak, rappelling down cliffs and more. The last day of the challenge combines these adventurous activities into one 25-mile (40 kilometers) race.

On arrival in Queenstown, the 250 Seagate employees were divided into 50 teams of five people each; in most cases the team members had never met before and in some cases didn't even speak the same language but were expected to work together to finish the Eco-challenge. This event, which some call a social experiment, is pet project of our CEO. Every year all 250 Eco Seagate participants learn a lifelong lesson about the importance of teamwork. He envisions Eco Seagate as a way to break down barriers, boost confidence and make company staffers' better team players. " Some of you will learn about teamwork because you have a great team," he says. Some of you will learn because your team is a disaster. " (Max, 2006). Were there outcomes positive or negative for the various parties in the situation?

Certainly the outcome of this exercise is very positive for the company and Seagate's staff. I would term this event as a mother of all team building exercise ever executed by similar size company in the Silicon Valley. One must realize that this is an investment towards Social capital (McShane and Von Glinow, pp. 236). After this event Seagate not only achieves better team dynamics within their employees but would also get a stronger bonding between company and the employees.

Mentoring and coaching, especially on an informal basis, help people build networks they need to work across corporate boundaries (Gratton & Erickson, 2007). I see one negative side of this elaborate team-building exercise. Two million dollar is a lot of money to be spent on a few individuals in a large company that has 45, 000 employees worldwide. There are number of other 'team building' programs that can achieve the same results if not better at a much lower cost. For me the main issue with this program is

that you are going on a team building exercise without your immediate workgroup team.

What would you do differently? Why? : As a manager, if I wanted to build a stronger team, I would take everyone in my team to such an exercise so that more cohesiveness and team skills development can be achieved across the board. Based on my own experience team building should be an ongoing process and programs of this kind only have a short-term impact. Rather than one massive/expensive exercise, I would suggest having more frequent low-cost programs that will help me to sustain my team over a long period of time.

My learning related to this experience: Prior to going for Eco Seagate team building program, I had a feeling that I would work much better independently just like Scott commented. (Seagate Technology, 2007). My general feeling was that team work would be a burden to me and each person in the team would feel less responsible for contributing because others are present. Initially I suspected that people tend to slack off, or loaf, when they work in a group more than they do when working alone (McShane and Von Glinow, pp. 238).

Later I concluded that I wouldn't be able to complete that race by myself as the format of the race was very rigorous and everyone needs to perform multiple activities at the same time like trekking, biking, navigating, map readings, searching for milestones and strategic planning to overcome the obstacles faced during the race. I started this exercise with low levels of cohesiveness with other participants. That may be because we work in

different locations and functional areas in Seagate, speaks different primary languages or we viewed the situation differently.

Our five-person team size played a very important role to increase the cohesiveness in first four days of practice and familiarization phase (McShane & Von Glinow, pp. 242). Our diversity in knowledge and physical skills helped us to develop our team more effectively (McShane & Von Glinow, pp. 245). As a Manager I learned that I need to make sure that diversity is effectively managed in the team, because if it is not, it may lead to low cohesiveness. During four days of the acclimatization session we organized several informal team meetings and started with learning each other's strengths and weaknesses.

During practice sessions we challenged each other based on our weaknesses, which helped us to stretch ourselves beyond our normal physical capability. That was the first time I realized the power of Five "C" team member competency (McShane & Von Glinow, pp. 244). As part of our team building process we established several ground rules for the final day race and assigned team roles based on our strengths and willingness (McShane & Von Glinow, pp. 246-248). With the moral support of my team and several practice sessions of rock climbing and rappelling down the cliff, I could overcome my fear of heights and felt a little upbeat.

When a group achieves noticeable and visible success, it contributes substantially to its feelings of cohesiveness and belongingness (McShane & Von Glinow, pp. 250). Since I know a few people who were coming from California, I expanded my network by leveraging them as brokers to "

connect the separate team clusters” (Uzzi and Dunlap, pp. 56). Some of them actually became my social friends and one of them recently took me around for a quick sight-seeing tour of Amsterdam during my eight-hour layover at AMS Schiphol airport.

Conclusion: Though we didn’t win the race, we successfully completed it about 50 minutes behind the first team that touched the finishing line.

Overall experience was amazing and the skills that I learned at Eco Seagate are still contributing to my on-the-job effectiveness, including the ability to follow through on commitments to others, actively listen to team members, take responsibility for group successes or failures and give and accept the useful feedback that will help to improve the performance in next iteration.

From the experiences at Eco Seagate, hopefully several Seagate managers are cultivated and now contributing effectively to form a high performing team by building trust within teams, sharing and communicating goals among team members, empowering team members, and encouraging them through positive expectations (McShane & Von Glinow, pp. 245-251). Works Cited *

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