



Human Resources



Psychological Safety and Well Being



Performance

Beyond the Surface:

Understanding and Addressing 4 Team Building Blind Spots for Organizational Success

Human Resource Services





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This document has been developed as an information resource. It is intended as a guide only and the application of its contents to specific situations will depend on the particular circumstances involved. While every care has been taken in its presentation, personnel who use this document to assist in Human Resource Services should have sufficient training and experience to do so. No person should act specifically on the basis of the material contained herein without considering and taking professional advice. Neither Grant Thornton International Ltd, nor any of its personnel nor any of its member firms or their partners or employees, accept any responsibility for any errors it might contain, whether caused by negligence or otherwise, or any loss, howsoever caused, incurred by any person as a result of utilising or otherwise placing any reliance upon this document.

Introduction

In the words of Patrick Lencioni from “The Five Dysfunctions of a Team”, he aptly states, **“Not Finance. Not Strategy. Not Technology, but teamwork remains the ultimate competitive advantage.”** The resonance of this sentiment is unmistakable as team building activities gain increasing popularity and reverence across diverse workplaces in both the public and private sectors.

In the modern organizational landscape, teams and their collaborative prowess have taken center stage, proving to be indispensable components of success. That said, the nuances of team building in its deployment on variant circumstances, requisitions a review of and an address of the associate blind spots that may hinder organizational effectiveness. In this article, we uncover the four critical blind spots every organization should be aware of to harness the full potential of teamwork in the contemporary business environment.

The Impact of ‘Team Building’ Activities on Workplace Dynamics

Backed by compelling statistics, team building has been proven to enhance work ethic and innovation by up to 10 times. According to PGI, frequent collaboration in the workplace not only amplifies successful innovation but also contributes to a 15% boost in productivity and business growth.

Moreover, the significance of team building extends beyond statistics; it plays a pivotal role in employee retention. Many employees choose to stay with an organisation because they feel a sense of belonging to a team.

A study conducted by the Kenexa Research Institute revealed that 50% of the positive changes in communication within a workplace can be attributed to social interactions outside of work, including participation in team-building activities.

The Goodway Group further supports these findings, reporting, “We definitely saw an improvement in employee engagement after booking hybrid team-building experiences with Confetti.” These insights underscore the multifaceted impact of team-building activities on fostering a positive and collaborative workplace environment.

Assessing the Efficacy of Team Building Interventions

While the concept of team building has yielded positive outcomes, the prevailing challenge is that, over time, numerous organizations have come to rely on team-building activities as a primary for addressing fundamental organizational issues. In the face of persistent challenges, organisations often gravitate towards familiar and simplistic solutions. The sentiment may be, “I know – let’s do a team-building exercise!”

Certainly, team building is enjoyable, memorable, and an excellent stress reliever. However, it constitutes only a fraction of and not the whole solution. To draw a comparison, these activities can be likened to a sugar rush – providing momentary delight yet offering little or no valuable nutrients to sustain overall organizational health. As Deidre (2012) aptly notes, team building, when not part of a broader strategy, may fall short in addressing the deeper issues that organizations face.

However...

While team bonding is valuable, it’s crucial to recognize that team fun activities have limitations in addressing a range of human resource issues within an organization. In such instances, a more targeted approach may be necessary, other than solely relying on team building activities. To illustrate this, we will highlight a few examples.

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‘Not Finance. Not Strategy. Not Technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage.’

1. The Efficiency and Communication Blindspot.

Efficiency challenges within a team are typically first observed through quantitative indicators, yet the root causes of these issues begin to surface earlier in subtle ways.

Regrettably, these initial signs often suggest team dysfunction, a deficiency in motivation or uninspired collaboration. That is why the prescription of team building is often deemed a viable solution. To address these underlying challenges effectively, it's imperative to delve into the core issues impacting team dynamics.

Perhaps an organizational review and restructuring could emerge as a viable solution, offering the opportunity to realign roles, streamline processes and foster a culture that supports collaboration and motivation.

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Organizational Structure Review

An effective Organizational Design defines the roles, responsibilities, and relationships within an organization and also lays a foundation for efficient operations, improved communication, role clarity, increased engagement, and successful teamwork.

In essence, organizational structure review empowers organizations to align their human capital strategies with business objectives, driving efficiency, agility, and talent excellence. It serves as a cornerstone for building a resilient and high-performing

workforce capable of meeting the demands of today's dynamic business landscape. Hence, issues stemming from an lack of organizational structure cannot be resolved with simplistic solutions like skipping a rope. In the ever-evolving business landscape,

investing in an effective organizational structure proves to be a strategic, long-term investment, providing returns that occasional fun activities cannot replicate.

Why It is Sustainably Important

Advantages of Org. Structure Review over Team Building Activities

- **Enhanced Efficiency:** By reassessing and possibly redesigning the organizational structure, HRS can streamline workflows, eliminate redundancies, and improve resource allocation. This results in smoother HR operations and increased productivity across the organization.
- **Improved Communication and Collaboration:** A well-defined organizational structure facilitates clearer communication channels and promotes collaboration among HR teams and other departments. This fosters synergy, enhances teamwork, and supports the achievement of common goals.
- **Enhanced Agility and Adaptability:** A flexible organizational structure enables HRS to adapt quickly to changing business environments, market demands, and regulatory requirements. This agility allows the HR function to respond promptly to emerging challenges and seize opportunities for innovation and growth.
- **Tailored Resource Allocation:** Through structure review, we can align resources with strategic objectives, ensuring that talent, budget, and other resources are allocated where they are most needed. This strategic allocation maximizes the impact of HR initiatives and supports organizational growth.

5-10%

impact created by removing overlaps, decreasing the number of layers and adjusting the span of control in an organizational structure.





2. The Performance Management Blindspot

In the pursuit of organizational goals and objectives, challenges often arise concerning inconsistent and ineffective performance and results management frameworks. While it may seem like an issue rooted in individual capabilities, the underlying cause may extend beyond the performance of one individual in a team.

Factors related to the work environment such as low morale and engagement, or excessive workload leading to consistently extended work hours, can significantly impact organizational performance and results. This, in turn, may contribute to stress, burnout, and ultimately, unsatisfactory individual and organizational behaviors and

by extension outcomes. You can observe the temptation to recommend a team-building experience whenever such symptoms arise. However, delving into the underlying problems requires a comprehensive and effective approach, which can be achieved through a Human Resource Audit.

“While it may seem like an issue rooted in individual capabilities, the underlying cause may extend beyond the performance of individual contributors.”

Human Resource Audits

While fun activities serve as valuable components for team building, they may not provide sufficient insights into the deeper organizational challenges and people problems.

In contrast, a HR Audit stands out as a more robust tool for objectively identifying areas of improvement, ensuring regulatory compliance, and ultimately enhancing overall organizational effectiveness. Whether

the focus is on policies or performance, conducting a yearly review of HR practices proves instrumental in uncovering challenges within the organization or a team. Once identified, addressing these

challenges, can significantly contribute to fostering a positive work environment and ultimately improving team productivity.

What HR Audits Can Help Where Team Building Can't.

Talent Management and Development:

HR audits analyze talent management processes, including recruitment, onboarding, performance management, and training. They assess whether these processes align with organizational goals, support employee development, and foster a culture of continuous improvement. HR audits provide insights into talent gaps, skill deficiencies, and succession planning needs, enabling organizations to optimize their talent strategies and enhance workforce effectiveness.

Strategic Alignment:

HR audits examine the alignment between HR strategies and organizational objectives. They assess whether HR initiatives support broader business goals, drive organizational performance, and contribute to competitive advantage. HR audits provide insights into areas where HR can add value, optimize resource allocation, and align HR practices with strategic priorities.

Policy and Procedure Review:

HR audits evaluate the effectiveness of HR policies, procedures, and practices. They assess whether HR policies align with organizational objectives, promote a positive work environment, and address emerging challenges such as remote work or diversity and inclusion. By identifying gaps or inconsistencies in policies, HR audits help organizations strengthen their HR framework to support long-term success.



4%

of organization's employees are the “thriving stars”, highly engaged and appear to spread the vibe across.

Employee Relations and Engagement:

HR audits evaluate employee relations practices and measure employee engagement levels within the organization. They assess communication channels, conflict resolution mechanisms, and employee feedback mechanisms. By identifying areas of concern such as low morale or communication breakdowns, HR audits help organizations implement targeted interventions to improve employee relations, enhance engagement, and foster a positive workplace culture.

3. The Employee Engagement Blindspot



Efficiency and Productivity Optimization



The issue of employee disengagement is often a complex and misunderstood aspect, as evidenced by various research findings. It is noteworthy that lack of engagement in employees may not necessarily be a fault on their part, especially if they have undergone a robust talent recruitment process.



Employee Well-being and burnout prevention



Cuts Aross

Even individuals with a high degree of ownership can find themselves disengaged from their work, with burnout emerging as a significant contributing factor. Signs of burnout may prompt immediate measures such as breaks, rest, or team-building activities. While these actions serve as temporary solutions, they fail to address the root cause of the problem.



Performance and Quality Improvement



The Hidden Root Causes

The underlying challenge lies in excessive workloads, which can lead to burnout, negatively impacting both physical and mental well-being. The consequences include reduced motivation, job satisfaction and overall team performance.



Strategic Decision-Making



Recognizing the importance of extracting optimal output from resources, it's crucial for employers to avoid overwhelming their staff with excessive tasks, as this may eventually lead the team to failure.

Workload Analysis Over Team Building

A Workload Analysis becomes a vital tool in ensuring the appropriate distribution of tasks, fostering employee well-being, enhancing productivity, and ultimately improving organizational efficiency. This strategic exercise delves into the core of the problem, offering a sustainable solution to elevate employee engagement within an

Workload Analysis Solutions

Value	Description
Efficiency and Productivity Optimization	A Workload analysis focuses on assessing the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among employees to optimize workload allocation and ensure equitable distribution of work. In identifying workload imbalances, bottlenecks, and inefficiencies, HR consultants can help you reallocate resources, streamline processes, and improve overall productivity. In contrast, while team-building events may boost morale and teamwork, they do not directly address workload distribution.
Employee Well-being and Burnout Prevention	Workload analysis helps organizations identify employees who may be at risk of burnout due to excessive workloads or unrealistic expectations. By proactively addressing workload issues, we can promote employee well-being, reduce stress levels, and prevent burnout. In contrast, while team-building events may improve morale temporarily, they do not directly address workload-related stressors or promote sustainable work practices.
Performance and Quality Improvement:	Workload analysis enables organizations to assess the impact of workload distribution on employee performance and service quality. Through workload allocation and reducing overload, HR can improve employee focus, job satisfaction, and performance outcomes. While team-building events may foster teamwork and collaboration, they may not directly contribute to performance or quality improvement initiatives.
Strategic Decision-Making	HR Consultants use workload analysis that provides data-driven insights to support strategic decision-making and resource allocation. By understanding workload trends, HR can anticipate future staffing needs, identify skill gaps, and align workforce planning with organizational goals. In contrast, team-building events primarily focus on interpersonal relationships and may not provide actionable insights for strategic HR planning.
Resource Allocation and Capacity Planning	We use workload analysis to help identify resource gaps, skill shortages, and capacity constraints within the organization. By understanding resource availability and demand, organizations can make informed decisions regarding hiring, training, and resource allocation to meet business needs effectively. Team-building events, while valuable for enhancing team cohesion, do not provide insights into resource allocation or capacity planning.



4. The Employee Dissatisfaction Blindspot

The origins of employee dissatisfaction often lie in issues not directly attributed to the employees themselves. This may include problems related to unclear expectations and role requirements, recruiting unsuitable candidates, ambiguous performance criteria, a lack of training needs identification, unfair compensation structures, misalignment with organizational goals, unclear growth plans, amongst other factors.

“The origins of employee dissatisfaction often lie in issues not directly attributed to the employees themselves.”

When confronted with a dissatisfied employee, the instinctive response might be to focus on making them happy through motivation or team-building activities. However, these approaches fail to address the underlying root problems. Instead, investing in a Job Analysis exercise proves more insightful, providing a detailed understanding of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and qualifications required for effective job performance.

How Job Analysis Cures The Blindspots

Job analysis not only offers clarity on job roles and expectations but also ensures that organizational practices, such as hiring, promotions, and performance evaluations, adhere to the principles of fairness and meritocracy, mitigating the risk of potential claims relating to discrimination and favoritism.

Beyond these benefits, Job Analysis serves as a lasting solution, offering insights into objective performance criteria, identifying major skill gaps, and pinpointing key competencies essential for succession planning and career advancement. These outcomes collectively contribute to increased satisfaction at work, fostering a positive and productive work environment.

35%  of employees attribute their attrition to sustainable work expectations and lack of career development

What HR Audits Can Help Where Team Building Can't.

Enhanced Job Satisfaction and Engagement

Job analysis focuses on understanding the specific requirements, duties, and responsibilities of each job role within the organization. By aligning job functions with organizational goals, job analysis ensures that each employee's efforts contribute directly to the achievement of strategic objectives. In contrast, team-building sessions may not always have clear connections to organizational goals and may not address specific job-related challenges.

Strategic Workforce Planning

Job analysis provides valuable insights for strategic workforce planning by identifying current and future workforce needs. By understanding the skills and competencies required for different job roles, organizations can make informed decisions regarding recruitment, succession planning, and talent management strategies. Team-building sessions may not offer the same level of data-driven insights into workforce planning.

Tailored Training and Development

Job analysis identifies the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required for successful job performance. This information enables HR professionals to design targeted training and development programs that address specific skill gaps and enhance employee competencies. While team-building sessions may promote general teamwork skills, job analysis allows for a more tailored approach to employee development.

Objective Alignment with Organizational Goals

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Verdict

In navigating the evolving business landscape, it becomes imperative for organizations to proactively adapt to change. At Grant Thornton, our commitment is to empower organizations with comprehensive Human Resource Consultancy Solutions, strategically designed to effectively manage and inspire their workforce.

Our services aim not only to help organizations achieve their strategic objects, but also to navigate market dynamics, scale operations and foster a culture of innovation.

Understanding the unique nature of each organization, we place a premium on collaboration, working closely with our clients to develop customized HR solutions tailored to their specific needs. Whether it's optimizing performance, adapting to industry shifts, or cultivating

a dynamic work environment, our services are crafted to contribute to the success and resilience of your organization.

Contact us today to explore how our tailored services can and will enable your organization to run efficiently, enhance performance, and establish a framework for success in the pursuit of your strategic objectives. Let's embark on a collaborative journey to build a solid foundation for sustained success.



For More Information:

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