



*This article is one of many available to download  
from the Advanced Training website at [www.a-t.co.uk](http://www.a-t.co.uk)  
T: 01235 770791  
F: 01235 766701  
E: [information@a-t.co.uk](mailto:information@a-t.co.uk)*

*The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author,  
who has given Advanced Training permission to make it  
publicly and freely available.*

*In the spirit of that openness, we ask that any copy of this  
document remains intact, including this page, so that its  
provenance and distribution credits can be acknowledged.*

*You are free to use this material for any non-profit-making  
purpose (subject to any restrictions otherwise noted) as long as  
this header and any copyright & contact information are included.*

---

## **A Philosophy for Effective Team Building by Tony Atkins, Director of Advanced Training**

### **Using Real Business Needs**

Advanced Training believes effective team building is best achieved when a team works on its real business needs.

By helping the team to use practical experiences, they can quantify their success and compare that to the desired success. They can analyse and understand how each person operates and how they relate to each other.

With this greater understanding, the team can clearly identify - in practical terms - how they can work more effectively together to achieve greater success.

### **Using Traditional Team Building Events**

We do recognise that traditional team building events can prove beneficial. Our armed forces and other active services use them as part of their foundation training. There are other examples of organisations that have claimed initial success from such events.

In the recent commercial world, it is more difficult to find organisations that have quantified lasting benefits to business performance. Those that have recognised to gain real lasting benefits team building events need to be:

- directly related to the required skill competencies of the individual team members and the team overall.

- focused on the desired behaviour in the workplace. At the same time recognising the likely impact of the demands and limitations often imposed by the existing culture.
- designed and delivered to meet specific business objectives and the associated people development needs.
- fully evaluated afterwards, against pre-defined success evaluation criteria. This enables the real benefits to be assessed and quantified. It also gives the team factual information to build upon and so continue their development.

## **Using Research**

In a recent survey, recruitment consultants Office Angels found that team building events were "becoming more wacky". In addition to the physically testing, activities now range from making clay pots to "human monopoly".

The findings of the survey showed:

- 68 per cent of respondents dreaded these activities.
- 52 per cent found the activities childish and embarrassing.
- 10 per cent complained of feeling uncomfortable.

Hardly a sound foundation for meaningful exploration of each individual's contribution, or for developing team cohesion. And yet, experience and history shows that such events can be fun for some people. They may help people to bond together. They may identify strengths and development needs in individuals when operating in a crises or physical situation.

Regretfully, there are also examples of such events going terribly wrong. When the well being of participants has been endangered, in some cases fatally.

## **Using Transferability**

For team building events to be successful, to gain real lasting benefit, the findings need to be directly related back to the workplace - the operational environment of the team. The skills identified need to be easily transferable to future performance in the required job role.

Advanced Training will devise and deliver such events, providing the needs are right for this approach and the format is entirely suitable and safe for all participants. This requires clearly defined business objectives, identified people development needs and success evaluation criteria that demand this approach. It also requires careful consideration of the expected physical capabilities of all participants.

Otherwise, Advanced Training strongly believes in, and recommends, adopting a work based approach for team building and team development needs.

## **Using Work Based Experiences**

Our preferred approach is to use appropriate and common business scenarios as work based learning experiences. By helping the team to work through real practical scenarios - by providing proper facilitated guidance - the team and its individual members identify:

- their successes and how they were achieved.
- development opportunities for the team and/or individuals. They gain a clear perception of the benefits and a shared understanding of why, how and when their experiences apply.

This approach often involves some foundation work, depending on the pre-knowledge of the group and the objectives for the intervention. For example, this could include some formal analysis of the team members' preferred style of operation for such things as:

- face to face communication.
- influencing others to act.
- their natural team role(s).

It may also include a review of how best to give and to receive feedback, so that it is effective and always seen as being constructive.

The team building event will conclude with giving the team members the opportunity to review together their whole experience. This allows them to identify actions or perceived attitudes that help or hinder the performance of individuals or the team.

With facilitated resolution of the findings, the enhanced mutual understanding can prove invaluable for the future operation of the team.

As the whole event is focused on work based scenarios, the transfer of skills and knowledge is automatic and continual improvement is a natural outcome that is generated through peer feedback and support.

## **Note**

Tony Atkins will welcome the opportunity to discuss any views or comments prompted by this summary article. Advanced Training will be happy to discuss your specific business needs and help you to deliver the right development for your people.