

WHY TEAM BUILDING IS THE BEST INVESTMENT

In most companies when a supervisor says, “We’re going to do some team building!” employees start re-running old episodes of *The Office*. It’s one thing to see it on TV, but getting a real-life taste of your manager mimicking Steve Carell’s insanely-awkward-try-hard leadership style just isn’t as funny.

Team building is the most important investment you can make for your people. It builds trust, mitigates conflict, encourages communication, and increases collaboration. Effective team building means more engaged employees, which is good for company culture and boosting the bottom line. It can also be adventurous and enjoyable if you do it with a little pizzazz.

Here are the ground rules that apply when it comes to planning activities for your people.

Don’t force the corporate stuff

The most successful, memorable team-building events are ones that don’t feel like a day at the office. Activities that overtly aim to draw in leadership lessons or practical takeaways are less powerful. Spending time together, sharing an experience or working towards a common goal allows bonding to happen more organically and far more effectively.

One example that comes to mind: The night we took the team to an Eric Church country music concert because our own COO had always wanted to go. There was no explicit lesson about leadership or communication as we spent the night drinking beer and practising our two-step. But the experience brought everyone closer together and in the end we learned that there’s no better way to understand someone than to walk a mile in his cowboy boots.

Ditch the company picnic

It turns out that happiness and learning are tied very closely together. Trying new things with your staff can generate good vibes among employees, which in turn benefits the business itself. Choosing something unique and slightly outside of people’s comfort zones can encourage them to come together in new ways.

When I found out a member of one of our teams was afraid of heights - and had always hoped to conquer that fear - we took the whole crew to the country’s longest zipline. Being thrust into a thrilling situation, 600 feet above Whistler, helped us all gel that day.

It's not a splurge - it's an investment.

A few years ago, we took our top-performing franchise partners NASCAR racing. It cost a small fortune!. At the end of the day, it was a totally worthwhile investment. The team felt appreciated. The experience - screeching around a track at more than 145 miles per hour - was absolutely unforgettable and we all felt like champions.

The point? You don't have to bet the farm on fancy, expensive trips or experiences, but don't skimp either. Be willing to make a real investment.

Keep that positive energy going at the office

Most team-building falls flat because it's a one-time activity - done and then forgotten. It's key to find ways to keep the excitement going. The challenge is creating opportunities for people to connect and interact in meaningful ways, outside of regular meetings or presentations.

One way we do this is at our daily huddle. At the same time each day, the entire company assembles for a fast-paced stand-up meeting to check-in on major projects and celebrate achievements together. Beyond that, our people are encouraged to share their 101 life goals list with each other (we even developed an app to make it easier). Goals range from learning to read Tolstoy in Russian to walking the Great Wall of China. It's a powerful way to learn about people and their dreams, as well as to generate ideas for future team-building activities.

How do you know you've got team building right? If there was laughter, a sense of excitement and accomplishment, and maybe a few Instagram moments, you're definitely on the right track!

Founder and CEO of O2E (Ordinary to Exceptional) Brands.