

HOW TO CREATE A TEAM BUILDING DAY WITH A PURPOSE



This free guide contains our top 5 tips that will save you time and money when designing your next team building event

BY SCHOOL OF THE WILD





INTRODUCTION

Team building means different things to different people. For many it conjures images of stag do-esque escape rooms, go kart racing or booze fuelled karaoke sessions. In today's diverse and inclusive workplaces these kinds of activities may no longer be appropriate or right for your team. And we have all experienced awkward ice breakers and outings that feel more like a school trip than a day that would have any lasting impact on the team or the business.

If that is one end of the spectrum, at School of the Wild we strive to create more focussed and inclusive experiences with a purpose: an opportunity to integrate values, reconnect teams, build meaningful connections and improve wellbeing.

This guide introduces the five most important considerations to look at when you're planning a meaningful event that is enjoyable for all of your team, and makes a lasting difference when you get back to the office.





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Capitalise on fresh perspectives and don't waste the opportunity to make a lasting impact



1 DEFINE GOALS/PURPOSE

It is important to consider what the goal of your team building event is from the outset. Is it about working together better? Is it a reward for hard work? Is it to help a team in conflict?

Your goal might be:

- Improving communication amongst leaders
- Breaking down silos
- Surfacing creativity
- Helping hybrid and remote teams to get to know each other better

It may sound obvious but having a clearly defined purpose from the start will help to ensure you plan a successful event. Once your objectives are defined it is much easier to choose solutions that align with them.



EXAMPLE

Goal: To address creeping disconnection in a hybrid team and break down the silos that have emerged as a result of remote working.

Solution: This is a common goal for team building events and we have seen great success with activities that create space for people to connect in an environment that's not online and totally different to the workplace.

Activities that include an element of experiential learning also help with relationships and team bonding, as participants come together over a shared experience. And the facilitation of observations creates space for 'aha' moments – leading to alignment and growth for individuals and the team.





2 ALIGN WITH KEY COMPANY VALUES

Team building days provide the perfect opportunity to embed values and convey to your team what they mean through what you do, beyond words on a page.

- Think about the value(s) that are most important to your organisation right now and make sure your event is aligned with them
- Incorporate activities that encourage people to think about how they can contribute so they feel involved
- Take the opportunity to celebrate what is going well so that people feel valued, to boost drive and motivation





HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

Let's take a company value as an example: honesty.

First think about the environment needed for people to be honest, a safe non-judgmental space where opinions are listened to, ideas and feelings are valued, and feedback is invited so everyone feels free to say what they think and ask for help without fear of blame or ridicule.

If you have a value like this it's important to find a way to create a team day environment where all participants can feel safe to both express concerns and be able to 'stretch'.

In most cases it's important to mix different teams and flatten hierarchies. Structured activities that place everyone on a level playing field work well, and getting outdoors is a great way to build cohesion, and foster authenticity.





3 ENGAGE THE WHOLE TEAM

Team events are often organised by one person or a small team and personal preference can take over. The boss loves hiking, the ops manager loves F1, some people don't drink, some are not as active as others, some have kids and want to get home early. Diverse teams need a diverse and inclusive approach so everyone can benefit from the day. Plan far enough ahead so you can get as many people as possible to attend, and then structure the day in a way that everyone will relax, enjoy it and participate. It is important to:

- Choose activities everyone can enjoy and involve others in the decision making process
- Structure the day itself so that everyone feels included and has a voice, the quieter ones as well as the louder more sociable members of the team
- Ask for feedback after the event to gauge success from the perspective of all levels in the business, and so that you can improve the next one



EXAMPLE

We worked with an organisation that was going through a period of fast growth. Having a lot of new team members join in a short space of time had disrupted their group dynamic and new staff members were struggling to integrate. They needed an event that would bring all corners of the business together to build cohesion and collaboration.

Rather than having their event organised by a single leader, they set up a small working group to decide what they were going to do. By including people from different backgrounds and levels of the business, they were able to plan an inclusive event that everyone could enjoy. And buy-in was higher as other staff members didn't feel they were being dictated to from the top.



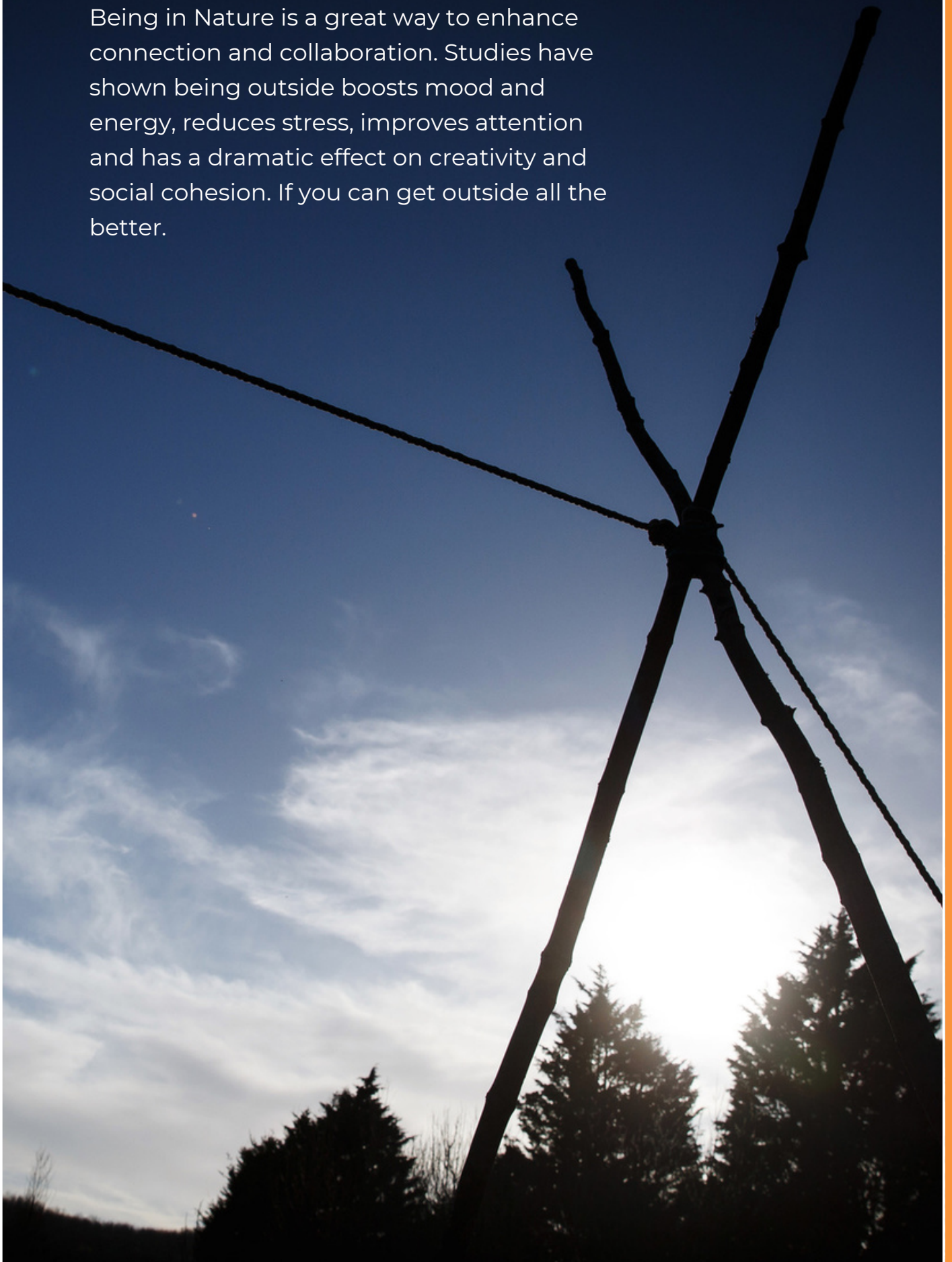


4 CREATE SPACE FOR CONNECTION

Deeper connection outside the confines of the office environment is what team building is all about - so that people will work together better when you get back to the office. By going offsite, it is easier to lower barriers, communicate across hierarchies and build genuine connections on a human level. This will make your team building day effective, memorable and of benefit to everyone.

- Regardless of any specific business goals, meaningful connections are key to the success of every team building event
- Consider bringing in an outside facilitator so that the existing group dynamics and agendas can be addressed rather than perpetuated, and everyone - including leaders - can relax and participate without feeling responsible for how the day goes
- Consider where the event takes place and how it will make people feel - will the seating reinforce power structures or allow everyone to engage, relax and be themselves? Will the space inspire creative thinking? Will people be able to switch off or be distracted by calls and messages?
- Design fun activities that encourage people to get to know each other better and have genuine conversations without feeling like they're being watched or assessed, or that favour certain people over others

Being in Nature is a great way to enhance connection and collaboration. Studies have shown being outside boosts mood and energy, reduces stress, improves attention and has a dramatic effect on creativity and social cohesion. If you can get outside all the better.





5 ACTIONABLE OUTCOMES

Last but not least. Even the best team building programme can fall flat if nothing changes afterwards. Everyone has fun, feels closer and starts to think differently but then what? If you don't formulate a way to harness the group feeling, and bring the fresh perspectives and deeper connections back to the workplace you'll have wasted a big opportunity, and tensions, dysfunctions and disconnection may quickly revert to what they were beforehand.

- Consider the outcomes you want in advance
- Encourage whole team involvement to improve buy in
- Harvest key ideas and actionable outcomes that you can agree on together and implement when you're back in the office, to take advantage of people's openness to do things differently and break out of business-as-usual
- Learn and iterate. If you're not learning, you're not growing. No matter how successful your team building event is, there's always room to improve.



EXAMPLE

A leadership group from a charity wanted to become a stronger team so that they could collaborate and perform better. This is a brief we see often and really enjoy working on. Away from the four walls of the office it is much easier for people to see things differently, and for new perspectives to emerge, but how do you take it back?

As part of the process we facilitated suggestions from the team on what they wanted to do differently. By recording ideas, getting cross-team agreement, and encouraging key staff members to take responsibility for implementation, fresh insights could be integrated back into the workplace.



A team building experience away from the confines of the office can have a hugely positive impact on your business. But designing a truly purposeful event that aligns with your values and makes a lasting impression takes planning and creativity. We hope this guide helps you to create an event that meets your goals, and improves team performance and cohesion.

If you'd like to see how a day in the wild could benefit your team we'd love to have a chat.



ABOUT SCHOOL OF THE WILD

At School of the Wild our team building programmes are based around a campfire and weave together your business priorities with enjoyable team building activities and meaningful conversations. Taking inspiration from Nature and designed around your objectives and the outcomes you need - they are a mix of bringing people together and bringing out combined thinking to take forward.

If this sounds like something that would benefit your team, get in touch:

info@schoolofthewild.com
www.schoolofthewild.com

