

TRAINING CAMP ISN'T JUST FOR FOOTBALL

Companies are turning to team-building activities to engage their employees

Autumn is that time of year when football training camps become a national pastime. The purpose of these training camps

is to prepare athletes mentally and physically for the season ahead. In the last five years, this phenomenon has spread to the business world. Now training camps are a vehicle for developing the corporate culture, as executives strive to manage the talent within their organizations and get workers in shape, develop their mental agility and prepare them to hit the ground running.

Typically, companies spend millions on the physical infrastructure of their operations and pay less attention to the human

technology company flies 200 staff members from around the world to New Zealand to participate in a one week eco-challenge that combines team-building activities and motivational speakers with all-day races in kayaking, hiking, biking, swimming and rappelling off a cliff. At a cost of \$9,000 per person, some may say that this is too expensive. However, Bill Watkins, Seagate's CEO, considers this event an investment in hu-



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infrastructure. Nurturing the talent within an organization should be a priority of senior management that requires a long-term commitment to infuse the corporate goals and values throughout the organization. Training camps and other team-building activities aid in creating a cohesive team when staff are forced to rely on one another in extreme or fast paced circumstances.

Seagate Technology is one example. Each year, the \$9.8 billion computer storage hardware

man capital.

In the Pacific Northwest, companies have organized guide-led climbs of Mount Rainier and Mount Adams for their management teams. Whitewater rafting down the Deschutes River and Seattle-Portland bike rides are also very popular with executives.

Structured learning and team-building activities are the foundation for creating a positive day to day corporate culture. Senior management can take the lead for establishing a positive workplace, or they can rely on the informal learning that occurs in the office. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 80 percent of workers report that they learn and know their job

informally. This kind of learning doesn't show up on the corporate training charts. Informal learning occurs outside of the classroom and is shaped by the corporate culture. So the question is, Do you want to have new employees learn about the company over a conversation at the water cooler, or do you want to take the lead in aligning the corporate culture with employees' talents and skills?

A lack of alignment is the primary reason for so few employees being fully engaged.

The 2006 Employee Engagement Survey by Blessing and White found that only 18 percent of employees report that they are fully engaged in their work. That means 82 percent of employees are not enthused and in gear in the workplace. Further, over 60 percent of employees do not see visible actions by their employers to increase employee engagement. Consider the visible actions that you can take to engage your employees. A training camp may be the solution.

If you are pondering a training camp for your employees, consider the following:

- Encourage staff from all levels and divisions to participate.
- Coordinate all activities around the core values and

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goals that you want to reinforce with employees.

- Hire an outside facilitator to run the show so top executives can participate along with employees.
- When you get back to the office, follow up on the core values and goals that were central to the event with additional small team-building activities.

Everyone in your organization has a talent. It is the responsibility of senior management to ensure that each employee realizes his or her full potential. Nurture your entire talent pool—not just the superstars—as a business needs more than a few high-flyers to be successful. Regional colleges and universities have trained facilitators who can help your

organization develop your own custom training camp to support the corporate culture you are trying to establish. It's training camp sea-

son. Are you ready?

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