

PRACTICAL SOLUTION FOR CREATING AWARENESS AND PROMOTING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN BUSINESS SEGMENT THROUGH SOCIAL RESPONSIBLE TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: TBA is a company that implements different workshops, programs and events for development of teams. It aims to create and promote social responsible team building activities that provide educational benefits to the companies and benefits to the nonprofit organizations and to the wider society. For this reason TBA developed a series of team building programs with the primary goal to foster the development of team work in organizations and at the same time to promote social responsibility and create benefits for different nonprofit organizations and its selected stakeholder groups. This is a relatively new educational model that integrates business with the community through educational platform that creates benefits for business, nonprofit organizations and individuals and enables their long term cooperation.

Keywords: social responsible team building programs, team work, promoting social responsibility

PRAKTIČNA REŠITEV ZA USTVARJANJE OZAVEŠČENOSTI IN SPODBUJANJE DRUŽBENE ODGOVORNOSTI V POSLOVNEM SEGMENTU Z DRUŽBENO ODGOVORNIMI TEAM BUILDING AKTIVNOSTMI

Povzetek: TBA se ukvarja z razvojem, organizacijo in izvedbo strokovnih timskih (team building) delavnic in programov. Eden od ciljev podjetja je tudi ustvarjati in promovirati družbeno odgovorne timske programe, ki prinašajo izobraževalne koristi podjetju, hkrati pa tudi koristi neprofitnim organizacijam in njihovim deležnikom ter s tem tudi širši družbi. V ta namen smo pri TBAju razvili serijo družbeno odgovornih programov, primernih za različna podjetja ter različne strukture timov. To je relativno nov izobraževalni model, ki povezuje poslovno okolje s skupnostjo preko izobraževalne platforme, ki ustvarja korist tako za podjetje kot celoto, njegove zaposlene ter za neprofitne organizacije, z namenom njihovega dolgoročnega sodelovanja.

Ključne besede: družbeno odgovorni timski programi, timsko delo, promoviranje družbene odgovornosti

1. Introduction

Long-term work in business industry showed it is hard to get means for socially responsible projects. Therefore we were searching for different ways to combine our work with social responsible practices to help to benefit the wider society. We developed and implemented a series of social responsible team building programs and events that have clear benefits for the company involved, for the individual employee of this company and for the (local) society.

This article presents a social responsible business model, supported with 2 practical examples with the aim to:

- show a different and innovative model of combining business practice with social responsibility and therefore accelerate the ideas of other innovative ways for implementing social responsibility into business segments;
- show good examples, future ideas and possibilities of close and potentially long term cooperation between business organizations and nonprofit organizations ;
- share ideas about future teambuilding programs and get critical feedback about their feasibility;
- attract different companies and nonprofit organizations to co-create new teambuilding projects with their ideas and proposals for the content of future team building programs.

2. What team building is and what it is not?

It is important to have a clear definition of teambuilding as it is often confused with the terms team bonding or just with employee socializing. Many professional article and books have been dealing with the topics of teams and their

importance for the success of their companies (e.g. Woodman et al (1980), Katzenbach et al (1993), MacMillan (2001), Salas et al (2008), Gilley et al (2010). However, there is much less professional literature written on teambuilding activities, let alone on their impact on the work performance and the proof that they are vital for the company's success (e. g. Kent (1979), Liebowitz et al (1982), Klein et al (1999), Salas et al (1999), Polajnar (2011). Still, today team building activities are - at least in more developed countries and modern companies - widely accepted as one of the most important tools to improve company's success.

Definition from the business dictionary (www.businessdictionary.com) proposes the following definition of team building:

1. Philosophy of job design in which employees are viewed as members of interdependent teams instead of as individual workers.
2. Ability to identify and motivate individual employees to form a team that stays together, works together, and achieves together.

Or as Kent (1979) put it: "Team building is a means by which a work group determines and solves its own problems with the help of an objective consultant adept in the behavioral sciences". Both definitions are very close to what team building is but they both lack the developmental component of team building programs and activities – the focus not only on analysis of team work but as well on the future development of teams.

Team building is a purpose-driven process that follows a systematic plan with the aim to create, maintain, and enrich the development of a group of people into a cohesive team. It refers to the various activities undertaken to motivate the team members and increase the overall performance of the team. It is by no means a one-time activity; it is a series of programs, events or activities that shape a team and unify their members, resulting in the achievement of targets and synergies.

Team building activities are very important in the development of teams that will work together for an extended period of time on a complex project or a series of activities. Team building activities help people understand that they are greater collectively than individually. It helps people see the benefits of collaboration and leveraging on one another's talents, expertise and resources.

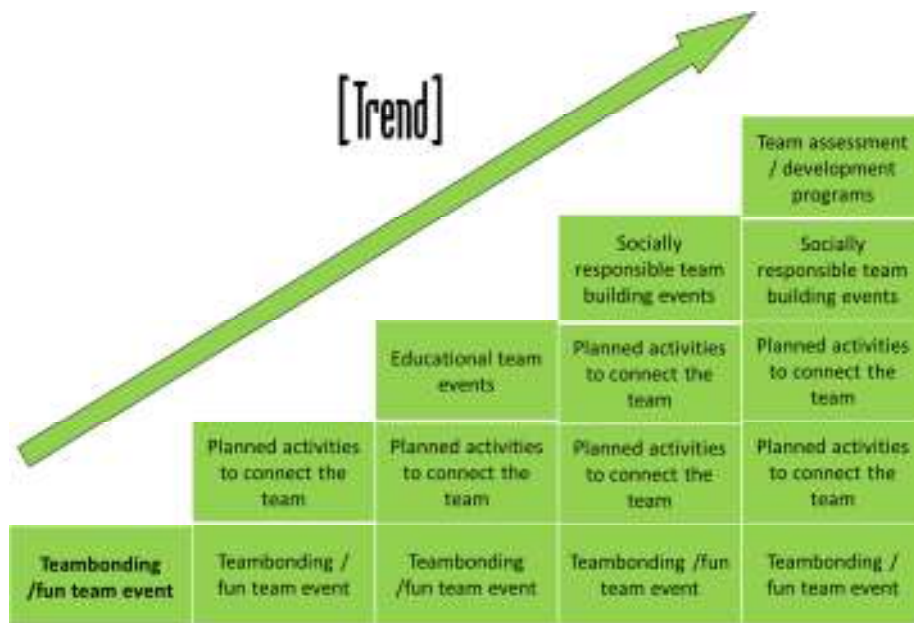
3. The history, present and the future trends of team building activities

The history of team building goes back to the late 1920 and early 1930 with now classic Hawthorne Studies. The research involved a series of research activities of a group of workers under various conditions. The results showed that with increased worker interaction the most significant factor was growing a sense of group identity, a feeling of social support and cohesion. (Dyer 1984). But not much more in the field of team building was written after that as teams were not recognized as the driver of company's success. The primal role in company success was attributed to the individual.

According to Kent (1979), team building became very popular organizational developments in the 1970's. Also, Simerkova (2011) pointed out the boom in team building activities from the mid- to late-1980s, as effectiveness of teams was increasingly recognized by human resources professionals.

Today, teambuilding activities are widely recognized as a very important driver of company's success. However, in various countries team building is on different developing stages. TBA developed its own model of team building development and trends, which can in a way also indicate, on which stage of maturity the team building activities are in a chosen country.

Picture 1: The trends in development of teambuilding activities



Source: Polajnar (2012), internal material

This model shows, how team building events evolved from fun team oriented events to well-planned educational activity. The first teambuilding events were actually team bonding. Their primary goal was to gather all employees to socialize and have fun. This is followed by a stage of planned activities with the aim to connect the team and also with some sort of strategy, how to connect them. This stage is followed by educational team events, where team – besides all the socializing benefits – also learns in a practical way how the teams function, what are the obstacles in good communication, what are different ways of problem solving etc. The maturity of team buildings are shown with the emergence of social responsibility as a very important part in team building activities. There are many different forms of socially responsible team building activities that will be revealed later. The last, final stage represent upgraded team building g programs that are based on team assessments that allow strategic planning of future team developments.

Slovenia has evolved a lot during the last 10 years within the field of team work and come already a long way towards more planned and strategic team building program implementation. However, we assume that the most of the companies – excluding the modern and innovative companies, where team building activities are strategically planned and coordinated mostly from the HR centers – is still on the very low stage of development, demanding more team bonding activities with the cliché goal to connect the employees.

4. Team building activities connected to corporate social responsibility (CSR):

It is important to understand, why the combination of CSR and team building become so crucial in the last years. As one of the American team building companies, American Outback Adventure & Events have written, companies are more aware of their responsible role in forming the future and CSR is an attempt to make a meaningful contribution towards the wellbeing of the society. However, CSR should be 'lived' through all the company, thus practicing its values by all the employees. In a way socially responsible team building events are upgrade of classical CSR, as they involve each and every employee that becomes aware of the impact he makes on society and also actively contributes to its implementation.

Many progressive businesses are actively looking out for opportunities to embed corporate social responsibility into various aspects of the corporate culture. Thus, CSR is ingrained into different activities carried out by the organization. But not many organizations have a strategic plan of CSR future development and here CSR team building events can contribute meaningfully to the consistent and sound CSR strategy. Many companies are deeply aware of their social responsibilities and feel the need to demonstrate this awareness to employees as well as give them a chance to do something to help. As a result, organizations are now beginning to hold community-based, aid-based team building events for their employees, so that employees too get an opportunity to demonstrate their sense of social responsibility.

Instead of spending the money in different CSR activities that do not relate to each other, strategically planned CSR that involves the whole company and its teams can be the right answer to solve the issue. As The American Outback Adventure & Events pointed out “Team building events can be quite expensive but when a company spends money that combines training with charity, they are able to make optimal use of their budgets. By combining CSR with developmental and training goals, companies get a chance to tick more boxes in their list of priorities!”

CSR team building events could range from green projects (river banks, cleaning lakes) to different people, groups or minority oriented programs (donating products, e.g. bicycles, toys, to children or food for homeless) or even animals (cleaning the Zoo, making house for dogs).

5. What are the benefits of bringing the social responsibilities together with team building practice?

The next model exposes some of the benefits that are the result of implementation of strategically planned CSR team building programs.

Figure 2: Key benefits of socially responsible team building events



Source: Rozman (2012), internal material

6. Two practical examples that support the viability of strategic CSR team building thinking.

Teambuilding academy consists of members, all trying to act in a responsible manner. We act green where possible and want to add valuable imprint to the society as a whole. TBA is also a company that strives for constant improvement. Therefore we were looking for innovative ways to help the (local) society. The basic concepts were generated from the examples abroad, where CSR team building programs were already being implemented. Therefore we created a series of social responsible teambuilding programs, from environmental friendly, ‘green’ ones to programs where team members are creating different things that are at the end donated to non-profit organizations or specific groups.

Among the most successful socially responsible team building programs for which we got the idea abroad but further developed ourselves into a dynamic and attractive team building programs, is called **The Bicycle Factory**. This is a program where teams split in smaller teams and each has to produce its own bicycle for a child. This program is implemented with the help of an educational team building trainer, who helps and thoroughly observes the team work. There is as well technical support, a bicycle specialist, which helps team if they have any issues with completing the bike. First teams have several fun warm-up team activities and then they start producing the bikes. .

The program ends with the donation of the bicycles to one of the non-profit organizations who states, who organizes that the bikes go into the right hands. This is a type of program that is already set up in front, with some changes to meet the demands, goals and structural features of the team as each program is team specific. Instead of the bicycles participants can also compose toys, notebooks, books with fairy tales, even computers. The program was implemented by TBA in Slovenia and as well abroad and was each time a success.

The other type of programs are a series of programs that are chosen strategically to be as much as possible aligned also to the company's CSR strategy. The goal of these programs is defined together with the client and can be anything that is based on a good cause. One such activity can be helping to repair the house of elderly people, kindergartens or other institutions. Here the team gets a project, that should be completed in the limited amount of time with the help of a team work. The company can choose itself, which non-profit organization it wants to work with and what kind of project they want to implement, to be as much as possible aligned with the strategy of the company. All these programs were also very well accepted and their number of implementation continues to grow.

Conclusion

Social responsible programs proved to be well accepted as a connection of HR, marketing and CSR strategies of the company. We aim to have more of these kind of programs and to create long term relationship among the companies, team building provider and the non-profit organizations. With this article we would like to promote social responsible team building programs as the responsible way of creating benefits to different stakeholders. Also, our goal is to attract different non-profit organizations to contribute their ideas and proposals for future development and cooperation.

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Photo material:

