

# 10 Team Building Trends for 2018

What's on the Horizon?



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# Team Building Trends 2018

## What's on the Horizon for 2018

Almost every year since 2013, we've released our annual forecast of team building trends based on what we are seeing in the marketplace. This year, we're pleased to release our trend forecast on our main website instead of our blog. We hope that this will make it easier for you to find tools and strategies to ensure that team building and executive retreats are effective in 2018 and for years to come.

As in previous years, not all trends are positive. Accordingly, we have divided the 2018 list into Best Practices and Pitfalls to Avoid.

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HTML Version: <http://www.executiveoasis.com/blog/teambuildingtrends.html> (With Videos)



# Team Building Best Practices

## 1. Team Building that Generates Revenue

Team building can be a revenue centre.



Often, team building and executive retreats are perceived as cost centres. This approach is short-sighted. As companies face the challenges of thriving in the midst of uncertainty and finding new sources of revenue, team building can generate bottom line results.

There are 2 approaches to making this happen:

- Integrating revenue generating projects into team building that give teams the opportunity to design and create:
  - guerilla marketing events
  - [viral videos](#) (Toronto)
  - flash sales
  - pop-up events
- Designing team building to address specific business challenges and generate solutions:
  - re-engineering time consuming processes
  - identifying new target markets to replace segments that are declining
  - identifying new uses for existing products or services (think 3M)
  - uncovering hidden business opportunities

Either of these approaches will produce results that can be measured. We have done this for a number of our clients and one of them has given us permission to share video footage from their executive retreat

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## Ensuring Alignment Between Branding Corporate & Culture

## 2. Team Building that Transforms Corporate Culture

Some companies are recognizing the importance of a vibrant corporate culture to foster innovation and as part of their branding.

Harvard Business Review's **Why Your Company Culture Should Match Your Brand** highlighted the importance of an alignment between corporate culture and branding.

*"....a strong, differentiated company culture contributes to a strong, differentiated brand..."*

**Harvard Business Review**

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As a result, some corporate culture transformation initiatives are now spearheaded by the CMO rather than HR. More and more, team building facilitators will be working in tandem with Marketing to:

- ensure that the entire marketing team is pulling in the same direction

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- break down silos and strengthen cross-functional teamwork between marketing, sales, and other key departments
- design and facilitate OD initiatives to accelerate the culture transformation process
- brainstorm and design strategies to improve branding and foster a vibrant corporate culture to support it

Companies that invest in long term team building or OD consulting facilitated by team building facilitators will increase the likelihood that these initiatives will be successful.



"This form of cooperative alliance has been the basis of nearly every great fortune."

### 3. Masterminds for Executives and Entrepreneurs

Team building isn't just for corporate teams that work together day by day. The same tools that assist corporate teams in improving their effectiveness can also add tremendous value for entrepreneurs and groups of executives from different companies who meet together in mastermind groups.

Professional facilitators can help the groups gel and remain targeted and focused.

Napoleon Hill, author of **Think and Grow Rich** was the first to highlight the power of mastermind alliances that meet on a regular basis to provide support to members.

The brainstorming tools and processes that create effective corporate team building can also contribute to the effectiveness of mastermind groups for executives and entrepreneurs.

Today, in a growing trend, groups like Vistage, Entrepreneurs' Organization, and Tec Canada (the Canadian wing of Vistage) apply the mastermind alliance principle.

**Mastermind:** "The coordination of knowledge and effort of two or more people, who work toward a definite purpose, in the spirit of harmony."

**Think and Grow Rich**

## Shrinking teams.....an opportunity



### 4. Smaller Groups

Some organizations that used to host team building initiatives at the director and VP levels are now dividing up the budget and distributing it to departmental managers.

Working with smaller teams makes it possible to see the mastermind principle in action and use it to address departmental issues. When groups are small, team members tend to open up and go deeper during team building. As a result, it is important to allocate more time for the individual sessions.

One thing to keep in mind is that, when groups are smaller, the per person fee will be significantly higher. For this reason, some teams end up using recreational activities as a substitute for team building. This does not address or resolve the team's challenges.

One way to make team building facilitation available to small groups is to enter into an agreement with a team building consulting firm and sponsor these initiatives at the VP level. Economies of scale can be realized to keep team building facilitation affordable even for small teams.



Games add the fun factor to team building.



## 5. Gamification

Games have many benefits for learning and team building. Not only can they be used as energizers, they can also help convey content that is complex and deliver it in a user-friendly manner that is easy to master.

Games can take many formats: card games, board games, game shows, and computer games. With the right graphics, they can be customized to fit just about any theme.

To deal with the challenge of covering content in compressed timeframes, some companies have used gaming to create team building simulations that work with large groups.

It is a theme that is sure to continue in 2018. Look for giant board games and more simulations delivered through video and digital games.

The next frontier...



## 6. Virtual Reality for Team Building

Last year, we highlighted virtual reality (VR) as a top team building trend. While team progress has been slower than anticipated, venues and services that provide VR are gradually coming on board.

The main area for development is interactive simulations in VR. As more of these programmes come on stream, we will definitely see more team building with VR.

Once Linden Labs' **Sansar** comes on-stream, there should be significant improvements in programming.

One ground-breaking development this year was at the 2017 YPO EDGE in Vancouver. Mobileye teamed up with YPO and broke the Guinness Book of World Records by demonstrating that 1,867 attendees could participate simultaneously in a shared VR experience.

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## Team Building Pitfalls to Avoid

### 7. Less team building and fewer off-sites.

When budgets are tight, the tendency is to become penny wise and pound foolish.

This trend is likely to continue due to shrinking budgets. Many companies are shelving team building or replacing it with activities that are strictly recreational. Off-sites have been disappearing for some time now. Today what gets called team building is either a corporate play day or a boring meeting followed by a recreational activity.

Unfortunately, while this short-sighted strategy may provide temporary relief from budgetary pressures, the core issues that team building could help organizations resolve are never resolved.

Rather than scrapping team building, all or part of a session can be held on-site. The concern with on-site team building is that there will be too many interruptions. Some alternatives are to use a branch office at the same company, swap meeting spaces with a supplier or client, and using a hybrid format.

Hybrid formats integrate on-site and off-site team building and sometimes integrate virtual presentations. To stretch budgets, groups can hold the activity portion of team building off-site. Consider summer camps during off-season, college or university campuses, acting studios, art galleries, community centres, churches (mid-week), and movie theatres.

For multi-national corporations, the format can work like this:

Alternatives: Hybrid Formats and Creative Venues





- Virtual session to kick off team building. This is an ideal format for CEO or executive briefings that set the context.
- Facilitated on-site sessions with facilitators at each location.
- Off-site team activities that fit the theme.
- Facilitated on-site sessions with facilitators at each location.
- Debriefing:
  - Debriefing preparation
  - Mini-debriefs at each location
  - Full debriefing and take-aways - virtual format
- Business application exercises at each location.
- Follow-up

## What's next? Pie throwing?



Seth Lemmons (Flickr)

## 8. More Foolishness and Folly #baaadteambuilding

Last year, we devoted a full section to foolishness and folly. Some of the trends we predicted are in full force. In fact, rage rooms even made it onto Shark Tank.

There is nothing much to add to what we have already shared.

We were among the first to sound the alarm about this issue. We are pleased that it is now being addressed by the media.

In fact, our President has been quoted a number of times in articles.

- [5 Steps to Create a Better Executive Retreat](#) Successful Meetings Magazine
- [Team building: le aspettative delle aziende e il rischio dell'effetto boomerang](#)
- [Don't Wing It with Team-Building](#), Society for Human Resource Management
- [...more media coverage....](#)

Extreme activities that pose a risk of injury have no place on the corporate agenda.



## 9. Danger Up Ahead

In team building trends for 2017, we addressed this emerging trend: danger on the corporate agenda. We cautioned organizations against the use of these activities, which are now being marketed as team building, during company time.

*The headlines speak for themselves:*

*Gym enthusiast mother-of-two, 35, needed £27000 worth of surgery*

*How a trendy endurance race left me needing £5000 of surgery...*

*Injuries at Florida obstacle course not covered by insurance*

*....Maimed and left in agony: Military-style obstacle courses are the new craze among competitive women - but many weekend warriors live to regret it... The Daily Mail*

There is really nothing to add to the concerns we have already expressed.

- [Team Events Gone CRAZY!!](#) (LinkedIn)
- [Extreme Team Building](#)(American Society of Mechanical Engineers)

So does this documentary.

*"What's coming next?' 'Poison darts? Machetes to the face? Acid in the eyes? Disembowelment?'"*

**A.J. Jacobs**

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Our position is unchanged. What grown adults elect to do on their own time after weighing the risks is their business.

Extreme activities have no place on the corporate agenda. Employees to go work to earn a livelihood for themselves and their families. There is no reason for them to be coerced into putting their lives at risk or face being ostracized for not being a "team player."

This trend is growing and it will take some hefty lawsuits from those who are injured to put a stop to it.

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It is essential for organizations to set clear guidelines for appropriate behaviour during retreats.

## 10. Sex Scandals

Reports about sexual misconduct have been dominating the headlines in recent months. More and more, incidents that have taken place during off-sites and other corporate retreats are coming to the fore.

*UCD investigation into wild retreat results in stricter policies*

*Sex on the company dime (MacLean's)*

*This Is How Sexism Works in Silicon Valley My lawsuit failed. Others won't.*

*Tech's Alcohol-Soaked Culture Isn't a Party for Everybody (WIRED)*

*Uber will try to change its 'bro culture' by cutting down on alcohol at work*

*Cocktail for disaster: Alcohol and business don't mix (NY Daily News)*

Look for more sexual misconduct allegations in the new year.

We have been sounding the alarm for some time about the importance of keeping alcohol under control and a leash on the libido at corporate events.

- [Alcohol at events & Duty of Care](#)
- [The Bachelor: Heartbreaking Lessons About Self-Respect \(HuffPost\)](#)

"What's coming next?' 'Poison darts? Machetes to the face? Acid in the eyes? Disembowelment?!"

**A.J. Jacobs**

We have been sounding the alarm for some time about the importance of keeping alcohol under control and a leash on the libido at corporate events.

Few team building consulting firms have addressed these issues.

It's time to re-visit protocols and policies re: appropriate behaviour at company functions. A clear message needs to be conveyed about what is expected and the steps that employees can take to ensure that their rights are protected.

Here is how one organization approached this in an email and communique that was distributed to all employees and members.

[Click to Play Video](#)



[Sexual harrassment policy and workplan](#)

Failing to do so can result in lawsuits, negative publicity, and irreparable damage to a company's brand.

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## Team Building, Innovation, and R.O.I.

### An Executive's Guide to Boosting the Bottom Line

#### About our New E-book



#### Overview

**Team Building, Innovation, and R.O.I.: An Executive's Guide to Boosting the Bottom Line** is a call for a **return to sanity in team building**. It is designed to stimulate discussion and an exploration of how team building can, once again, be used by executives as a vehicle for boosting the bottom line.

The strategies and tips that I have included are based on the missteps that I have observed companies make over and over again during the past 20+ years.

We'll explore:

- the main ingredients for designing effective team
- the keys to planning effective team building
- pitfalls to avoid
- the steps involved in measuring team building R.O.I.

- [Why Team Building](#)
- [What Executives Have to say About this E-book](#)
- [Executive Summary](#)
- [Why This E-book](#)
- [Team Building and the Bottom Line](#)
- [Essential Ingredients for Effective Team Building](#)
- [Team Building vs Team Recreation: Can You Spot the Difference?](#)
- [The Role of Fun in Corporate Team Building](#)
- [Keys to Planning Effective Team Building](#)
- [The Value of Team Building Simulations](#)
- [Team Building in Tight Timeframes](#)
- [Top 12 Team Building Pitfalls](#)
- [A Word About Sales Rallies and Retreats](#)
- [Foolishness and Folly on the Corporate Agenda](#)
- [Caution: Danger up Ahead](#)
- [Effective Team Building That Pays for Itself](#)
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- [Team Building in Action \(Sample Team Building\)](#)

Order Here: <http://www.executiveoasis.com/blogs.html#ebook>

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## What Executives Have to Say About This E-book



*Time is money. A well-organized executive retreat or team building session demonstrates the importance to participants. It conveys the messages that the organizers/company respect their time.*

*Anne Thornley-Brown has created a very thorough review of the issues that should be considered to make best use of the time allotted by the company and employees to achieve particular company/team goals.*

*To some, these tips/suggestions may seem to be intuitive or insignificant but experience has shown that even a small miss can have a significant impact. Disciplined preparation improves your chances.*

*I am a strong believer in senior officer involvement.... and the rules to be aware of when you participate. It is important that all participants know and respect your role. Most company success comes from the direction and vision at the top. There is no better place to set the direction, seize a particular "opportunity", and demonstrate the talk you walk and that you walk the talk. You play by the same rules. If you are on time everyone will be, however, if you are not so inclined, it can have a very negative impact.*

*Congratulations on your success in the niche you have carved out. Good luck with the e-book.*

### **Bob**

**Robert F. Latham,  
Board Member, BSM Wireless  
Chairman of the Board, Datacom Wireless  
Former President and CEO, Bell Cellular  
Group VP, A/President, Bell Business Solutions, Bell Ontario**

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## Executive Summary

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Here are the most important things for busy executives to keep in mind to keep executive retreats and team building on track and ensure that you generate bottom line results.

- Team building is more than an event. Expertly facilitated team building can generate bottom line results
- Set clear objectives and tie them to **specific, measurable** improvements in team and business performance.
- Never delegate key decisions about team building to inexperienced or junior team members who don't have a grasp of organizational strategy. Delegate fact-finding, research, and logistics but never authority for key decisions.
- Remember that recreational activities are not a substitute for team building.
- Select inclusive activities in which all team members can participate
- Meet with the facilitator at 3 strategic points. It doesn't take much to unleash the power of team building. All it requires from the sponsoring executive is an initial meeting or conference call and 3 checkpoint meetings or conference calls to keep things on track.
- Allocate enough time for team building and don't cut it short. Unless you schedule a series of meetings, it is impossible to generate bottom line results and make the session interactive and fun in 2 hours or half a day.
- Don't scrimp on the debriefing and business application exercises
- Always have a post-mortem and follow-up sessions with the facilitator.
- Avoid the top 12 team building pitfalls
- Avoid risks. Keep the liquor under control and avoid extreme activities.
- Stretch your team with team building that generates revenue and pays for itself.

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## About Anne Thornley-Brown



President, Executive  
Oasis International

**Team Building Facilitator/OD Consultant**  
**Education:** MBA, MSW

**Experience:** 20+ Years  
**Global Reach:** Companies from 18 countries

Anne Thornley-Brown, founder and President of Executive Oasis International. Anne has worked with clients in a variety of industries including telecommunications, banking, pharma, the airline industry, transportation, and the entertainment industry.

Anne has facilitated team building and workshops from 18 countries including North America (Canada, USA), The Caribbean (Jamaica, Dominica, Barbados), The Middle East (Dubai, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain), Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, India), Africa (South Africa, Egypt, Sudan).

Anne's clients have included Holt Renfrew, Bell Mobility, Telus Mobility, Rogers Communications, Bell Mobility, Nakheel/Dubai World, Bidvest (South Africa), Roche, Scalar Decisions, Manulife Financial, Ingram Micro, OCBC Bank Malaysia, EPICPCS - USA, Sittercity, Xerox, IBM, and IKEA. During 18 tours of Asia, Anne has delivered seminars to over 2000 executives and managers. In Asia, participants from a variety of organizations including Petronas, Samsung, Malaysian Airlines, Digi, Mobil/Exxon, Thai Airlines, Proton and Perodua, Bangkok Airways, and Dell Computers have attended her public workshops.

Anne is also a popular blogger. She has written for Plan Your Meetings by MPI, The Huffington Post, Event Manager Blog, Cvent Blog, EventMobi Blog, and Elite Meetings.

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## About Executive Oasis International



With major shifts in the global geo-political landscape, the economy and business climate have entered a time of turbulence and uncertainty. As businesses become increasingly complex, connectivity is decreasing, and silos are becoming more entrenched. Effective cross-functional teamwork is a key driver of corporate success.

In the midst of turbulence, even organizations with strong performance need to be alert, on top of their game, agile, and proactive enough to seize opportunities.

Organizations need to spot and respond effectively to the trends that will have an impact on their business.

Since 1996, Executive Oasis International, a Toronto team building and OD consulting firm, has helped rapidly changing organizations from 18 countries:

- Foster innovation.
- Strengthen team cohesion.
- Re-shape their corporate culture.
- Inspire teams that are tired or discouraged.
- Identify and tap into growing markets.
- Break down silos and improve cross-functional teamwork
- Design & execute innovative strategies to stay ahead of the competition.



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## We'll Bring our Oasis to You



**We have served clients from 18 countries** including Canada, USA, Jamaica, Barbados, Dominica, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, United Arab Emirates (Dubai), Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan. Clients have included Holt Renfrew, Bell Mobility, Mars Canada, Sittercity, EPICPCS, Caribbean Development Bank, GSK – Saudi Arabia, Sidra Capital (Saudi Arabian), Bidvest (South Africa), and CAPO Diary – A Dal Company (Sudan).

### [Partial Client List](#)

**We specialize in the design and facilitation of executive retreats, team building, meetings, and brainstorming services. We also offer management consulting, organizational development (OD) and keynotes for conferences.**

## Why an Oasis

**From time immemorial, weary travellers have wandered through the desert in search of the next oasis to refuel, re-chart their course, and find the strength to continue their journey.**

In the same spirit, Executive Oasis International creates a safe haven for corporate teams to pause, refuel, and pick up tools and strategies to help them on their journey to success.



**Oasis = A place of calm and growth in the midst of turbulence.**

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## Executive Oasis International Team Building in Action

### Team Building Simulations

- [Visexecutaries \\*](#)
- [Inc. Inc.](#)
- [Restaurant Inc.](#)
- [Viral Video DIY](#)
- [Wilderness Survival](#)
- [Wilderness Survival USA](#)
- [Winter Team Building](#)
- [Black Gold Quest](#)
- [Desert Survival](#)
- [Desert Survival USA](#)
- [Island Survival](#)
- [Mountain Survival](#)
- [Beach Team Building](#)

	Availability	Managing Change & Uncertainty	Breaking Down Silos	Cross-Functional Teamwork	Fostering Innovation	Producing Results in Tight Timeframes
Globally		●	●	●	●	●
Globally			●	●		
Globally		●	●	●		●
Toronto				●	●	●
Canada		●		●	●	●
USA		●		●	●	●
Canada		●		●	●	●
UAE		●		●	●	●
UAE, Oman		●		●	●	●
USA		●		●	●	●
Jamaica, Caribbean		●		●	●	●
Oman		●		●	●	●
UAE, Asia		●		●	●	●

\*= Pronounced Viz-Zec-Cue-Taries

- [Cash Flow Game](#)
- [Polo Team Building](#)

	Availability	Managing Change & Uncertainty	Cross-Functional Teamwork	Improving Hand-offs & Transitions	Financial Acumen	Thriving in a Fast-Paced Environment
Toronto		●			●	
Globally		●	●	●		●

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	Team Building Destinations	Sample Team Building	Synopsis
<a href="#">Global</a>	Companies in every corner of the globe can benefit from these facilitated indoor team building simulations.	<a href="#">Visexecutaries</a> *	<b>Visexecutaries = Visionary Executives</b> An Apprentice inspired simulation familiarizing teams with a toolkit that they use to design, plan and execute a real, revenue-generating project. <b>* = Pronounced Viz-Zec-Cue-Taries</b>
		<a href="#">Inc. Inc.: Breaking Down Silos</a>	In this highly customizable and scalable simulation, participants experience roles that are very different from their current organizational roles.
		<a href="#">Restaurant Inc.</a>	Inspired by restaurant wars on reality TV cooking shows, this version of Inc. Inc. involves participants in designing the marketing strategy for a simulated restaurant and preparing signature dishes.
		<a href="#">Cash Flow Game</a>	Robert Kayosaki's popular board game that teaches financial principles, an understanding of the stock market, and business against the backdrop of a changing and uncertain economic climate.
<a href="#">Toronto</a>	A multi-cultural urban centre in close proximity to rural and lakeside resort areas.	<a href="#">Viral Video DIY</a>	Participants design, crew, shoot and launch a viral video.
<a href="#">Dubai</a>	What better place is there to explore the dynamics of accelerated change and growth than in a destination that has undergone the most dramatic transformation on earth? Simulations can be offered in the desert, on the beach, or in the mountains	<a href="#">Quest for Black Gold</a>	In the desert, teams compete as they prospect for oil. The race is on as they locate and assemble a broken oil derrick and complete to pump oil. The debriefing focuses on uncovering hidden business opportunities.

	Destination Highlights	Survivor Team Building Series	Sample Tools	Sample Activities
	While exploring the local culture and traditional lifestyle, teams have an opportunity to bond through destination specific outdoor team challenges.	Our Survivor team building retreats explores the dynamics of change and innovation. Facilitated themed exercises provide an opportunity to strategize away from day-to-day pressures.	<input type="checkbox"/> Idea Chains <input type="checkbox"/> Grids <input type="checkbox"/> SWOT Analysis <input type="checkbox"/> Force Fields <input type="checkbox"/> Storyboards	<input type="checkbox"/> Orienteering <input type="checkbox"/> GPS Challenge <input type="checkbox"/> Firestarter Challenge <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor Cooking <input type="checkbox"/> Obstacle Courses
<a href="#">Canada</a>	Against the backdrop of the changing seasons a range of outdoor team challenges can be incorporated into team building.  Each region of Canada has diverse cultural highlights to explore.	<a href="#">Winter Team Building</a>  <a href="#">Wilderness Survival</a>	Same  Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoeing <input type="checkbox"/> Dog sledding <input type="checkbox"/> Quinzhee Building  <input type="checkbox"/> Night Hike <input type="checkbox"/> Horse Riding <input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing
<a href="#">USA</a>	The diverse regions of the USA provide an opportunity for beach, Mountain, desert, and snow team challenges.	<a href="#">Wilderness Survival USA</a>  <a href="#">Desert Survival USA</a>	Same  Same	Same  <input type="checkbox"/> 4 X4 Jeep Off-roading
<a href="#">Dubai</a>	Exploration of Bedouin culture and traditions adds a rich experience to team building in Dubai.	<a href="#">Desert Survival</a>	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Dune Bashing <input type="checkbox"/> Camel Safari <input type="checkbox"/> Desert Camping
<a href="#">Oman</a>	Majestic mountains with sweeping panoramic views.... contrasting themes and landscapes.... rocks, caves, exotic Middle Eastern architecture, secluded beach hideaways, lush oasis springing from rocky mountains.	<a href="#">Mountain Team Building</a>  <a href="#">Beach Team Building</a>	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Souk GPS treasure hunt <input type="checkbox"/> Abseiling <input type="checkbox"/> Mountaineering
<a href="#">Jamaica</a>	A tropical island with many resort areas and world class facilities for retreats, meetings, and incentives. Beach, rainforest, and mountain adventures are available.	<a href="#">Island Survival</a>	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Challenges on the Beach <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming horses <input type="checkbox"/> Jamaican Cooking
<a href="#">Malaysia &amp; Singapore</a>	Experience the local culture and diverse landscapes. Keep abreast of emerging technology.	<a href="#">Jungle Survival</a>  <a href="#">Beach Team Building</a>	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Make bamboo dishes, utensils, & water bottles <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal cooking

