



MEETINGS:review

OPINION Todd Demorest: Build CSR into team building

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by Todd Demorest

The lead facilitator at Odyssey Teams explains why adding a philanthropic side to your team building events can make them more effective and boost your CSR credentials.



In the tumultuous times we are in, organisations are facing a multitude of challenges. These include keeping the people in the company energised, ambitious, connected to their work and in a positive mood. The proper choice of CSR events can increase cross-functional networks, improve cross-departmental communication, foster solution-based thinking and raise mood levels, thus productivity.

By investing CSR funds and/or time in the employee, they will feel included, taken care of, worthwhile and appreciated. They will also learn new skills and/or competencies that are essential as the business and their roles in it evolve.

There is a belief that if a company (and the individuals in the company) treat their internal customers as well as their external customers that everything else will work out – more often, better than expected at all levels of the business.

Creating hybrid events

Today, more and more companies are turning to a melding of CSR/philanthropy and team building events for their employees. Companies can no longer afford team building simply to be fun, entertaining and/or gregarious. It is imperative that the money spent on building a team does just that, and maybe even more importantly build the capacity for individuals to make powerful choices and blend more easily as they move from team to team.

These hybrid team building events are a fabulous place to bring corporate values and/or targeted points to life. Participants have an opportunity to connect with their co-workers as they work on projects such as making prosthetic hands for land mine victims, bicycles for less fortunate children, play houses for children's hospitals, etc.

Emotional connections

These programmes provide a visceral experience that anchors the learning points with emotion – which lasts longer than a PowerPoint presentation or a 'team mug'.

In addition the employee can put a 'face' to the people affected by the company's CSR initiatives and/or the benefits of where the company contributes. And they feel a key part of the CSR programme, too, with all the pride, gratitude, and humility that comes with it. The cynicism that often goes along with team building events is diminished in these highly developed and relevant events.

When discussing team building, target a programme that can provide a wide return on investment for the employee, their team, the business, and beyond, as they put their thumbprint on something that touches near and far. Philanthropic team building is a sure way to hit the CSR mark at many levels.

Todd Demorest is lead facilitator at Odyssey Teams

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