

Plummer & Associates Case

2-Hr Team Building Session for Executive Team Retreat

(example of an application of the Vision Web simulation)

The CEO of a 300-person company was planning a 2-day retreat with his executive team. His tentative agenda was filled with critical business issues, including acquisition plans for the coming year. He also wanted to focus attention on how they worked together as an executive team. He wanted his team “tuned up” for the coming challenges and had 2 hours he could give for “team building”. He thought the team should discuss process and he also wanted some feedback on how they viewed his as a leader.

We proposed a short survey to gather team member’s perspectives on their effectiveness and on the CEO’s leadership and we included 3 questions about the business acquisition process. Survey results were sent to the team for review 2 days prior to the retreat.

We started the team building session with a trust-building exercise. Then we spent an hour reviewing and discussing the survey results.

- What did it say about our team?
- What insights do the results provide about how we can improve our effectiveness?
- How does the CEO’s view of our team differ from the members’ views of the team?
- How do we collectively view our effectiveness on handling acquisitions?
- What are our priorities for improving our acquisition process?

To wrap up the session, we took the team to the next room where we had set up a fun, fast-paced exercise called [Vision Web](#). The exercise consists of a “web” of ropes and pulleys that participants use to achieve a team goal of stacking cylinders. The first time only the leader is aware of the goal and the participants can not see what is going on with other team members. It only takes a few minutes to realize that the team is going nowhere fast. The second time the participants can see the goal is to stack cylinders. They then fairly quickly “work the web” in concert with other members to achieve the goal. After the exercise, we did a quick debrief of how the two approaches were different and what could be learned from the exercise to help their team.

In closing, we brainstormed action items to improve team effectiveness and asked for individual commitments for one or two actions they would take to help the team.

We received excellent feedback. They felt the advance survey helped them get to their team issues quickly and facilitated a more in depth and honest discussion of the team in the meeting. They also enjoyed the ropes exercise and felt it underscored how important it is for everyone in the organization to understand goals and work interdependently to achieve them.

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