Top 3 Tips For Corporate Team Building

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If we can agree that 'practice makes perfect', then it would make sense that improving teamwork requires practice. Athletes and sports people endure regular and strenuous training sessions to improve their fitness, skills and teamwork, yet practising teamwork in a work environment is much less common.

A typical corporate team might undertake a team building session once or twice a year as part of an annual offsite retreat. If this is the case, then the team building session needs to be targeted, relevant and memorable if it is going to make a difference back at work for the remainder of the year.

So, how do you improve an organisation? It sounds like a daunting, perhaps insurmountable question. According to Organisational Behaviour Theory, it can be achieved in two ways. You can change the organisational structure, or you can improve the effectiveness of the people within the organisation.

Structure Or People

Improving the structure can be separated into three main areas. Firstly, you can re-structure the number of vertical layers within the organisational chart. In a fast changing environment, companies may attempt to flatten the structure to increase flexibility. The number of horizontal departments can also be altered. Secondly, it is possible to review the systems and processes. Documented processes and training programs allow for a consistency of delivery within the organisation. Thirdly, it is possible to look at the decision making processes and either centralise or decentralise. All of these options are time consuming and costly, with questionable long-term benefits.

Tip 1 - Improve The People

Team building and team development is a strategy of improving results by increasing the effectiveness of the people within the organisation. There is no doubt that creativity and empowerment are two of the most effective ways to improve performance. People that are engaged in their work, empowered to make decisions and motivated to show initiative are invaluable.

However, you need three things for individuals to be effective. Firstly, you need people to have the appropriate technical and process skills to complete the job. Secondly, you need staff that are suitably motivated. Thirdly, management needs to provide an opportunity for staff to use their skills. It makes sense that having well trained staff that are either not motivated or not given appropriate opportunities will have negative consequences.

It may not be surprising that teams provide an excellent means for individuals to share ideas, show initiative and make decisions. Teams are one of the simplest methods for unleashing individual creativity, empowerment and problem solving. Improving individual communication and problem solving skills is the bedrock for the next tip.

Tip 2 – Improve The Team

Putting people into teams is not enough to guarantee improved results. There needs to be a systematic and consistent way that teams work together. In a team building program, an educational or theory component provides the basis for people to understand the various phases involved in team-based problem solving. The theory can be practised and reinforced through a variety of suitable challenges.

An appropriate team building program should be matched to the group size, time frame and industry so that is relevant with the right amount of challenge. Whilst the session may appear to be unrelated to the core functions of the organisation, the purpose of an experiential exercise is to simulate the group dynamics that can occur at work within a shortened time frame, and to provide opportunities for discussion and learning.

Tip 3 - Improve The Organisation

As teams develop the skills required to solve complex problems, their productivity and morale typically improve. This observation is supported by psychological research that has shown that work satisfaction is closely linked to work place performance. However, the natural predisposition for teams to become tribal or insular needs to be overcome. Team building programs can highlight and overcome this tendency through a carefully designed, multi-team, experiential exercise.

A positive result does not happen by chance. Teams that are successful are able to apply the theories of teamwork and organisational learning into a tangible experience. They are able to demonstrate the behaviours required to plan, innovate and problem solve. Team building provides an opportunity to highlight that teamwork is a strategic choice that requires sharing information and ideas within and across teams for the benefit of the organisation.

Daniel Cohen founded A.C.E. Training And Consulting in 1998 and has conducted more than 1,000 team-building programs for a huge range of companies across all Australian states. Daniel has formal qualifications in traditional teaching methods and experiential teaching methodologies. Both approaches are incorporated into training programs to maximise learning, participant involvement and enjoyment.

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