

ADMINADVANTAGE

The Exclusive Online Magazine for Administrative Professionals

April 2017



Why today's EAs need to get more strategic

FEATURES:

The Secret Guide to Get Your Best Night's Sleep

Disney Magical Meetings

12 Work-Life Balance Tips for Administrative Professionals

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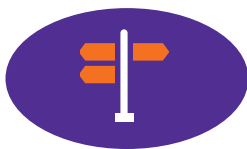
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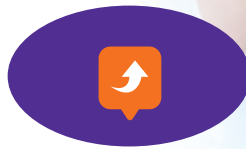
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The Secret Guide to Get Your Best Night's Sleep

By Mark S Cooper

Sleep - it seems as if you can never get enough. You go to wake up tired, go through your day tired and fall into your bed tired, only to lay there, zillions of thoughts about your day zipping through your mind. When will you ever get a good night's rest? Is it just you? ►►

No, you're not alone. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 50 to 70 million adults have problems with sleep; they add that inadequate sleep is "a public health problem." Lack of sleep, or inadequate sleep (sleep that is not deep), can lead to:

- Falling asleep at the wheel, even during daylight hours
 - Difficulty performing daily tasks
 - Hypertension
 - Diabetes
 - Depression
 - Obesity
- Reduced quality of life and productivity



It's no wonder chronic lack of sleep, with its accompanying problems and illnesses, is a real concern.

How much sleep do you need?

The amount of sleep you need changes as you age. The national institutes of health (NIH) recommend children, including teenagers, need between nine and 10 hours of sleep each night; adults need between seven and eight hours. Yet most adults are getting less than six hours of sleep and high school children less than eight. Obviously, you'll need more sleep if you are stressed, either physically or emotionally. A stressful job, the flu, surgery or family issues are all reasons to add extra hours of sleep to your day. However, those are also reasons why you're not getting good, quality sleep with an average of seven or eight hours each night.

The bedtime routine

Experts agree - the best way to get a good night's sleep is to have a set bedtime routine; you have one for your kids, why shouldn't you have one yourself? The National Sleep Foundation has a list of tips and tricks to getting regular, quality sleep:

- **Eat your biggest meal at lunchtime.** Eating a heavy meal in the evening, especially later in the evening, can keep your system awake and active, leading to gastric reflux, heartburn and nausea.
- **Skip the alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes at night.** Obviously, both alcohol and cigarettes have health complications of their own. Caffeine

and cigarettes are stimulants, which will fool the sleep receptors in your brain into thinking you have more hours to be awake. Alcohol may help you go to sleep, but the result is bad-quality sleep; long-term alcohol before bed leads to a vicious cycle of needing more sleep without being refreshed by it, leading to more drinking.

- **Have a wind-down routine.** Get into the habit of winding down the same way every night. Listen to quiet music or enjoy some silence. Read, take a warm shower, do whatever it takes to get yourself into a more sleep-ready frame of mind. Jerri, a single mother of three from Oregon, says she has a routine of reading to each of her children every night after their baths, starting with the youngest; this helps her wind down, because **she's snuggling her kids, reading and relaxing them, which relaxes her. Once they're in bed, Jerri takes a warm shower, sprays some lavender on her pillows and gets into bed to read. She says, "Most nights, when I follow this routine, I'm asleep within 30 minutes and wake ready to take on the next day."**
- **Exercise.** You don't have to run marathons every day for exercise to help you sleep. Ben, a New York financial planner, says, "Just before it's bedtime, my wife and I take our dog for a leisurely walk around the neighborhood. Even in the winter. The nightly walk gives us time to talk, laugh and reconnect after our hectic days."
- **Cool down.** Surprisingly, the best temperature for sleep is between 60 and 67 degrees; most sleep with the bedroom temperature above 70.

TRAINING



Your body cools in the evenings, signaling other areas of your brain that it's time to sleep. Keep the bedroom cooler and adding a blanket or two will ensure the best environment for sleep.

- Opt for comfortable bedding. Bedding plays an important role in the kind of sleep you are going to get. While the comfortable bedding can ensure you the smooth sleep throughout the night, on other hand, an uncomfortable bedding will keep you awake throughout the night. While buying designer flat sheets, you must keep comfort your top most priority. Cotton flat sheets are one of the most comfortable, though it works on simple principle, the more thread count is, the smoother you will sleep.
- Turn off the lights and the noise. George, a

Michigan teacher, said he couldn't sleep unless the TV was on which is why George has had chronic sleep problems. The problem was that he needed sound to keep his brain from swirling thoughts around, keeping him awake. When he went for a sleep study. George's doctor suggested turning off the lights and the TV at a set time every night and using a sleep-inducing app on his phone, with ambient sound, like a fan or a rainstorm. Julie, a firefighter in Texas, uses a box fan and ear plugs to keep the noise out.

Sleep is one of the basic necessities to maintain a healthy life. Set yourself up for the best night's sleep by planning ahead, relaxing and putting the lights out. 🌿

Why today's EAs need to get more strategic

By Adam Fidler

The role of the Executive Assistant (EA) continues to evolve and in my capacity as a trainer, educationalist and thought-leader in the industry, I continue to observe and reflect on what the role of the EA will become. Having worked as an 'Assistant' for 20 years, and having transitioned from Secretary, to PA, to EA, the biggest learning I had to do, in all that time, was to operate more 'strategically'. ►►

WORKSMART



Today, it's not just the Executives who operate with strategic focus. If the EA role is to survive the long-game, then it's essential that the Assistant who supports an Executive has the ability to operate more independently, both in the activities they undertake, but also in the decisions, thoughts and choices they make. This requires strategic focus.

The hundreds of PAs who have attended my two-day Executive PA program will know that I talk about 'black box' and 'red box' activities that the Assistant carries out, emphasizing that if an Assistant is to move forward in their profession, and fulfil their desire for self-development and recognition, then it will be essential that they undertake elements of the 'red box'. This means more managerial activities, more evidence-based input from them, and the ability to straddle between offering 'support' and operating as a junior- or middle-manager in their own right.

Equally, if leaders are to survive, they too will need to use their Assistants in the right way – and allow their Assistants the autonomy to do their jobs. When an Executive allows their Assistant to operate in the space of 'management', they free themselves up to operate in the space of 'leadership'. (Assuming, of course, the Executive know the difference between leadership and management!)

In my view, Assistants need to become more 'strategic' and this is not actually as hard a transition for them to make as they may feel. Put simply, being strategic, from the EA's perspective means:

- **Knowing their organization, the bigger picture and their Executive's desired outcomes, so they can work towards solutions that get the best end results.**
- **Working more autonomously, to free up management time, by making informed**

judgements about what needs doing, when things need doing, and who needs consulting, thereby saving their Executive having to think about these things. In other words, EA-ing is not only about joining the dots, but also about making the dots.

- **Feeling confident to take the lead, offer solutions and challenge their Executive, even if this upsets the status quo.**
- **Developing neutrality of thought and independence; crucial if the EA is to become a highly-respected, trusted advisor and enabler, who influences on their own merits, and not merely through the Executive they support.**
- **Working ‘to the position’, and not just ‘to the boss’. There is a subtle difference here. This means acting with delegated authority on certain projects or activities; often with no, or very little, input, from their Executive. Indeed, some of the EA’s responsibilities may not directly involve the Executive they work with at all.**


The role of the Executive Assistant is here to stay but it requires some fine-tuning by the EA and the Executive if the role is to add the most value. Moreover, it requires the right attitude and approach from both parties so that everyone knows where the EA function fits in, and how Executive and EA work strategically together.

The question, then, for the would-be Strategic Executive Assistant is: ‘You may have the skill, but do you have the will?’ Only the EAs can answer that, but as I learnt, the more I put

into developing my strategic focus, the more valuable my contribution became for the boss and the organization.

Adam Fidler is the Principal and Founder of Adam Fidler Academy, which offers inspirational teaching and learning for PAs, EAs and business support professionals. His most popular courses ‘Get Ahead as an Executive PA’ and ‘The Strategic Executive Assistant’ run regularly in Manchester, London – and abroad.

After graduating with a degree in business studies in 1999, Adam worked as a corporate Board-level Assistant in a variety of organizations, including The Boots Company PLC, Bank of America and Salford City College. He qualified as a teacher in 2008 and has, since then, educated hundreds of Assistants all over the world.

Adam’s cutting edge perspectives on the true role of the Executive Assistant make him a leading authority and thought-leader in the industry, where his work has received worldwide acclaim. 

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MEETING

Disney Magical Meetings

By Susan Silva

Disney. Disney magic. Disney imagination. Disney innovation. Disney fun! Millions of people every year “experience” Disney. For me Disney is special. My birthday is very close to Christmas, so growing up my parents took my twin sister and me to Disneyland Resort in Southern California every year for our birthday. Disneyland made our birthday special and left actual presents for Christmas. ▶▶

Millions of families worldwide have treasured memories of going to one of the Disney resorts for a vacation or special occasion. But Disney isn't just for the family vacation! Thousands of companies hold meetings at a Disney resort every year. Companies have such a good experience that many come back year after year. Disney is known for quality, and that is what you get. Disney Meetings host, create and produce magical and inspiring events—meetings that will

be unforgettable for you and your attendees. “Why Disney Meetings? The answer is simple: because it is Disney itself!”

When planning meetings, the Disney experience provides you with the whole package. Disney's event staff will take the time and work hard to give you the perfect meeting within budget and at the same time help you meet your objectives while having fun. It doesn't matter if your event is

Disney MEETINGS



small or large, the event staff will work with you and help you with creative ideas to get the job done right while staying within your budget. You can start with where you want your attendees to stay. After getting to know the needs and objective of your meeting, they can help book a stay at the perfect hotel. Each Disney hotel has an ambiance of its own—casual, fun, some with a bit more luxury. Disney can help you pick the best hotel for the goals of your meeting. You can also include a few resort days before or after your event for a special rate and purchase specially priced Disney Meeting and Convention theme park tickets.

Some of the fun features that come with planning at a Disney Resort are the

opportunities of meeting rooms or event space that can be themed. You can have a “Swashbuckling Soiree” or maybe an “Alice in Wonderland” themed-party for everyone. With world class service Disney provides lots of options to give your meetings the maximum impact they deserve. Start the day in a conference room with a catered breakfast, book break-out rooms for brainstorming or smaller group sessions, have a fun themed catered lunch in an outside location, come back to a team building event in the park, and end the day at one of the fine restaurants nearby or a sit-down dinner with beautiful décor and entertainment. The meeting is yours to make magical! Disney can help you surpass the “WOW” factor!

MEETINGS



Your meeting may be a managers meeting, a convention, a conference, an incentive trip, a corporate planning meeting, or possibly a team building experience. If you are planning to include a professional development element to your agenda, your Disney Meetings representative may suggest including a Disney Institute program. Disney Institute provides fun and informative training, based on the time-tested success and insights from Disney parks and resorts worldwide. Disney Institute can provide your meeting with a keynote presentation and one-day to multi-day programs which provide you with Disney insights in stimulating format and team building experiences.

Disney is known for their imagination; they can help bring this magic to your meeting, keeping

your attendees engaged. Disney makes you look good! Some meetings look for ROI; Disney gets you ROE—Return on Emotion. Planning a meeting at Disney will bring out the best in your meeting and your attendees. They will leave with great memories—a positive Return on Emotion!

Planning a meeting at a Disney Resort has its advantages. Disney wants your experience to be excellent and will make all your meeting members feel like VIPs. Disney meeting services are available worldwide at the Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida, the Disneyland Resort in Southern California, Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa on the island of O’ahu in Hawaii, Disneyland Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland Resort, Shanghai Disney Resort and the Disney Cruise Line.



Orlando, Florida is the number one conference destination in the U.S. My bet is the Disney Resorts play a major part in being number one. Walt Disney World Resort has six convention resorts with more than 700,000 square feet of flexible event space for your meetings, including ballrooms, meeting rooms and outside locations. Each hotel has its own ambiance and unique features.

Disney's BoardWalk Inn is on the water and has a 1940s feel of Atlantic City. With over 370 luxurious guest rooms and over 20,000 square feet of flexible meeting and event space, Disney's BoardWalk Inn is a great choice for conferences with an exciting atmosphere.

Disney's Contemporary Resort has an iconic A-frame tower with a beautiful view of the Magic

Kingdom park just across the lake. Disney's Monorail runs through the resort. This hotel has a modern look and feel and has over 650 guest rooms and a convention center with 115,000 square feet of meeting and event space.

Disney's Coronado Spring Resort is a popular spot for meetings; it has a Southwest feel with palm-shaded courtyards and haciendas. It also has a white sand beach and scenic trails.

The Disney's Coronado Spring Resort is popular for larger conferences and has many amenities for the larger events, with over 1,900 guest rooms. They have business class guest rooms as well. The resort has over 220,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including the Veracruz exhibit hall that is 85,765 square feet of meeting and event space

MEETINGS



and the Coronado ballroom with 60,214 square feet of space.

Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa is a Victorian style hotel. It takes you back in time with its décor and style. The Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa has an antique style with stained glass ceiling domes and a feel that you are at a beach resort way back in the early 19th century.

Disney's Yacht & Beach Club Resort

club is more upscale and has a more relaxing atmosphere with a nautical, New England vibe. It is next to beautiful Crescent Lake where you can rent water crafts and take time to enjoy the beauty of the area. With over 1,190 guest rooms and over 70,000 square feet of meeting and event space, the Disney's Yacht & Beach Club Resort is a great

option for your meeting. Within its meeting space, there is the Grand Harbour ballroom which can accommodate a meeting or event up to 4,500 guests! On the flip side, there is also the executive boardroom for small groups up to 14 guests.

Southern California is home to Disneyland Resort,

the first and original Disney Park. Located in Anaheim with airports nearby, the Disneyland Resort is easy to get to. There are three Disney operated hotels, all just outside the park and each has its unique theme. Downtown Disney is just steps away from all three hotels and has plenty of places for dining, shopping and having the Disney magical experience.

Grand Californian Hotel & Spa is a beautiful hotel that makes you feel you are at a wilderness lodge. The hotel lobby was inspired

by Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn. It has elegant wood accents and a roaring fireplace where you warm up, talk with co-workers or just relax. It is the "Grandest" of the three hotels with over 940 guest rooms and 20,000 square feet of meeting and event space. The Sequoia ballroom can accommodate events up to 1,200 guests. The Grand Californian has three scenic outdoor areas that can accommodate events up to 200 guests.

Disneyland Hotel is the original Disney

Hotel! A little fact: the Disneyland Hotel opened in 1955, but none of the original hotel remains. It has had several renovations and is now a cool hotel with stunning views. Guests in many of the rooms can enjoy the nightly fireworks show or the World of Color show at the Disney California Adventure Park from the hotel's balconies. The Disneyland Hotel has over 970 guest rooms and 136,000 of flexible meeting and event space that includes the Disneyland exhibit hall that can accommodate up to 3,000 guests.

Paradise Pier Hotel has a beach culture theme. It is right across from the Disney California Adventure Park and many of the rooms feature views of the park. The Paradise Pier Hotel has fun themed rooms which highlight the sea-side beach theme. Disney's Paradise Pier Hotel has very cool rooftop pools and the California Streamin' waterslide! Many of the Disney hotels have won awards, but the Disney's Paradise

Pier hotel won the AAA Three Diamond Award in Southern California specifically for business travelers. The Disney Paradise Pier Hotel has over 480 guest rooms with 24,000 square feet of meeting and event space.

Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa is Disney's magical Hawaiian paradise! Located on the island of O'ahu, this destination showcases all the WOW factors that are Disney. This beautiful waterfront destination gives you an exotic, luxurious backdrop for your meeting. Your meeting will be truly Hawaii with infusions of Disney!

Disney Cruise Line offers a unique meeting experience as well as all the wonders that a Disney Cruise can bring. Disney has four ships, each with dedicated meeting space where you can get together for your meeting. Have your meeting attendees try a group port adventure. The Disney Cruise Line, with its unparalleled service, will be one your meeting and event attendees will take home memories from to last forever.

Disneyland Paris is "the" place to plan your next meeting. When planning a meeting at Disneyland Paris, you will work with Disney Business Solutions. Disneyland Paris is Europe's number one tourist destination. Disneyland Paris has two major conference centres, an events arena and 9 partner hotels. It is the fifth-largest convention facility in France! Disney Business Solutions will give your meeting an experience

MEETINGS

only Disneyland Paris can give! You search for your ROE (Return on Emotion) at many of the resorts around Disneyland Paris.

Disney's Hotel New York takes you to New York in the 1930s. Experience an Art Deco feel of New York and Wall Street. It gives you that high energy feel. The Disney's Hotel New York is great for larger meetings as it holds one of the two convention centres located at Disney Paris. The Disney's Hotel New York has over 568 guest rooms with 5,000 square meters of meeting and event space.


Disney's Newport Bay Club's ambiance and décor is based on a New England experience, light house included! Laid back with relaxation, this colonial style hotel allows you to get away from it all, Disney style, with over 1,093 guest rooms and 5,500 square meters of meeting and event space. The conference centre for businesses having meetings at the centre is not accessible by the casual Disney visitor.

The Disneyland Hotel at Disneyland Paris is a grand hotel full of luxury. The hotel's theme was inspired by Victorian palaces. The Disneyland Hotel has over 496 guest rooms and a customizable business suite that lets your meeting be held in a unique environment. Many of the rooms offer beautiful views of the Disneyland Park. The Disneyland Hotel has two meeting rooms of 2,800 square meters for small meetings with lovely views of the Disneyland Park.

Hong Kong Disney Resort - Over the years Disney has been magical in the meetings and events realm. Disneyland Hong Kong has the benefit of this combined knowledge and can bring that extra sparkle and magic to your Hong Kong meeting.

Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel is located on the shores of the South China Sea. It captures a Victorian theme and brings a bit of luxury and class to the ambiance. It has 400 guest rooms and 1,500 square meters of meeting and event space. It has a dedicated Conference Centre area for meeting guests and includes two beautiful ballrooms: the Cinderella Ballroom and the Snow White Ballroom.

Disney's Hollywood Hotel sets you in the Golden Age of Hollywood. The Art Deco design of the hotel has a more playful feel . Disney's Hollywood Hotel does not have meeting room space. When planning a meeting, the Disney's Hollywood Hotel partners with the Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel and hosts the meetings at their property.

In the future months, DeskDemon will delve into each Disney destination area in more depth and bring you some of the unique features and fun that each resort area can bring. But in the end, it starts with what was quoted in the beginning: Why Disney Meetings? The answer is simple: because it is Disney itself! That really says it all. 

Disney Meeting's Crossword

Answers are in the Disney Meetings Article



Across

4. Disney will make you and your meeting members feel like a ____.
5. How many convention resorts (with over 700,000 square feet of meeting space!) are in the Orlando area?
7. Which national park (one of its hotels) inspired the Grand Californian in Southern California?
11. What type of Soiree or themed event can you have?
13. Disney is known for their _____.
15. How many Disney Hotels are at the Southern California Resort?
16. The Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa has an antique style with stained ____ ceiling domes.
17. What is the name of Disney's magical Hawaiian paradise?
18. On the roof of Paradise Pier, there is a _____ called California Streamin'.
19. What Hawaiian island is the Aulani on?

Down

1. Why Disney Meetings? Disney _____.
2. This park was the first Disney Park.
3. Disney's Grand Floridian Resort & Spa has a _____ feel to it style and decor.
6. What form of transportation runs through Florida's Disney Contemporary Resort?
8. Disney's Yacht & Beach Club Resort club is next to a beautiful _____ Lake.
9. How many ships does Disney Cruise Lines have that you can get together for your meetings?
10. Disney can make your meetings _____.
12. Disney's Coronado Spring Resorts has this exhibit hall that is 85,765 square feet of meeting and event space.
14. Disney's Boardwalk Inn is on the water and has a 1940's feel of _____ City.
18. Disney can help you surpass the ____ factor for your meetings.



Interview with Clay Teufel, Co-Founder and Head of Marketing at VoyaDesk.com

Hi, can you tell me about you and your role at VoyaDesk?

I'm the Co-Founder and Head of Marketing at VoyaDesk. We launched in Q4 of 2016. I've had the pleasure of working on a number of consumer product launches over the past few years and we are very excited about VoyaDesk. The standing desk market is growing rapidly in the workplace and we are excited to be a part of it.

Exactly, what is a VoyaDesk?

VoyaDesk is a fresh take from the dull and boring workspace setting, and allows you the ability to stand up and feel inspired in the workplace. VoyaDesk gives you the flexibility to control how your body feels at work.

It is a two-tiered sit-to-stand desk, that can be effortlessly adjusted to one of twelve height settings to accommodate almost all workspaces.

It has enough space for a keyboard, mouse, two monitors and other accessories.

VoyaDesk allows you the ability to stand up and feel inspired in the workplace. It promotes the opportunity to improve your posture and feel motivated with increased energy by standing up.

- Reduce back pain
- Boost productivity
- Improve your mood
- Boost your energy levels
- Lower risks of weight gain
- Lower blood sugar levels
- Lower risks for heart disease

How is it different from similar brands?

We believe that your workspace should motivate and inspire you. If your current workspace could talk,




what would it say? VoyaDesk is different from other brands, because we believe that the workspace should be a place that motivates and inspires. We offer the VoyaDesk at a lower price, because we believe that everyone should have the opportunity to boost their energy, productivity, mood, and motivation at work. Why pay more to feel the difference?

In addition, we also understand the hurdles people need to go through in order to have the desk approved from HR. We want to make things easy, by providing a cost efficient product that does not sacrifice features or quality. We would like to partner with companies who believe what we believe; that workplaces should motivate and inspire their employees.

Why should DeskDemon viewers purchase these products for their office?

VoyaDesk gives EA/Office managers the ability to make an impact in the office by increasing employee energy and productivity. An office manager has the opportunity to change the overall dynamic of the office atmosphere. In addition to the benefits provided by standing desks, we offer bulk discounts for office managers looking to equip their teams with standing desks.

How can they order products for their office?

Voyadesk is sold directly online through our website, Voyadesk.com. We sell direct to consumers and offices through bulk sales. Orders ship within one business day and customers can also shop on Facebook (facebook.com/voyadesk) and Pinterest (pinterest.com).! 

WORKSMART

Leave the Games Behind - Team Building 101

By Brian Wiggins

Call it a bad, real-life version of *The Office*. The boss decides that productivity and morale are down, so there needs to be team building. So on a chilly Wednesday morning, rather than being at work, the whole staff finds themselves at the base of a high ropes course. The morning starts with some reaffirming words about trust and positive thinking and keeping an open mind from the facilitator, followed by some activities to aid in communication and trust, such as a trust fall and the human knot game. Soon, after some rudimentary safety training, the staff begins to tackle the high roped elements of the course; some are not so wild about heights, so they elect to stay on the ground and help with the safety ropes. As the sun sets that evening, the facilitators congratulate everyone on a job well done and for participating and hope that the staff is able to take the lessons learned that day back into the office. ▶▶

Come Thursday morning, with the exception of maybe some sore muscles; it is back to business as usual. The boss cannot figure out why his team is not any better and retreats back to the confines of his office to ponder what to do next.

This is actually an all-too-common scenario. Too often when a team is not performing up to expectations, the powers-that-be elect for a “team building” day, such as the one described above or something similar. While a day scrambling up an artificial wall may be fun, there is one major caveat to engaging in the above activities: none of it is team building.

Simply put, team building is not an activity, but an ongoing process. There are certainly

activities and initiatives that can be of use as tools in this process, but they are not an end unto themselves, and if used as such or not properly facilitated, they can potentially create more harm than good.

In understanding team building, it is important to determine what it is not.

AVOID THE CLICHÉS ▼

First, there must be a distinction made between bonding and building. Bonding is merely an act of sticking two or more objects together; in terms of people, it is two or more people getting along and caring for each other at some level. This can be done very quickly, such as a child using paste to attach the eyes onto their

WORKSMART

Halloween jack 'o lantern project in school: effective, though temporary. A more permanent bond is possible, but requires greater time and effort.

Building, on the other hand, is an organized and planned effort to construct a solid structure to serve a purpose. There are many individual activities and transactions required to achieve this goal, and once the initial structure is complete, constant maintenance is required to keep it functional. It is a continual process. As such, team building is not building camaraderie. While in an ideal environment the team will bond and genuinely care for each other's well-being, it is more realistic that there are people on every team who wish nothing more than to come in, do their job, and go home. Even more realistic a view is that there are people on the team who may actively despise another member. These are obstacles, to be sure, but ultimately the success of the team is not dependent on everyone liking each other, so this is not a goal of team building. Additionally, team building is not an activity. Putting a team through team building "initiatives", such as the aforementioned human knot and ropes courses and the like in an attempt to demonstrate examples of core team behaviors does little at building the team, as these activities 1) do not always translate well to the work environment, and 2) do nothing to secure continual support of the potential lessons learned.

Team building is an ongoing, multifaceted process encompassing several disciplines that, when done properly and given the due attention it deserves in any organization, plays an important role in an organization's success. Ultimately, it is getting a group of people to work together towards a common goal in such a way that the results of their efforts are greater than the sum of their parts. This requires constant attention and is achieved over time, and must be maintained through continual efforts. As mentioned before, there are additional activities that can help boost or accelerate team building, but these tools are only an additional support option for what should be a daily function of the workplace and the team leader. Moreover, the activities that qualify as team building tools are very specific in scope and how they are applied; in other words, not just any activity provided by a book or facilitator can necessarily fulfill this purpose.

THE MYTHS ▼

There are several myths that have unfortunately been tied into team building, which have created unrealistic expectations in regards to the potential outcomes. The two most prevalent relate to team building's scope of effectiveness and which activities are most effective.

Myth #1: Team building will cure what ails ya'.

FACT: Team building is not a cure-all. There are many possible contributing factors to

why an organization is not performing up to expectations, team building being but one. While some quality team building may create a short-term stopgap for overall poor performance, it cannot heal a sick corporate culture. While team building should be a constant endeavor at any organization, regardless of performance, the deeper, underlying issues need to be addressed if team building is going to have the desired impact on success.

The truth is that while a team's lackluster performance can hurt an organization's success, it also may be a symptom of a larger problem. It will still do well to treat the cough, but this will do little good unless the cause of the cough is treated as well.

Additionally, team building may not even be the issue at hand. For example, is there truly a team that needs to be built? High school teachers, for instance, all strive for a common goal: educating their students and playing a role in shaping them into productive citizens. However, the Spanish teacher's job performance is not dependent on the Algebra teacher; ergo, there is no need to spend time and resources trying to "build" this team.

Another example: is the team's goal mission critical? If the office's Sunshine Club is not getting along and it is interfering with the plans for the end of year Christmas party, is

it worth the money and lost productivity to send them on a daylong team building crash course? Is it worth spending more than an hour's worth of conversation?

In both of these cases, there is no need for team building. If issues are arising between the parties mentioned in the examples above, other approaches would be more appropriate.

Myth #2: Activities outside of the office can help highlight key behaviors.

FACT: Stripping away all of the excess baggage and eliminating distractions are excellent ways of drilling down to core issues, but most activities do not support this end in a practical, sustainable way. While on paper, the high-ropes course or weekly "team building" initiatives at the morning meeting may seem like excellent ways of demonstrating the core values of team building, there are major reasons why they prove to be ineffective.

One-shot deal. It is the equivalent of brushing your teeth once a week. It may act as a temporary booster, but eventually decay sets in and undoes whatever few benefits gained. In addition, not everyone in the group may get the same take-away value from the activity, thus leading to uneven results at best from engaging in such activities and reducing the return on investment. For them to even begin to approach being effective, the activities need to

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be engaged in on a regular basis.

Lack of interest. If employees are not interested in the activities, they will not be keeping an open mind to the potential learnings. True, this may stem from a lack of proper facilitation or preparation on the team leader's part, but it provides for a difficult obstacle: if one employee is acting indignant, the attitude can spread virally and keep more members of the team from engaging.

For instance, if someone is terrified of heights and is generally not an outdoors kind of person,

they will not be willing to engage fully in a high-ropes course. Additionally, if they are not participating in the full initiative and are left on the ground working the ropes, they are not going to get the same takeaway value as those who completed the course (harkening back to a previous obstacle in engaging these activities). Is it worth the time and resources to attempt to convince these one or two employees to engage fully in the initiative? If not, is it worth engaging in the initiative if the whole team will not be getting something of value out of it?

Statement of the blatantly obvious. Most initiatives

will attempt to highlight the building blocks of team building. These “truths” are often patently obvious and the staff already knows and understands them.

Most productive members of an organization understand that they are part of a larger whole, and what they do can either contribute or take away from the overall success of the team. It is during this debrief, with everyone sitting in the circle and each holding a piece of string in a web that symbolizes their responsibility to the team that the facilitator begins to highlight the requirements of teamwork and the employees’ eyes begin to glaze over.

Same quota, less time. Most employees will see the time spent on team building initiatives better utilized in completing their work responsibilities. The perception often is that there is still the same amount of work to accomplish, but less time to accomplish it in. At a 3-day in-house team building initiative at one company, employees were told that the sessions were mandatory and would last from Wednesday through Friday. At each break, rather than using the downtime to eat something and relax, the majority of the staff were running back to their desks and answering urgent emails, completing reports and making necessary phone calls. Rather than look for the benefits of the session, most employees saw it as a waste of time that prevented them from completing their work.

No follow-through. Once the initiative has been completed, the staff are turned loose back in the office and expected to perform at a higher level with this newfound enlightenment concerning their role to the team. If there is any positive energy generated, and there very well may be, it will often fizzle out after a few days when it becomes clear that nothing has really changed. Managers do not spend the time following up with their teams properly because they become too distracted with other, more important responsibilities. Lessons are not reinforced. Staff members begin to slip into old habits. The facilitator, if an outside one is used, is nowhere to be found to check on progress.

“We do the bonding.” As mentioned at the beginning of the article, many of these activities tend to generate bonding more so than building. They act as a common challenge that people have had to face, much like pledging a fraternity. And while fun, if bonding is the overreaching goal (and in some cases, it may be as the job requires it), it would probably show a greater return on investment to go bowling or hit the pub for a few pints after work.

GETTING ON THE RIGHT TRACK ▼

So what is a leader to do? Is team building relevant, or even useful?

Yes. The key is to readjust the point of view on what team building is and how to enact the process. It boils down to assessing and addressing the team’s needs.

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In the initial stage of assessment, a team leader must ask a question that may not have a clear-cut answer: is team building necessary? Prima fascia this seems an ambiguous question at best with an answer that falls somewhere in the gray scale between black and white, but the answer can be simplified by breaking the question down into its core components.

First, is there actually a team? This is a bit of a trick question. Are the people that are working in the department or office dependent on each other's performance for their own success? Take for example the previously mentioned high school teachers. They are not dependent on each other's performance for success within their own classroom. True, if all of the teachers are enforcing the rules equally and pushing all of the students to maintain a high standard of performance, then everyone's job gets a little easier, but because they are not immediately dependent on each other to complete their job every day they do not qualify as a "team".

However, if there is direct dependency there, then there is a "team." For instance, if the staff is responsible for achieving a common goal, such as a sales target or a project objective, and each play a role in seeing this goal met, then they are a team.

Who to include on this team can be a slippery slope. Who gets included? How involved in the process must a staff member be to be included

as a team member? Does the receptionist who funnels incoming phone calls to the appropriate parties count? How about the administrative assistant who coordinates all of the filing and required meetings?

The team leader ultimately has to make a decision in this case, but to guide this decision, the leader need only ask a question: if this person vanished tomorrow, how much impact would that have on the rest of the team? The administrative assistant would more than likely sorely be missed, as their contribution allows the rest of the team to concentrate on their areas of responsibility, and having team members rotate in to do that job could prove to be counter-productive. The receptionist (as described above) provides a helpful service, but with some adjustments could have their responsibilities taken care of by the rest of the staff with little impact on productivity. The team leader has to make a decision as to who needs to be included, and what the return on that investment must be.

Once the nature and members of the team have been established, the leader can then move on to addressing the team's needs. To answer the question posed at the beginning of this section, "Is team building necessary," the answer is if there is a team, then unequivocally "yes." As has been mentioned several times before, team building is a constant and ongoing process, so if there is a team, the

team leader must always be taking action to keep the team moving smoothly.

MEETING THEIR NEEDS ▼

Every team has the following needs that must be met to keep the team functioning smoothly:

- **A purpose or goal:** a unifying reason for the team's existence
Communication between members and stakeholders: established channels and methods, and protocols, including who is responsible for what types of communication, timetables, contact people for key issues, etc
- **Accountability:** clearly defined accountabilities; who is responsible for what, and who is responsible for control and evaluation
- **Support:** backing by management at the highest appropriate level, including access to resources and information

Real team building lies in addressing these needs. To be effective, a team leader must constantly be assessing and evaluating how the team's needs are being met. Where are the problem areas? Has there been a break down in communication between two members? Are the appropriate managers supporting the team's efforts? Have the team's actions strayed from the team's purpose? When a team leader starts acting as an advocate in this way, they are laying the foundation for a solid team.

This is an ongoing competency. Simply laying

the groundwork is not enough; a strong leader will constantly be taking the pulse of the team in an attempt to be proactive is addressing the team's needs and ironing out any wrinkles before they arise. This process can happen in any number of degrees of difficulty, depending on the team members, the tenure of the team, organizational climate, etc. Regardless, the process does not stop.

THE EXCEPTION THAT PROVES THE RULE ▼

Now, with any rule there are exceptions. Those aforementioned "activities" that were written off as not building teams? They may still hold a useful place in the team building process, but under very specific circumstances. Even if these circumstances arise, the usefulness of these tools has not been proven, and a leader should only enter into their use under careful deliberation and using experienced facilitators who understand the true team building process and are capable of a longer commitment to working with the team.

So when are these "booster shots" appropriate? When should a leader drag his team out into the wilderness for four days to help accelerate the process? The following scenarios may call for additional, accelerated aid outside of the ordinary practices:

- **Brand new team with a looming project deadline**
- **New members on the team that must be brought up to speed quickly**

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- A mission-critical team in critical condition with a project deadline
- A team where 100% of the members are on board with the activity

With the exception of the last scenario, there is a common thread here: deadlines. In all but the last case, the team is threatened by a deadline that must be met. Now, just because there is a deadline does not necessarily mean that there is a need for a team booster shot; as mentioned before, the team leader must carefully consider his or her options before jumping into such an activity. Booster shots are not a cure-all, remember, but only a tool that should be used in conjunction with sound team building processes.

For instance, a firm that produces portable MP3 players is about to begin a new marketing push to try to take a larger market share. This initiative could mean the difference between several years of strong sales and expansion, or could result in a loss of capital and market share. The senior management team has two new members within the last six months, and there are tensions between the other four tenured managers that have resulted in some communication breakdowns in the last year. In this case, with a team that not only has a looming deadline of some importance, but also has new members and issues between others, there may be a case to engage in some emergency “boosters” to get the team in synch very quickly.

BOOSTERS THAT WORK ▼

What are some of the options available? If a team leader decides that a booster is necessary, several routes could be taken. In all of the cases below, the key is constant feedback about specific, individual behaviors that are affecting the team. It is not enough to simply engage in the activity with no direction or feedback. And remember, the team leader is not trying to change anyone on the team, but attempting to change their vocabulary and understanding of each other. Focus on the behaviors, not the people, but with an eye as to why the people may be engaging in damaging behaviors.

Do the work of the team. The easiest and most relevant would be to engage in a team-specific project that directly reflects the work that they do. This has a high level of transfer and relevance to their other work habits and could result in smoother operations.

Retreats. Take the team out of the workplace and to somewhere new and relaxed where they can focus on the work of the team (as mentioned above). A change of venue and relaxed environment could yield some strong results, but again the work must be focused on the team’s goal. A strategic planning session, for example, would be a good reason for a retreat, but again with feedback given to members regarding how their behaviors are affecting the team.


Outdoor facilitated initiatives. No, not a high-ropes course (with its previously mentioned built-in barriers). This can be a very powerful tool if used properly. The advantage of being outdoors is that most, if not all distractions have been removed and it lays bare people's attitudes and behaviors. The stress of the initiatives (often strenuous hikes with little guidance, book ended with facilitator sessions) brings many emotions to the surface and can really get to the roots of the underlying problems.

Obviously, there are some pitfalls here that, if not carefully navigated, could end up doing more damage than good. This is why it is important to have a strong facilitator present who is not only able to manage the team's safety and act as an outside observer, but also to help the team heal itself once the inevitable verbal and emotional lashings happen.

THE TAKEAWAY ▼

As mentioned before, good communication and follow-up are key to the success of any of these boosters. In any of these cases, there must be follow-up over several months to ensure that any positive building is being maintained in addition to the ongoing team building that must be present. Faltering in either feedback, follow-up, or ongoing team needs' assessment will result in a loss of any benefits gained through the boosters.

Remember, there are three primary keys that

are required for effective team building. First, it must be determined if it is even necessary by assessing the nature of the team. Second, it is an on-going effort that requires attention to specific needs that keep the team operating smoothly. Finally, with any team building, whether it is through every day efforts or through a booster, there must be follow through. If a leader keeps all of this in mind, they will be well on their way to developing strong, high-performing team. 

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Let's Talk Paella

By Terry L Arkin

There are several different types of Paella. While there are a variety of Paella dishes we are going to discuss the Puerto Rican style. There isn't a Latino household and I will dare to say many households in the US that doesn't have a Paella recipes. There is a difference of opinion over the origin of Paella. Needless to say, we are thankful for this delicious dish. Paella can be used for an evening meal or a party dish. Paella can be made with chicken or seafood and you can use different types of rice. A must for an excellent dish of Paella is Saffron. While Saffron is a little on the pricey side it adds amazing flavor to the dish.

In Puerto Rican house holds a Caldera (heavy pot) was used for this dish. You will need to use a large heavy-based pot. Read the Paella recipe, check and make sure you have all the ingredients that you will need. I use the Misen En Place method (everything in its place). I measure out all my ingredients, chop and dice having everything ready to begin the cooking process.

I am going to share with you my Paella recipes. This is a Puerto Rican recipe.

Paella Puerto Rican Style

Ingredients

3 pounds chicken pieces
12 whole black peppercorns
3 cloves garlic, peeled
3 teaspoons dried oregano
1 teaspoon salt
¼ cup olive oil plus 3
tablespoons
2 tablespoons red wine
vinegar 2 teaspoons paprika
1 large yellow onion, peeled
and finely chopped
1 large green bell pepper,
cored, seeded and chopped
3 sweet chili pepper, seeded
and chopped

3 chorizo sausages, sliced
into ¼ inch rounds
1 cup chicken stock (made
from 2 tablespoons chicken
base and 1 cup water)
½ cup tomato sauce
¼ cup black olives, sliced
3 cups rice, washed and
drained
1 tablespoon saffron
1 ½ pounds whole baby clams
12-15 raw mussels, scrubbed
and debearded
1 10-ounce package frozen
green peas

1 ½ pounds cooked lobster,
shell split, claws cracked and
grey sack removed or 1
pound frozen lobster tail
meat, without the shell
1 ½ pounds raw shrimp,
shelled and deveined
1 6 ½ ounce jar pimentos,
drained and cut into ½-inch
strips
1 tablespoon chopped fresh
Italian parsley
2 cups water

Directions

1. Rinse chicken pieces under cold running water and pat dry with paper towels.
2. In a mortar, crush peppercorns, garlic, oregano and salt. Blend in 1/4 cup olive oil, vinegar and paprika.
- 3 Rub chicken thoroughly with seasoning. Place in a covered bowl and let marinate for a minimum of 30 minutes or, preferably several hours.
4. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a heavy kettle, Dutch Oven or Paellera, if you can find one. Add onions, bell pepper, aji dulce and chorizo. Saute until onion is transparent.
5. Add tomato sauce, bouillon cube and olives. Stir to combine.
6. Add chicken pieces plus 2 cups water. Mis, lower heat to moderate-low and cook, covered, for 15 minutes.
7. Add rice and achiote. If necessary, add more water to cover contents in pot. Mix well. Cover and simmer on low heat until liquid is adsorbed and rice is tender (25-30 minutes).
8. While rice is cooking, strain clam juice over a cloth to get rid of sand. Combine this liquid with water so that it measures 2 cups. Pour this into a pot or heavy skillet with a tight fitting lid Add mussels and lightly steam 2-5 minutes or until they open. remove with a slotted spoon, set aside and keep warm.
9. Add peas to rice-chicken mix and stir. Continue cooking on low heat for 10 minutes.
10. Meanwhile, remove the lobster meat from shell and claws and cut into 1-inch pieces.
11. Add lobster, clams and shrimp to rice and mix well. Arrange mussels around the rim of the pot and in the center. Cover and cook 10 minutes more.
12. Remove from heat, garnish with pimento strips and sprinkle with parsley. Serve immediately.

12 Work-Life Balance Tips for Administrative Professionals

By Brandi Britton, OfficeTeam

Chances are, your definition of work-life balance differs from your employer's. According to a recent OfficeTeam survey (<http://officeteam.rhi.mediaroom.com/2016-11-17-Uneven-Views-On-Work-Life-Balance>), 63 percent of senior managers said their company is very supportive of its employees' efforts to balance their personal and professional lives. However, only 34 percent of workers agree. ►

This disconnect means you may need to take your work-life balance into your own hands. As an administrative professional, finding and maintaining the ideal equilibrium between the office and home is essential for avoiding workplace burnout, and there are several ways you can add more balance to your life.

1. Change up your schedule. According to 44 percent of employees surveyed, the best way to achieve work-life balance is having a flexible

schedule. Talk to your boss about the possibility of working remotely a day or two per week, if your position allows it. Or, check if you can commute to the office during off-peak hours. The time you'd normally spend in traffic could be allocated to exercise, outside interests or even a little more sleep.

2. Take some R&R when you can. Whether or not your company has a use-it-or-lose-it policy for paid time off, try to use as much of it as

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possible each year. Everyone needs to get away from the office, be it for a couple days at a time or a longer stretch. If you're fortunate enough to work for a company that offers a generous vacation time package, which is our survey respondents' second choice for work-life balance (33 percent), take full advantage of this perk.

3. Don't be guilted into saying yes to nonessentials.

This can be especially challenging if you're a people pleaser. But the more extra tasks you take on, the more your colleagues and boss will keep coming to you with assignments. Know your limits and say no when necessary.

4. Be disciplined with social media. Some administrative professionals' duties include engaging with clients and customers on the company's Facebook page or Twitter account. But be careful not to let your own social media scanning put a dent in your workplace productivity, or else you might have to stay later to catch up on unfinished work. Wait until you get home to browse your own Instagram feed.

5. Maximize the lunch break. Whether you have a sandwich before running a few errands or eat your salad while ordering groceries online, use these 30 to 60 minutes to cross a few items off your personal to-do list. But be careful not to overdo it. Your body and brain need this downtime to refuel and recharge, otherwise you

may run into the dreaded afternoon slump.

6. Become more proficient in commonly used software.

Get more out of Microsoft Office by learning about shortcuts, macros, styles, templates and much more. In fact, you may want to pursue the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) certification. Working efficiently allows you to get more done in less time, which means fewer late nights at the office.

7. Outsource tasks. As an administrative professional, you're accustomed to helping others. Well, it could be time to get some assistance of your own. Many services enable a better work-life balance by running those personal errands you don't have time or inclination to do. For example, hire a cleaner every other week so you're not spending your valuable weekend scrubbing the bathroom. Consider such expenses an investment in your personal well-being and happiness.

8. Leave work at work. While today's communication technology boosts productivity and collaboration, it can also ruin your work-life balance if your boss and colleagues are constantly pestering you after hours. Avoid checking your office inbox or voicemail when you're supposed to be relaxing. Unless you're an administrative professional who's occasionally on call, leave work-related items for business hours.

9. Adjust your sleep schedule. Looking for extra hours in your week? Try carving out some time


at the start of the day. Let's say you feel happier when you do yoga each day, or you'd like extra time to work on personal projects. To fit these activities into your schedule, set your alarm an hour or two earlier than usual. Then spend this quiet time doing what you love.

10. Stay home when necessary. An important aspect of work-life balance is self-care. If you drag yourself to the office when you're feeling ill, you're really not doing anyone any favors. Stay home when you're sick and rest up so you can recover faster. What's more, you won't win any workplace friends if you infect colleagues or customers with your cold.

11. Be firm about your work hours. Let others know you're serious about work-life balance by sticking to your schedule. When coworkers approach you at the end of the day and want to talk about starting a new project together, tell them you're heading out the door, but would be happy to discuss it either as you walk to your car or the next morning. Eventually they'll become accustomed to the boundaries you've set for yourself. True work emergencies are a different matter, and those may require you to stay late — but not every request is an emergency.

12. Find a job closer to home. This might seem drastic, but if you're dealing with a long or stressful commute, it might be worth putting out some feelers to explore opportunities closer to home. Shorter commute times mean more time

for family, friends and yourself. And if you drive to and from work, you would also save money on gas and wear and tear on your car.

There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to work-life balance. If you're childless, your idea of a healthy equilibrium may be a sabbatical to pursue your passion for world travel. On the other hand, working moms or dads may focus on perks that give them plenty of flexibility to juggle office and home duties. Regardless of how you make it happen, the important thing is to make sure you're not shortchanging your employer, your family or yourself. 

Brandi Britton is a district president for OfficeTeam, the nation's leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled administrative and office support professionals.

OfficeTeam has 300 locations worldwide and offers online job search services at roberthalf.com/officeteam.

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