

# More than team-building events required to bring a workforce together

Debbie Nicol

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Corporate team events often reap little benefit beyond the day itself. So perhaps it is time for corporations to channel their well-intended investment into a something that will yield and sustain back in the workplace for days, weeks, months and years to come.

What is the essential core that traditional team-building activities miss? To answer that, a presupposition must be acknowledged; an effective team is not simply a collection of individuals. A team will behave as a team only when a common goal is achieved through high levels of dependency and trust, facilitating a synergised commitment.

Dependency is seen in mechanical devices where if the cog doesn't move, nor does the wheel and if the oil isn't clean, the engine won't charge. Dependency is often considered relevant to process management, when specialists take decisions at choice points with common questions: if yes, proceed, if no, return to home. Up until recently, the concept of team or human dependency was rarely worked within corporations because human systems, groups, teams or relationships were pushed aside.

Times are a-changing, resulting in compelling evidence and opportunity for corporate teams to integrate human systems work into their team development plans. This means the team will prosper when developing awareness of, and working with, an entity that exists between the individuals called the team relationship.

This approach helps corporate teams to look beyond the individuals and work with the connection between them. Let's demonstrate some real examples:

- A merger has two parties – the acquiring party and the one being acquired. Science tells us that “one” is finite, and that two parties simply cannot become one. With the billions of dollars reaped through corporate M&As that might suggest two can become one, a question begs to be asked. At what cost was that merger? Yes it produced efficiencies at some stage post-merger, yet how much wasted time, energy and utilisation of resources are not reported? And how many suffered throughout the process? Regardless of the acquiring company's standard operating procedures, corporate collateral or best practices, there will be a new entity or relationship that will have influence from both sides. What a fabulous opportunity to facilitate the influence from both, while working within a required framework, rather than pouring a set of individuals into a vessel that they are in conflict with.

- Many organisations are now adopting a business model which focuses on an expert business specialist being hired, commonly on a six to 18-month contract, and introduced into a team with the sole purpose of helping it “hit the ground running”, “survive the initiation period” or “fix the problem”. They already have proven expertise in their field and the company requires them to perform the “emergency surgery” needed for a changing corporate or government scenario. Focusing only on technical expertise cancels out any

possibility of the team relationship having an effect on the results. What a system-based approach would bring to these team scenarios is a focus on results, wiping out wasted, suspicious energy.

To ensure business continues to invest in team development, event organisers need to take a choice:

Either approach team days as a day out, allowing team members the opportunity to voice concerns of “who did what to whom, when” and complete some fun initiatives in the hope forgiveness will prevail during the patch-up job. Or work with the relationship which binds the team together, that invisible and powerful space of synergy between individuals. When working with this approach, one often referred to as working with team coaching, a collective consciousness or a team identity, the very source of a team is evolving, strengthening, growing and reinventing itself. With this approach just one part of the team-strengthening process, the emerging healthy team will hold itself accountable for ongoing correction and sustained accountability.

That’s certainly a great return on investment.

*Debbie Nicol, the managing director of Dubai-based business en motion, is a consultant on leadership and organisational development, strategic change and corporate culture.*

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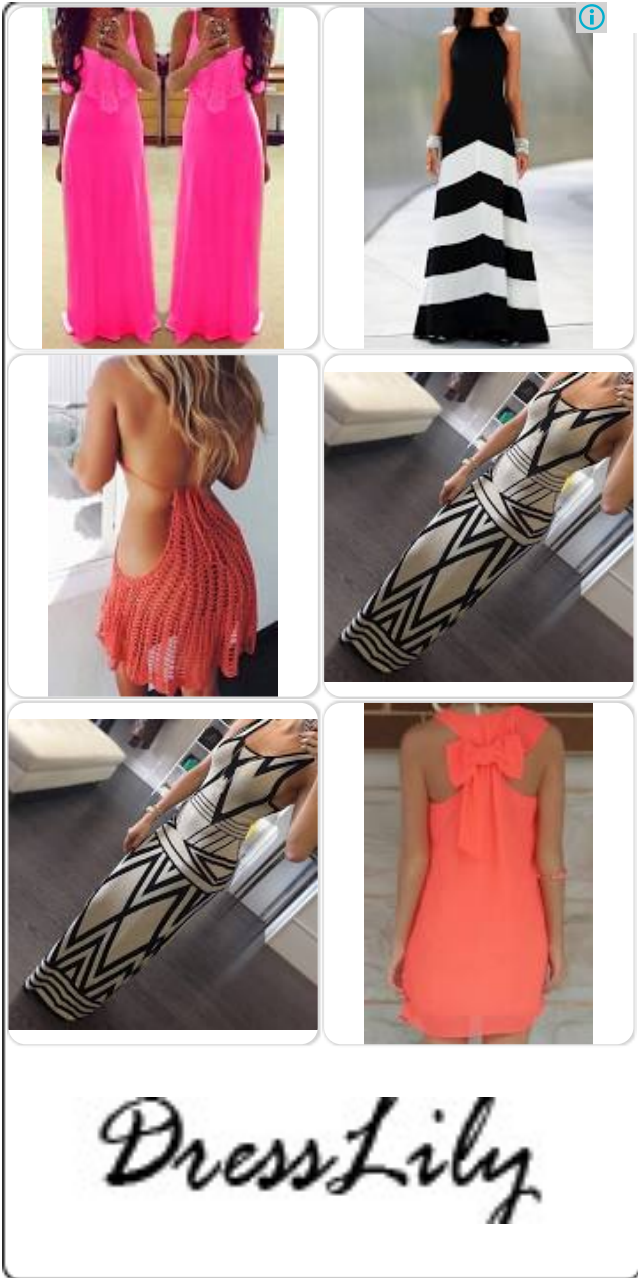
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