



## Guide for Team Building Planners

### Introduction:

Thank you for your interest in **Mission Possible** Team Building. This guide is designed to give you the information and tools you need help you plan and resource a successful team building program as you plan your group's next team building event. I hope that this is a useful resource for you. You should also always consider a meeting with the providers so they can clearly understand your objectives and you can get a clear picture of what they offer.

It won't take you long to read the guide and if you take the suggestions on these pages, not only will you likely save time in planning your next event but you will also be much more likely to create an event that your participants will remember.

Think about how you feel when your participants tell you (as our clients have told us): "Thank you, this was a great experience!!"

In the first part of the guide, we prepare and help you do some planning and goal setting. Then we give you some thoughts and ideas on what your event could look like. The link below will let you see what our current team building modules look like.

### Team Building Defined:

Have you ever watched a movie that was billed as a comedy, only to find that in your opinion it is more of a drama or an action film? To some people it probably was a comedy, but not to you. The discrepancy is semantic; the word "comedy" means different things to different people.

Similarly, "**Team Building**" is a widely-used expression that defies an agreed-upon definition. It means different things to different people. In some organizations team building means the same thing to everyone. But their use of the expression may differ from that of another organization or even a team building provider.

As you begin to conceptualize your group's team building experience, it is important to be clear about what you mean when you use the expression "team building" and what other people (such as your boss or planning committee) mean when they use it.

Used incorrectly, you might find that the team building delivered by a provider is not the experience you sought. In practice, it is not enough to contact a team building provider and say "We are looking for team building", because this leaves too much room for misinterpretation.

To ensure that the team building provider knows what you want, it is important that you meet to align your objectives and needs with the resources and style of the provider.

The importance of using the right terminology to identify your needs and wants relates to your group's desired outcomes from the program. In our experience providing team building programs we have found that the various meanings of "team building" can be boiled down to two categories of potential outcomes.

### Team building for Fun:

The first category is team building experiences that are used for the purpose of fun and relationship-building. When a group goes offsite and has a positive experience, these shared adventures create a "buzz" upon return to the office. These kinds of team building sessions bond people together to create stronger friendships and interpersonal relationships, helping participants better communicate and work as a team upon returning to the office. All our Team Building programs are aimed at both learning and having "fun".

## **Team Building for Learning and Development:**

The second category is team building activities that provide a deeper level of processing as an experiential learning program. In addition to the benefits described in Category 1, your team building program can be a developmental experience in which participants learn how to work more effectively together.

The group usually has specific team building objectives, such as improving communication, building trust, enhancing strategic planning skills or thinking outside the box.

Often it is a combination of several learning and development objectives. Being clear about what you mean and what other people mean when using the expression "Team Building" will help you down the road as you seek proposals from team building providers and/or choose activities for your team building program.

### **Identifying Your Group's Objectives:**

Let's say you want a new car. For fun, let's say it is a sports car. Take just a second or two to envision the car. (A Porsche always comes to my mind!!) Now imagine yourself walking into a car dealership and shaking hands with the salesperson.

Imagine having this dialogue:

**Salesperson:** How can I help you today?

**You:** I'm looking for a new car.

**Salesperson:** Excellent! I can definitely help you with that. What kind of car are you looking for?

**You:** A sports car.

**Salesperson:** Well, you came to the right place! What kind of driving will you do?

**You:** I'm not sure.

**Salesperson:** You're not? Well, that's OK. Tell me...where will you drive the car?

**You:** I'm not sure. You see, it is actually my wife who will be driving the car.

**Salesperson:** Oh, I see, so where and how will she drive the car?

**You:** I'm really not sure about that.

**Salesperson:** Hmm. When do you need the car?

**You:** I don't know.

**Salesperson:** I see. How about this...how much do you want to spend on the car?

**You:** I don't know, I don't have a budget.

**Salesperson:** You don't?

**You:** No. My wife just asked me to see what kind of cars there are and how much they cost.

How did you feel while reading this conversation? I hope you felt frustrated by the lack of information that you had to offer the salesperson!!

The salesperson needs to know some key information about you and your needs to make a good recommendation. Similarly, if you don't identify your group's objectives before choosing your team building activities you will be equally frustrated when you talk to team building providers.

Why? Because most good team building providers offer a wide variety of programs on a *consultative* basis which means that upon learning about your group's needs and objectives, they will create a program (or programs) that are best suited for your particular situation. The provider knows their programs far better than you do, so if you can share with them the information they need, they'll put together a team building session that will be a hit with your group and will meet your objectives. (This is the approach taken by **Mission Possible.**)

Without knowing your objectives, all the provider can do is give you some random details about their programs and a few prices. Usually they will send you everything they have. After contacting a few different providers, you'll end up with a mountain of information to go through. Then it will fall upon you to determine what will be the best activity for your group.

Can you see how this can lead to an unsuccessful team building session? Can you also see how much time you will cost yourself?

Rather than sift through hundreds of possible team building activities and then hoping you've chosen the right one, by specifying your objectives in advance, you will have received specific, tailored recommendations for maybe three, five or ten different activities, knowing that whichever you choose will be a success.

Now imagine having this conversation:

**Salesperson:** How can I help you today?

**You:** Hello. I want to purchase a two-door sports car that gets above average mileage for its class. It must be red. I will mostly drive it in the city and very rarely on the highway. I have \$75,000 to spend and I'm prepared to take it off the lot today. It must be standard transmission and have a high-quality stereo. And of course, I should be able to get two child-seats in the back.

**Salesperson:** You've really helped me narrow it down. There are two options you should consider. Let me show you the first one...

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**Is this you? "But my manager just told me to go get some team building ideas"**

You want to make your manager happy, right? You want to look good and make your manager look good, right? Then at this point you probably need to go back to your manager (or planning committee) and clarify the objectives of the team building session. You can do it! It will take less than five minutes. You can use the template below as an aid.

**Team building objectives template:**

- What is the #1 reason we are considering a team building session?

\_\_\_\_\_

- And why is that important?

\_\_\_\_\_

- What are some other reasons we are considering a team building session?

\_\_\_\_\_

- How will our group/department/organization be made better by team building?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Does our group expect to learn from the team building session? If so, what? If not, why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What three things did our group like the best about our most recent team building session?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What three things did our group like the least about our most recent team building session?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What components or qualities MUST the team building session have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What components or qualities WOULD BE NICE for the team building session to have?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Fun? Learning? Or Both?**

In the template above one of the questions reads: "Does our group expect to learn from the team building session?" This is something important for you to consider.

All team building providers provide fun and interactive experiences. But some also have the ability to turn your team building session into a learning experience. Programs that are for learning are generally restricted to learning that applies to team skills, i.e. skills that help people work more effectively as a team. Some examples include:

- Communication
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Teamwork Sharing Ideas Creativity (in a team setting)
- Leadership
- Strategizing
- Prioritization

Some examples of skills that generally do not apply to a team situation and cannot generally be developed in a team building session include: Computer skills Time management Sales (except in a team setting) So, determine if your group needs to learn from the session. If so, spend some time identifying the desired outcomes of the learning session. Some reasons why teams decide to have a learning session include:

- Teams have merged and people are in new working relationships.
- A team has centralized or decentralized.
- Something happened that caused a loss of trust and/or efficiency.
- Salespeople from a competitive background need to share ideas and information.

If you intend to gain learning from your team building session, be realistic about your desired outcomes. For example, expecting to significantly change the culture of a team with a 2-hour team building session is overly optimistic.

The following template can help you determine your learning objectives and outcomes. See the Appendix for a sample of a completed template.

**Team building learning goals template:**

- What is your top learning goal for the session?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Why is that your top goal?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What are some other learning goals you have for the session?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- After the team building session, what will be different about the way your team works?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How can you justify the cost of the team building session? In other words, what revenue increase or cost decrease could possibly be generated by having the team learn?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What can you do to ensure that our team building provider is skilled at providing an interactive and engaging learning environment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Is there something systematic that prevents your team from changing the way they work? (For example, a pay structure that provokes competition is not helpful in stimulating teamwork). If so, can you possibly change it before the team building session?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Types of Team Building Programs:**

Team building programs come in all shapes and sizes. There are myriad opportunities for team building. Essentially anything that your team does together outside of the office can be considered team building. We recommend that you look for programs that have the following characteristics:

- **Team-oriented.** Something that divides the team into groups is best. Going to a sports match or the theatre tends not to be team-oriented.
- **Competitive.** Even groups that are not competitive in the office benefit from some competition in team building, because a competitive program tends to engage participants in the activity.
- **Active.** Active sessions tend to require both left- and right-brain thinking and as a result are more engaging and memorable. Active programs also tend to engage the three types of learners (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic), so any learning that takes place will be absorbed by the greatest percentage of the group.
- **Inclusive.** Try to find an activity that is going to be fun for the highest percentage of people. Also, look for activities that don't give certain people an experience-based advantage, such as playing golf.
- **Customizable.** If you have particular needs, then look for an activity that is easily customized. You can reasonably expect to have to invest more money for this customization.
- **Easy to incorporate into your meeting, conference or incentive trip.** Look for a program that can come to you to minimize transfer times.

## **Establishing your Budget:**

Let's be realistic. Team building isn't free. And you definitely get what you pay for. The value of the experience is the most important measure.

An example from the USA:

"One interested manager from a very profitable international company asked for a price quote from us and said that their budget was \$500. Well that not much more than a basic entry-level program, but it happened to be a personal friend, so I thought I could be a bit flexible with our pricing.

Then she told me that the group size was 50 people. Team building on \$10 a person? I was about to tell her to take her team to the movies. Perhaps they could buy their own popcorn.

Then she told me that the \$10 per person budget included lunch! I wondered how impressed the team would be with a \$5 lunch and a \$250 team building program!"

Obviously, this manager's expectations were out of line. If you get one thing from reading this, please, be willing to spend some money on team building. We understand that ROI is hard to establish. After all, how can you measure an improvement in communication and relate that to revenue or costs? You can't. You (or your manager) needs to have faith that team building will benefit the team. And the more clear you can be about your objectives, the more likely the benefit will be realized.

What should team building cost? Well, price depends on a number of factors including:

- The type of activity
- The duration of the program
- The number of participants
- The location
- Whether the program will be for learning or if it is just for fun.

So let's talk numbers. A reasonable expectation is that your team building program should cost Php1,500 – Php3000 per person. It could be a bit more for small groups and could be a bit less for really large groups. You should also be willing to invest more if you want a high quality learning debrief. Also ask yourself these questions. Would I be willing to invest more if more value could be provided? What would that additional value be and how much more could we afford?

You don't need to have an exact budget for team building, but our advice is that you should have a range in mind. It will save you time when you are looking for a team building provider.

### **A time-saving tip:**

Avoid micromanaging. If you have chosen an experienced provider, trust that they know how to engage the group and meet your objectives.

Of course it is OK to work closely with your provider to ensure that everything is planned properly. But don't go overboard. As an example, we have seen senior managers spend hours customizing every last detail of their programs. The programs were successful, but this is not work that senior managers should be occupied with! Give you provider clear guidelines and let them do what they do best. Then you can get back to the rest of your work!

### **Having Fun:**

This comes back to trust. Trust your team building provider. They are good at what they do. They want to win your accolades and referrals. So on the event date, enjoy the program and have fun!

**Pitfalls:**

No-one wants to blow it. No-one wants to look bad. No-one wants to make a mistake. Here is how to avoid it. Most of these pitfalls have already been discussed, so here is a quick summary.

- **Unclear objectives:** The team building provider must know what you want to accomplish.
- **Overly high expectations:** You can't fix every problem with team building.
- **Low budget:** Good team building costs money. So you'll need more than Php500 to Php1000 per person. (Don't shoot the messenger!)

**Your RFP:**

The letters RFP (an abbreviation for Request for Proposal) can conjure up images of long-winded briefing documents with sections and subsections and sub-subsections. In our case simply go to <http://www.missionpossible-pg.com/questionnaire.htm>

These are excerpts from a paper by Andrew Long  
Critical Pathfinders Adventure Training Inc.