

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

An Executive's Guide to Boosting the Bottom Line



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Why Team Building

Unleashing Bottom Line Results From Team Building



Team building is one of the most effective tools that executives have at their disposal to fuel corporate success. Yet, it is often underutilized and lacking in focus. By understanding the complex nature of team building and the subtle choices that influence success, executives can unleash the power of team building to boost bottom line results.

Since 1996, Executive Oasis International, a Toronto based team building firm, has served **companies from 18 countries in North America, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Africa**. Teams walk away with tools and strategies to resolve **specific** business challenges. In fact, revenue-generating projects can be integrated into team building to **generate results that flow directly to the bottom line**.

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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.



About This E-book



The Shape of Turbulence

Why This E-book



In 2002, the world was struggling to emerge from a tumultuous period. A year earlier, the dot com bubble had burst and the NASDAQ had plummeted. Just when it appeared that things couldn't get any worse, the 9/11 attacks transformed the world forever.

That year, my company received a phone call from a prospective client. The person on the line asked for information about "team building" but it quickly became clear that is not what the company was seeking. Instead, the team planned to spend a night at a hotel and participate in an activity "just for fun".

"Your CEO is willing to spend money on this?" I asked.

"Yes" my contact replied. I was stunned.

It seemed odd that a company was spending on a night of fun when the economy was in a tailspin. Similar requests soon followed. Corporate socials and team fun play an important role in boosting team spirit and shaping a vibrant corporate culture. But, an over-emphasis on fun during turbulent times is like **Nero fiddling while Rome burned**.

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In 2003, SARS hit **both** Toronto and Asia. The Toronto tourism sector experienced a dramatic downturn and there was a ripple effect on **many** industries. The retail sector was pummeled as people avoided malls and large gatherings. Even the film and television industry was hammered as cast and crew were too scared to come to Toronto. There were lay-offs. Workloads increased. Employees were burning out. Companies no longer had the time for 2 - 3 day retreats.

The economy gradually recovered but the bottom line focus of team building never returned. Companies specializing in recreational activities started to market them as “team building”. Gradually, team building was being replaced with corporate play days. Companies were spending less and less on facilitated team building to improve team performance and more and more on recreational activities.

In September 2008, the global economy came crashing down. This ushered in a period of unprecedented turbulence and change. The global tourism, hotel, and hospitality sectors were hit particularly hard. Some hotels sent their staff to community colleges for one semester facilitation skills courses to learn to debrief their recreational activities. These were marketed as “team building”, but there was little depth.

In less than a decade, the time allocated for team building had declined from 3 days to 2 days to 1 day and, eventually, to ½ a day and **2 hours**.

In response, some team building companies drastically reduced the length of their sessions and **devoted only 15 minutes to ½ an hour to a quick debrief.**



What you can Expect From This E-book

Fast forward to today. The global geo-political is undergoing massive transformation. Off-sites have become rare. Uncertainty is causing many companies to curtail spending on consultants, facilitators and team building. **Yet, foolishness and folly are taking over corporate agendasthe more outlandish the better.** Everything from axe throwing to smashing objects in rage rooms to mud obstacle courses have become the order of the day. Some of these pose a risk of **serious** injury.

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.

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Team Building & the Bottom Line



Executives who perceive team building as a cost-centre are missing the mark.

Team Building in a Nutshell

Through team building team cohesiveness is enhanced to improve business results. A facilitator guides participants through predictable phases of team development, exercises, and discussions. These are debriefed and mined for insights, tools, and strategies to improve team interaction and performance.

Many team building sessions include recreation. While team building can be enjoyable, fun is not the primary purpose.

Benefits of Team Building

Team building is not just any experience shared by a team. It is a facilitated process with clearly defined outcomes. **Effective team building requires planning, organization, execution, debriefing, and follow-up.** Team building enhances team effectiveness to:

- Foster innovation.
- Re-shape corporate culture.
- Manage Change and Uncertainty.
- Break down silos and enhance cross-functional teamwork.

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- Thrive in a fast-paced environment.
- Produce results in tight timeframes.
- Identify and resolve business challenges.
- Inspire teams that are tired or discouraged.
- Spot and respond to marketplace trends.
- Identify and tap into emerging market niches.
- Ensure smooth hand-offs during times of transition.
- Provide a shared set of tool of brainstorming, decision-making and planning.

Measurable Team Building Results



Not only can team building pay for itself, the tools, strategies, and initiatives designed through team building can generate **measurable** bottom line results. Here is how it works:

- ❑ Identify the **SPECIFIC** business issues and challenges the team and organization are facing.
- ❑ Pinpoint the **SPECIFIC** improvements you need to see.
- ❑ Set the targets. (Above all effective team building must be measurable.)
- ❑ Assemble and brief the team.
- ❑ Through upbeat and fun [business simulations](#), familiarize teams with a shared toolkit for brainstorming, decision-making, and planning.
- ❑ Debrief the experience.
- ❑ Analyze **SPECIFIC** business issues and challenges and generate solutions.
- ❑ Identify next steps.
- ❑ Follow-up.
- ❑ Measure results.

Identifying Key Business Challenges

Pinpoint and begin to analyze the key business issues that are keeping the executive team up at night. Clarify:

Key Business Issue Facing (Insert Name of Company)

- Causes:
- Required Improvements:
- Industry Trends:
- Competitive Analysis:
- Models for Success:
- Suggested Action Steps:
- Measures of Success:

Keeping Team Building Strategic Through Careful Delegation

One of the fundamental flaws that we have observed in over 20 years of designing and facilitating team building is that many organizations delegate key decisions to employees who don't have a grasp of organizational strategy.

Team building should never be used as a "practice run" or an opportunity to give junior employees practice in project planning and management. You'll end up with a corporate play day. If employees need practice, let them plan a strictly recreational event, the company picnic or Christmas party.

The sponsoring executive should retain authority for key decisions including selection of a facilitator and approach, sign-off on the agenda and content. Logistical details can be delegated.

When organizations face intense pressure in the marketplace, it is not the time for business as usual. Invariably the challenges your company is facing cannot be resolved by any single department operating in isolation. It is critical to move beyond your traditional silos and assemble a number of SWAT teams to address critical business issues.

Fostering Innovation Through Cross-functional SWAT Teams



- ❑ Each team should focus on one core issue and report to a specific member of the senior management team.

There should be representation from the various departments that have an impact on resolving each specific issue. Representation should not be restricted to members of the leadership team. Instead, frontline employees with director customer, supplier and business partner contacts can add tremendous value to the team.

- ❑ Assign each team the responsibility for analyzing a specific business issue, brainstorming, exploring alternatives and generating a number of action plans for executive consideration.
- ❑ Teams meet weekly bi-weekly with tasks and action items assigned in between meetings.

The role of facilitators is to:

- help the teams gel
- improve the effectiveness of meetings
- provide energizers (one energizer kit for each team would be ideal)
- facilitate brainstorming sessions

Engage an external or internal facilitator to work with the teams. Invest in facilitation training for the cross-functional team leaders to help jumpstart the process.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Project Teams

Project teams can get bogged down if team members possess a vast storehouse of technical knowledge but little expertise in conducting effective meetings, problem solving, brainstorming solutions, and conflict management. An opportunity to add value through team building is to engage internal or external facilitators to work with the various project teams that have been deployed throughout your organization.



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
Global	Companies in every corner of the globe can benefit from these facilitated indoor team building simulations.	Visexecutaries *	Visexecutaries = Visionary Executives An Apprentice inspired simulation familiarizing teams with a toolkit that they use to design, plan and execute a real, revenue-generating project. * = Pronounced Viz-Zec-Cue-Taries
		Inc. Inc.: Breaking Down Silos	In this highly customizable and scalable simulation, participants experience roles that are very different from their current organizational roles.
		Restaurant Inc.	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.
		Cash Flow Game	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.
Toronto	A multi-cultural urban centre in close proximity to rural and lakeside resort areas.	Viral Video DIY	Participants design, crew, shoot and launch a viral video.
Dubai	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	Quest for Black Gold	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
Canada	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.	Winter Team Building Wilderness Survival	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
USA	The diverse regions of the USA provide an opportunity for beach, Mountain, desert, and snow team challenges.	Wilderness Survival USA Desert Survival USA	Same Same	Same <input type="checkbox"/> 4 X4 Jeep Off-roading
Dubai	Exploration of Bedouin culture and traditions adds a rich experience to team building in Dubai.	Desert Survival	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Dune Bashing <input type="checkbox"/> Camel Safari <input type="checkbox"/> Desert Camping
Oman	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.	Mountain Team Building Beach Team Building	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Souk GPS treasure hunt <input type="checkbox"/> Abseiling <input type="checkbox"/> Mountaineering
Jamaica	A tropical island with many resort areas and world class facilities for retreats, meetings, and incentives. Beach, rainforest, and mountain adventures are available.	Island Survival	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Challenges on the Beach <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming horses <input type="checkbox"/> Jamaican Cooking
Malaysia & Singapore	Experience the local culture and diverse landscapes. Keep abreast of emerging technology.	Jungle Survival Beach Team Building	Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Jungle Camping <input type="checkbox"/> Make bamboo dishes, utensils, & water bottles <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal cooking

