



A PUBLICATION OF TEAMBONDING

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
**CHARITABLE  
HOLIDAY  
ACTIVITIES**

*FOR YOUR TEAM*

THE STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO STRESS-FREE PLANNING AND HOW YOU CAN DO IT



Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strengthens work teams and builds employee skills and professional development. Employers gain higher retention rates and employees pursue more promotion and professional development opportunities when CSR encouraged or supported through volunteering and other charitable programs.



62% of workers 18- to 26-years old would prefer to work for a company that provides opportunities for them to apply their skills to benefit nonprofit organizations.\*



## STEPS TO STRESS-FREE PLANNING

Over the past ten years companies have become some of the biggest supporters of volunteering, investing more money and resources into community engagement projects. Indeed, volunteering has been steadily moving towards the center of many corporations' corporate social responsibility initiatives.

### Step #1

Start The Countdown (*Early!*)

### Step #2

Revolve Around Your Guests

### Step #3

Chew On The Extras

### Step #4

Sell The Sensation

### Step #5

Evaluate Your Success

***Bonus:*** Research Your Resources



## STEP #1

# START THE COUNTDOWN *(EARLY!)*

Whether you're planning a large company party or a small team outing this holiday season, take fun seriously. The more you plan, the more relaxed you will be and the more fun you'll have with your team. The worst part of planning a last minute activity, is that it will feel last minute, and the only solution to last minute, is to break the bank.

# SAVE MONEY

## and time!

### **Give the charity some notice.**

As you start to narrow down your selection of non-profits for your team activity, start reaching out to discuss availability. A lot of people volunteer around the holidays and many employees, which means there will be fewer and fewer opportunities for a charity to host your team. Don't save this part of the plan for last! Finding a charity is harder than it seems.

Once you do have a charity lined up, stay in touch with them. One of the pitfalls to planning ahead is that people can lose track of the details or an organization can have turn-over that leads to lose ends.

### **Start lining up discounts.**

Everyone knows that when you travel and you book early, you save. This also applies to *venues, wine, food, entertainment, transportation...the list goes on*. Consider negotiating around costs, minimum numbers and the final package with venues and other suppliers.

Even if you don't get a deal, starting early is key. You will pay a premium for extras added close to your event. Although some vendors may not be willing to negotiate if the holidays are their peak season, many will still be open to giving you a deal if you ask and you make a deposit.

Venues that require in-house catering often lead to the highest food expenses. If you are limited to in-house catering, ask for a custom menu that will fit your budget. And don't be afraid to ask about trades. Just try to keep the quid pro quo details clear and simple.



Photo Credit: Nicole McDermott | 94 Creative Ways to Save Money Today | 2014

Is your timing flexible? You can cut your costs by up to 50%. However, this may mean planning your activity during office hours if your team typically works 9-5PM. Is this an event you'd like to run annually? Ask your suppliers about multi-year discounts.

If you can't get an adjustment on the pricing, you may still be able to get some perks. Having a fancy party? Ask your venue if they can knock \$5 from your linen or chair cover rentals or your caterer to throw in free napkins and utensils.

Don't limit yourself to traditional modes of transportation. Are you in an area with temperate weather during the winter months? Can your team bike or walk to the charity or venue? If so, you'll save and your team will incur additional health benefits through alternative modes of transportation, putting them in a great mood to kick off your activity. Just make sure that your plans fit with the team culture and limitations.

# Save The Dates + Take A Look Back

Mark your calendar! Let your team know that you're planning something. Surprise activities are generally a [bad idea](#). The end of the year is a busy time for everyone. Provide basic details about the activity in your invitation. This gives you time to make adjustments, if necessary.

## Existing Company Calendars:

*Outlook, Google Calendar, Intranet*

*Potential Pros:*

- 📌 Familiar platform
- 📌 Update notifications
- 📌 Consolidated information

*Potential Cons:*

- 📌 Easily buried
- 📌 Update notifications (*too many?*)
- 📌 Boring

## Paper Invitations:

*Hand deliver, when possible, to avoid missing someone.*

*Potential Pros:*

- 📌 Personal touch
- 📌 Significant meaning

*Potential Cons:*

- 📌 Impossible to update
- 📌 Easily lost

## Virtual Invitations:

*Evite, Smilebox, Celebrations.com, Facebook, EventBrite*

*Potential Pros:*

- 📌 WOW factor
- 📌 Update notifications
- 📌 Consolidated information

*Potential Cons:*

- 📌 May get blocked by spam
- 📌 Unfamiliar platform
- 📌 Personal & professional overlap

## Now that you have the date:

Start with reviewing last year's event.

- Who were the key decision makers?
- Where was it held?
- What was the turnout?
- Did the timing work?
- Were there any issues around food? Alcohol?
- Did people like the activities? If not, why?
- Are there elements that you can improve or expand on?

# Start Mapping Your Route

If you're thinking about your holiday plans now, then you already have a few ideas about tasks and timing. Start jotting them down and organize as you go along.

Remove anything that you decide to omit from your event and cross off tasks that you complete. This will keep you motivated and help you avoid missing anything.

## Create a checklist

This can be a simple excel sheet or a fun, engaging template from [Pinterest](#) or a [simple web search](#).

- Write down your initial to-dos.
- Add to your list throughout the rest of your planning process.
- Revise and organize as necessary.

## Create a schedule

This can also be a simple excel sheet or a fun, engaging template from [Pinterest](#) or a [simple web search](#).

- Create a timeline or schedule for your planning process.
- Create a timeline or schedule for the day of your activity.



## STEP #2

# REVOLVE AROUND YOUR GUESTS

The easy answers for planning an event happen when you realize its goal. Determine whether this party is supposed to have a special meaning to it. What should employees take away from it other than having a great time? Remember, it is about your attendees first.

# Planning Committee

## party of one?

If you have a large team, you're likely to be planning a complex event. Consider forming a small committee. Formally assign specific roles or informally ask for help based on the skills and interests of people on your team. Once you know who's pitching in, it's time to dive into the details.

### Questions to ask...

- Can and should you involve your entire team in decision making during your planning process through surveys or [quick polls](#)?
- What is your team's culture? Are they fun and active? Or laid back and quiet? Is the goal of your activity to get them to step outside of their comfort zones? [Don't make them compete when they like to collaborate!](#)
- Is your team family and friends oriented? Do you have room in the budget for guests?
- Do members of your team have special diets or health needs?
- How can you involve remote or virtual team members?
- Does the charity have connections to personal interests for your team or the interests of your organization? How can you communicate those?
- Will you need to make accommodations for executive meetings or sales calls during your activity?

### Further consideration...

- Make sure participation is and feels voluntary. Otherwise, you will not reap the team building benefits of your activity.
- Identify a theme for your event based on your goals or content.
- Determine how apparent or subtle to make your event theme.
- Create as much comfort as possible. Identify restrooms and amenities.



**Bonus Tip:** When you need team consensus and commitment to tackle an issue, involve your team in the [decision making process](#).



What you want to achieve here is that each team member feels his or her ownership in the final decision, solution, or idea. The more he or she feels this way, the more likely he or she is to agree with and commit to the decided line of action.



- Sergey Dudiy, Ph.D. 2005

# Champion Your Charity + Your Team

Consider local causes that are within your community or where your team can make a significant impact. Ask your team, friends and family to make referrals.

## Questions to ask...

- What causes or issues are important to you and your team?
- Does your team have special skills? Will activities require training?
- Does your team have special needs around accommodations?
- Will your team learn something new from the work with the charity?
- Do your event or organizational goals line up with the charity goals?
- Where is the charity or activity located?
- Can the charity host a group of your size? If not, are there opportunities to break your team up into smaller groups and reconvene throughout the day?
- Will there be a space for breaks and meals?
- Will it be fun, meaningful or both? What can enhance the experience?
- What kind of commitment can you and your team really make?
- Are there opportunities for future volunteering?

## Types to consider...

- Day care centers, Neighborhood Watch, Public Schools and Colleges
- Halfway Houses, Community Theaters, Drug Rehabilitation Centers, Fraternal Organizations and Civic Clubs
- Retirement Centers and Homes for the Elderly, Meals on Wheels, Church or Community-Sponsored Soup Kitchens or Food Pantries
- Museums, Art Galleries, and Monuments
- Community Choirs, Bands and Orchestras
- Prisons, Neighborhood Parks, Youth Organizations, Sports Teams, and after-school programs, Shelters for Battered Women and Children
- Historical Restorations, Battlefields and National Parks

## Once you've narrowed down the charity, make the plan:

- Arrange teams ahead of time if you have small group activities.
- Plan ice breakers to kick-off activities, fill in extra time or cope with delays.
- Facilitate networking and collaboration.
- Set up time to debrief. If you have a facilitator, this is where they'll shine!



## STEP #3

# CHEW ON THE EXTRAS

Special events and activities are all about the light touches. You want your team to feel comfortable and appreciated. Just a little extra consideration and flare will go a long way.

# Consideration + Flare

## a starter checklist

- Prepare a playlist for the activity or transportation.
- Ask venue or charity about coat rack, bag area or lockers.
- Plan incentives or rewards for “winning” or entire team.
- Prepare name tags or plan an activity of “nick-name” tags.
- Provide water for participants throughout activity.
- Provide other refreshments for participants.
- Outline ice breakers to keep energy going during delays.
- Think of some *little* surprises to include for your team.
- Design fun place cards, party hats or t-shirts.
- Determine if your team will need parking accommodations.
- Hire a photographer or videographer for the day.
- Create a Hashtag for participants to share social posts.
- Provide a platform for participants to share photos.
- Arrange for take-home information about the charity.
- Prepare surveys (*less than five questions!*) for feedback.



## STEP #4

# SELL THE SENSATION

Now you're ready to make the big announcement! Your team knows that you've been up to something, they may even have a few clues about what's in store. You've laid some powerful groundwork for buy-in and participation. Now it's time to generate real excitement and keep the momentum going.

# The Pitch

## boost awareness + engagement

### What's in a name?

Along with your theme, give your activity a name. Need some additional inspiration? Check out the [band name maker](#) or [this set of marketing secret weapons](#) for help. Enter one or two words related to your theme and these tools will provide a little kick in the pants to get you out of a rut.

### Keep the updates exciting.

Do you have changes or news about your activity to share with the team? Share this information with a fun, exciting tone. Even small changes and new developments provide a great opportunity to keep your team engaged leading up to the big day.

Be timely and considerate about your updates. If you send a flurry of news flashes (*no matter how exciting*), your team may start to tune you out.

### Consider some PR.

Yes, effective PR will be good for your company. It's also good for boosting your team's morale. What better way to recognize the good they're doing for the community along with their accomplishments?

#### *PR Tips:*

- Identify "fit" in terms of your activity and possible publications.
- Look for local news, blogs, Instagramers, etc... for opportunities.
- Plan your talking points (*and don't force them*).
- Share you event results as soon as possible.





## STEP #5

# EVALUATE YOUR SUCCESS

You made it! The plan went off without a hitch! Well, maybe there was a hitch...or two...or three. But, you planned a great activity. Your team had an opportunity to bond like no other while giving back to the community. You should feel good about that. While you're at it, jot a few thoughts down about what worked well. Then, we need to talk about opportunities for improvement next year...

# Let's Be Honest

## what went well?

### Questions to ask...

- Did most or all of your team members attend the activity?
- What parts of the day ran on schedule or as planned?
- Who was able to step in and help when changes or issues occurred?
- Was your team smiling throughout the activity? At the end?
- Was your team able to complete all of the necessary tasks?
- How many team members stayed to chat after your activity ended?
- Did your team share photos from the day on social media?
- Is your team asking about the next charitable outing or party?
- How many of your goals were accomplished?
- Did the charity follow-up with pictures? A thank you note? Any updates?

## what did not go so well?

### Questions to ask...

- Did you run into any timing issues?
- Was there a lot of energy-killing down time?
- Was your team relieved to end the activity? Why?
- Were your team members sticking to exclusive groups of people?
- How challenging was it for your team/ facilitator / venue / photographer / charity to adapt to change?
- Did *YOU* enjoy the activities? If not, why? How can you participate better / more next year?
- Was your debrief experience quiet? Or full of energy?

**Ask for feedback, give shout outs, share outcomes and takeaways and keep information from planning this year's event available for next year!**



Bonus

# RESEARCH YOUR RESOURCES

We used these resources to create this guide. Check them out for more tips and ideas regarding event planning and volunteering.

- [HeresChicago.com](http://HeresChicago.com)
- [NetworkForGood.com](http://NetworkForGood.com)
- [NationalService.gov](http://NationalService.gov)
- [Care2.com](http://Care2.com)
- [VolunteerMatch.org](http://VolunteerMatch.org)
- [EventManagerBlog.com](http://EventManagerBlog.com)

# UNIQUE HOLIDAY IDEAS



Looking for a unique idea for your next company holiday party or outing? TeamBonding offers a diverse selection of activities to make a fun and memorable experience.

We can create an engaging holiday, charitable or culinary activity for your team. One that'll help build a sense of community both during and after the event. While the primary focus will remain on acknowledgement of your staff and the amazing work they've done, we'll also turn the activity into an opportunity for networking and team building. Win, win.

[GET STARTED NOW](#)

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Sam is the Director of Marketing at TeamBonding. Her experience managing small teams, company outings and larger corporate events has accumulated a vast base of knowledge around meeting individual needs and planning for the unknown!



## TeamBonding

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Over twenty years ago, TeamBonding started with a simple question: how can we facilitate true, authentic bonds between members of corporate teams? We took a long hard look at what was being offered as team building activities for work.