



Increasing Employee Engagement Through Team Building

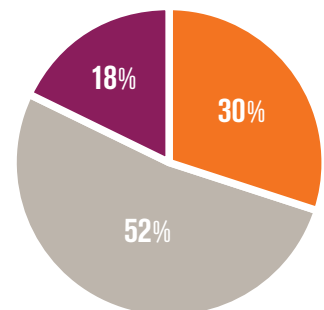
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Principal, Platinum Leadership Inc. © 2016

How important is employee engagement to the bottom-line success of your organization?

According to Gallup, it's fundamental. They estimate organizations with high employee engagement are 147% more profitable than those with low engagement.

Gallup describes three categories of workers in the average organization:

- The **engaged** 30% of employees are deeply committed to their organization and emotionally connected to its mission and goals. They routinely contribute their discretionary effort and go the extra mile.
- The **disengaged** 52% of workers are less emotionally connected to their employer. They show up but generally give the minimum required.
- 18% of employees are **actively disengaged**. They work against the organization, undermining what others are trying to get done.



Gallup, 2015

Mark Crowley translates these numbers in *Fast Company* magazine by saying, "Imagine a crew on a river where three people are rowing their hearts out, five are taking in the scenery, and two are trying to sink the boat." If it were your company on the river, how many of your employees are in each of these seats?

For employee engagement to really take off, an organization needs to:

- Hire the right people for the right roles
- Set clear expectations
- Give people what they need to do their jobs effectively
- Be generous with recognition and appreciation.

When you're doing all of this, the time is ripe for team building to take your employees' engagement to the next level.



WHY DO TEAM BUILDING?

Simon Sinek. *Start with Why*. 2009.

Why? To help people experience the joy of working together. It's too easy to lose sight of how magnificent the people we work with really are. Many of us spend more time with colleagues at work than our families at home. Familiarity can dull our perception of people's gifts as we collect data to reinforce narrow assumptions and patterns of behaviour.

Groups of people get stuck in ruts too. We develop stagnant limiting beliefs about who we are and what we can accomplish together. Even teams with great track records on high plateaus can pick up momentum and set greater standards for themselves. When breakthrough performance is required, team building provides new perspective and energy. It reveals potential waiting to be tapped in the system as its people come to know and trust each other in new and surprising ways.

It's as though the whole company changes channels. The experience creates new neural pathways in your organization's operating system. This gives your team access to increased agility, creativity and intelligence as they come together. It strengthens the relationships and trust that propel performance to the next level.



HOW DOES TEAM BUILDING WORK?

To be useful, team building has to meet the needs of the organization. A random selection of games and activities that worked in another setting will not provide a targeted response for your organization. Team building must be carefully calibrated to complement your leadership, strategy, vision and culture. This requires a significant investment of time and resources, careful planning and skilled execution.

Here are four key ingredients for team building to increase employee engagement:



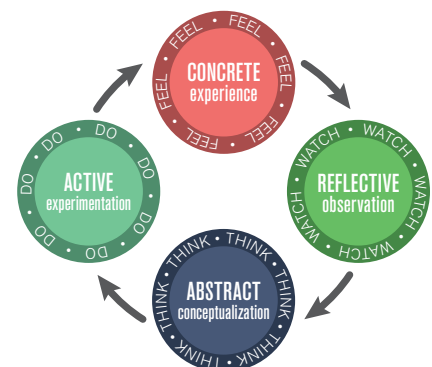
Platinum Leadership
Business Alignment Model

1. A Designed Team Alliance

Employees benefit from opportunities to discuss the culture they want to be part of. If culture is, 'How we do things around here,' ask them, "How do you want it to feel and what values will you stand for?" Just as importantly, ask your employees, "What can we count on you to contribute in our culture?"

2. Experiential Learning Cycle

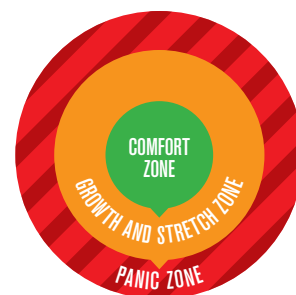
Learning stimulates change, and we're big fans of David Kolb's studies into how adults learn. After getting clear on an objective, consider crafting opportunities for experience, reflection, generalization and application in every learning cycle. Designing in this manner generates shared experiences that accelerate engagement and evolve team climates and company culture for the better.



David Kolb, *Experiential Learning*, 1984

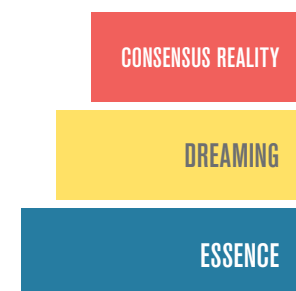
3. Challenge by choice

Project Adventure describes three zones individuals and groups can occupy. The comfort zone is safe and secure, with great potential for boredom and apathy. In the panic zone, reptilian brains take over with fight, flight or freeze reactions. Nothing good happens there. The growth and stretch zone is where we aim. It's marked by heightened awareness and full engagement. When teams lean into their strengths and one another, they develop new habits for addressing adversity and conquering challenge. This is the optimal zone for team building. It's where we invite groups to play!



4. Systems Coaching

The word 'corporation' means, 'united in one body,' and integrative team building can build core strength in your organization's body. Einstein reminded us, "We can't solve problems with the same kind of thinking used to create them." By coaching the group as a whole, we 'reveal the system to itself.' The group gains access to new levels of creativity and intelligence. Beyond everyday 'consensus reality,' awareness and change at the dreaming and essence levels are also available. These shifts can magnify resilience and increase capacity to navigate the permanent whitewater of business today.



Arnold Mindell, *Dreaming While Awake*, 2000



WHAT TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES CAN I USE?

Team building can run from the mad to the ridiculous, and sometimes seemingly simple exercises are the most magical of all. From potato cannons to wordles, and trust falls to yurt circles, every primer, activity and debrief can be pieced together to help your people choose new ways to become part of a stronger team. We've posted scores of examples on the Platinum Leadership YouTube channel of activities we've used during strategic planning, employee training and corporate retreats.

Through team building and active learning, you can invite people to open their eyes, take a little risk and experience their colleagues anew. There's no end to the ideas you can implement to support this process. The discipline is to co-create a container within which it's more likely for people to buy-in and work together.

When team building is part of a sustained commitment to increase alignment between an organization's leadership, strategy, vision and culture, more people in more boats buy-in and decide to row — together.





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