

1992

The Impact of a Corporate Adventure Program

William J. Quinn

Northeastern Illinois University

Robert Vogl

Northern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded>



Part of the [Environmental Education Commons](#), and the [Leisure Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Quinn, William J. and Vogl, Robert (1992) "The Impact of a Corporate Adventure Program," *Research in Outdoor Education*: Vol. 1, Article 18.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.cortland.edu/reseoutded/vol1/iss1/18>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Cortland. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research in Outdoor Education by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Cortland. For more information, please contact DigitalCommonsSubmissions@cortland.edu.

The Impact of a Corporate Adventure Program

Cover Page Footnote

Research Abstracts (Refereed for Presentation at Symposium)

The Impact of a Corporate Adventure Program

William J. Quinn
Northeastern Illinois University

Robert Vogl
Northern Illinois University

Corporations continue to use adventure challenge activities to create or enhance a sense of cohesion, or team, within their corporate culture. The purpose of this study was to document the perceived benefits of an "Adventure Challenge" program on a short term basis. The program was designed to meet specific expectations held by high ranking employees of an international accounting firm. The goals for the program were developed in consultation with instructional designers and their superiors responsible for the firms' training and development. This paper reports on efforts to document the impact of an adventure challenge program integrated into an extended corporate education course. Two hours of adventure challenge activities took place in the afternoon during an intensive course in business consulting. Some of the goals of the program included building a network of international cooperation, creating trust, introducing an attitude of risk taking behavior, and recognizing the importance of working as a highly functioning team. Subjects in the study were assigned to small teams of eight or more members. The groups were structured with the intent of mixing participants from different countries as well as from different levels of responsibility within the firm. Groups remained the same over the ten day period with the same facilitator. Each team participated in a similar set of activities which were carefully sequenced to provide problems of steadily increasing difficulty. Activities included many standard initiative tasks which were adapted to fit the clientele. Common names of some of those activities are the nitro crossing, zig zag, trolleys, trust sequence, Mohawk walk, and the pamper pole. Each event was followed by a debriefing session designed to create an avenue for reflection with a large group debrief finalizing the program on the last day. Opinionnaires were administered to participants prior to the start of the program and at its conclusion. Over 125 participants from five separate schools responded to the three questionnaires developed to explore their views. An eleven item questionnaire attempted to assess the extent to which program goals were met in each specific school. The results were reported as mean scores and tested for significance using a two tailed t scores. One instrument consisted of an eleven item opinionnaire which asked participants to assess the degree to which specific program goals were met. A pretest to establish a baseline of participant views was used for comparisons after the adventure challenge component. The opinionnaire was a five point Likert scale which addressed communication, risk taking, stress management, self confidence, motivation of others, trust, conflict management, and cooperation with colleagues from different countries. Significant results were reported in the areas of communicating with colleagues from other countries and management of conflict. Four of the five reported significant changes were in self confidence. Two of five schools reported significant change in communication abilities, handling stress, and trusting associates. A second Likert scale instrument was used on a post-test basis only. This survey asked participants to rate program activities in terms of how much they enjoyed each one and the extent to which each activity reached the previously stated program goals. The results are reported as mean scores in rank order. The data suggested that it is important to provide participants with several enjoyable activities in order to have participants feel that the goals of the program were achieved. It is also interesting to note that the mean scores for meeting program goals were consistently higher than the means for enjoyment for corresponding activities. This finding suggested a level of mature reflection on the part of the respondents. It must be assumed that facilitator ability and activity sequencing has influenced the ranking of these activities. A third instrument was open ended. It asked participants to give their views on six items regarding

Quinn and Vogl 98

the value of program activities and personal changes created by the program. For many participants the adventure challenge program served as a powerful socializing force. Teamwork, knowledge of others, and friendships were the most frequently mentioned worthwhile outcomes. The results provide additional support for the overall positive socializing effect of adventure challenge activities. The results of this study lend support to the belief that adventure challenge programs assist corporations in boosting self-confidence in their employees, reducing social barriers between members of the organization, and facilitating the development of a team concept. The results also suggested that the benefits are dissimilar for each participating team. In some groups improved communication with subordinates occurred, in others, several participants gained in their ability to motivate others and trust associates. The most powerful impact of the adventure challenge program was that of socializing participants from various parts of the world to one another. Participants formed friendships with others from foreign lands and worked well together to accomplish the common challenges they were asked to pursue. While the research design should be improved to provide more definitive data on the role of adventure challenge activities in corporate educational programs, this preliminary study did suggest some of the more powerful effects of such programs.

Selected References

- Anderson, A. (1989). The future is now: Presentation synopses. Paper presented to the PED Education Staff Meeting, St. Charles, IL.
- Barnes, S. (1990, April 1). An education in adventure. Chicago Tribune, Section 18, pp 6-8.
- Best, J.W. (1989). Research in education. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Braderick, R. (1989, October). Learning the ropes. Training Magazine, pp. 78-86.
- Galagan, P. (1987). Between two trapezes. Training and Development Journal, 41(3), 40-50.
- Long, J.W. (1987). The wilderness lab comes of age. Training and Development Journal, 41(3), 30-39.
- MacNeil, R. (1989, September 4). Motivational training for employees. MacNeil/Lehrer New Hour, Show #3551. (Transcripts by Strictly Business, PO Box 12361, Overland Park, Kansas, 66212.)
- Pfeiffer, P.B. (1988, August). Management goes out on a limb. Air Destinations Magazine, U.S. Air, pp. 25-27.
- Sloan, B. (1989, June 26). Back to camp for happy corporate executives. Crain's New York Business, p. 20.

The authors may be contacted at the following locations: William J. Quinn: Health Physical Education and Recreation, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois 60625. Robert Vogl: Outdoor Teacher Education, Northern Illinois University, Oregon, Illinois 61061.