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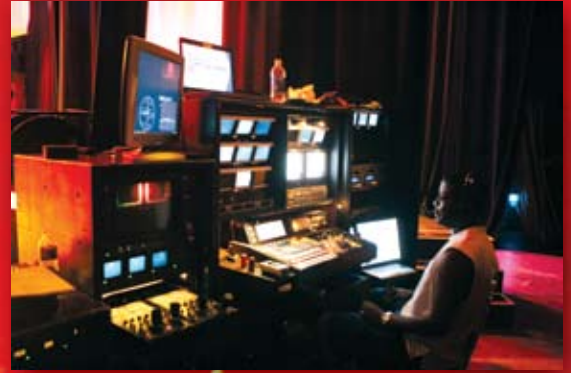
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Courtesy: Project C.U.R.E.

'Heads, Hands, Hearts'

To truly motivate employees, today's team building programs need to impact the emotional bottom line

By Bill John

Including philanthropic elements in team building activities engages employees on an emotional level. Here, Coors employees sort medical supplies to be delivered to developing countries.

Motivating your team is never an easy task — among every group there are the non-believers and the cynics who roll their eyes at the slightest notion of team building. The challenge of breaking through their façade and actually impacting the emotional bottom line is pushing businesses to look beyond the obvious paintball excursions and to put a philanthropic twist on events. Why? Because they engage employees emotionally and push people to change the way they do business — both with their coworkers and their customers.

Today's Employee

People don't want to have punch into work and out of life and then at the end of the day punch out of work and back into life. They have too many choices not to be fully engaged and satisfied with their experience

at work. The challenge of building effective teams is, then, to help team members find more meaning in their work and more value in their relationships with customers and coworkers.

As we've moved from agrarian to industrial to technological commerce, people have moved further and further away both from the customer interface/experience and from their families. This means that employees' sense of work satisfaction rides on the connections they can make with the value of their product/duty/customer and their relationships at work.

Because every company's ability to make a profit is directly related to the value it provides to its customers, it makes good business sense to help employees understand their connection to that value. If employees lose their essential sense of contribution, they lose the sense of teamwork,

commitment and purpose. A company unravels quickly from there. The rebuilding of these things requires the rebuilding of value and contribution — not just the focus of doing "team building."

Workers Hungry for More

Effective team building programs must incorporate experiences, simulations and processes that provide this new context of self and team. Activities that are outside the realm of business induce a neutral playing field and allow the cast of team characters to emerge organically. As participants are able to catch themselves being themselves, they can easily see and discuss how their defaults impacted team performance and work satisfaction.

Our philanthropic program Life Cycles, for example, shows the lifecycle of one's contributions to the team



When it participated in a national "Adopt a Classroom" program, marketing agency Barkley divided its employees into teams and had them create their own school names and mascots. The "schools" then competed to raise money.

Courtesy: Barkley

as well as a product resulting in real value to real customers. The main simulation involves creating a product, later presented to children from area youth groups, with the parts, tools and expertise within the room/group.

What unfolds is something that begins to have meaning and value — a bicycle, a prosthetic hand, a playhouse. People begin to think about a customer at this stage, but still with limited emotional connection and commitment. Quality is often questionable and so is their overall sense of teamwork. The missing link? The customer! So we bring in real kids to receive their first brand new bicycle, or show video of children of land mine accidents being fitted with the same devices the group just built or kids playing in the playhouses at hospitals and youth shelters. This turns a hypothetical simulation into something tangible, real and emotional.

Is it touchy-feely? You bet! But people want to feel connected to their jobs and that they are part of an effective

team. They don't want to just hear about these things — they want to know that their efforts touch the lives of others enough to make it worth the amount of time they spend at work and away from their families. They are hungry to bite into more meaning in their work.


Short, Sweet — and Powerful

With a changing workforce come changed needs



Courtesy: Barkley

Jeff King and Vicki Stuckwisch, president and COO, respectively, of Barkley, got into the act as part of the "Adopt a Classroom" program.

for managing employees. Companies now need to create team building and leadership programs that utilize participants' heads, hands and hearts. These programs need to leverage team building and leadership initiatives by benefiting more than just the participants. Combining training and philanthropy into one powerful team building experience helps accomplish this. When activities inspire participants to a different level of engagement and evoke a more impactful message around team skills, leadership, customer service and performance, participants walk away with heightened awareness and a deeper understanding of what they are trying to accomplish. 



Guest columnist Bill John is president and co-founder of Odyssey, a Chico, Calif.-based team building company. Contact: bill@odysseyteams.com

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