

Team-building, for Diverse Teams.



One of the most exciting aspects of being [nominated by our clients, as one of the top training companies in South Africa](#), is that we work in the much-maligned area of “Diversity Training”, and Team-building

When we started the [Celebrating Humanity©](#) program, our main focus was on Diversity Training. And we perceived it as a huge opportunity, to transform teams and build organisations - through respect, understanding and unity.



As we have said, many times over, companies embarking upon a “diversity training initiative,” stand at the crossroads of danger and opportunity. Our [Guide to Selecting Teambuilding Providers](#) clearly states, that the opportunity lies in uniting the teams and the greatest danger, in the separation of team members by their “differences.”

Our main guiding principle, is:-

“At the level of respect, all people are equal.”

Why Diversity Training/ Teambuilding?

Normally a “diversity training/ teambuilding ” initiative, is based in the need to reduce at least one of the following:-

- Negativity and Arguing.
- Incessant Gossiping & Backbiting.
- Cross-cultural Clashes.
- Personality Conflicts.
- Silly Time-wasting Workplace Disputes.
- Frustrating time spent in Dispute Mediation, and at the CCMA.
- Unnecessary Labour Lawyers' fees.
- Misunderstandings and Mis-communications.
- Inability to communicate with diverse clients.
- A lack of Professionalism and Accountability.
- Excessive Absenteeism.
- Racism and Prejudice.
- Rankism and Departmentalism.

and/ or to lay the groundwork for improving the (Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) rating of the company/ organisation.

Everyone needs to feel safe.

Whatever the reason for the program, it is essential that it is based in fun and respect, and is totally [non-threatening, inclusive and motivational](#). Everybody wants their place in the sun.

One of the biggest challenges with traditional team-building exercises, is that the focus is often on the needs, talents and abilities, of a core group, within a team. The less young, educated, physically talented, or fit the team member - the more they have to rely upon the “cool group.”

And the less they enjoy the experience.

These results are often short term and limited.

Involving Diverse Teams

When working with a very diverse group of people, it is critical that the facilitators involve EVERYONE, in a way that is individually important to them, and their existence on the earth. This ensures that each person can, and does contribute.



In the [Celebrating Humanity© - Transformational Team-building](#) programs, processes are fun, exciting, non-threatening and most importantly, everyone participates.

Each person adds value to their teams in some way. The process and methodology must show the value of everybody, in the group. Processes need to show at least some of the knowledge, skills and abilities of each person.

We all add to each other

In a public session, a partially literate Zulu-speaking housekeeper, maKhumalo - sat in a team comprising highly-qualified HR professionals. In the same team - was Kevin Turner, who was raised on a rural Midlands farm and who spoke excellent Zulu.

He and maKhumalo happily shared and communicated their knowledge on culture and tradition to the team. maKhumalo was the expert on Zulu culture, proverbs, ancestry. She brought great value, as did her team members. And similarly Kevin added to the team with his knowledge of Zulu and his warm humanness.

At the point where the team was asked to put together a Kwaito dance, maKhumalo suddenly stood out head-and-shoulders, above her more skilled and reserved team mates. It was delightful to watch her lead them. And they put on a wonderful 2 minute show, for the other teams.

Here was a wonderful lady, from the depths of rural KwaZulu Natal, and she was the stand-out leader for a group of University-educated Human Resources specialists! The exercise demonstrated, that we are all leaders, that we all bring value, and that we all need to respect and value each other.

Teams that understand, that we add to each other, will be far more secure. Through Transformational Team-building, they will know and experience, that the more diverse the team members, the more chances we have to win - through greater knowledge, skills, wisdom and understanding.

Some ways to involve people.

Some of the ways that we involve our delegates, are through their:-

- Workplace Knowledge.
- Background.
- Artistic ability.
- Joke-telling skills.
- Dancing skills.
- Language and greetings.
- Proverbs.
- Body language.
- Cultural knowledge.
- Beliefs.
- Religion.
- Music.
- Traditions.
- Other relevant Skills and Talents.

Diversity does not only mean culture and religion.

At Lake Kariba, we took the top executives of the Bank of Zambia, through a transformational team-build.

Now Zambians have, since the inauguration of Kenneth Kaunda, believed that they are all “Zambians.” “One Zambia, One nation”, was the clarion cry of former President Kaunda’s government. And it has worked!

The Zambians all stood as one. Not black, or white, Barotse, Ngoni, BaBemba, Nyanja, Batonga or as speakers of any of the over 69 dialects, just Zambians.

The World, South Africa, companies and organisations could learn a lot from the people of this beautiful country.

Thus, in Zambia - there was no desire to bring “cultural diversity” to the team-build. So we found out about the various skills and abilities of the team members, and involved them all in, in that way. They soon knew, just how much, they added to each other.

And one of the most brilliant dancers, in that small section of the program, was wheelchair-based. He really made that wheelchair dance!

You never know just how your team members add to you, until you experience them as humans.

Skills Development

Any team-building/ diversity training program that does not develop skills, is not worth the investment.

Transformational Team-building programs are intended to improve the lives of delegates, by

building their personal skills, communication and relationship skills - socially, at the office and at home.

The Celebrating Humanity courses, are now so much in demand, for [the wonderful outcomes](#), that we are regularly asked to run [public courses](#).

Some of the skills would include:-

- How to learn more easily for your unique Learning Style.
- How your unique Learning Style shapes your Communications Style.
- How to assess the Learning Type of the person/s you are communicating with and get stunningly better results, in your communications.
- The impact of your Communications Style on your relations in all areas of your life.
- Simple and easy, non-judgemental and team-based Personality assessment skills and how to get better results by adjusting your own behaviour.
- Understanding body language from different cultural groups. Making adjustments for far better results, with clients and team members.

In a recent chat, with one of our Celebrating Humanity© facilitator's wife - she said, "Fazal was amazing in the Free State. He greeted the local people in Sesotho and through body language showed his respect. The people were simply amazing to us."

We know Fazal well and are certain that he would have used his other, easy-to-use communication skills, to further build the relationships, as he went along on his fishing tour.

Sustainability

It is critical to make sure that the team-build is not a once off injection in the spirit of the team! The program has to include in-house follow up, initially guided by the teambuilding organisation. The Harvest programme ensures sustainability.

Ownership

Another great opportunity to add to this "diversity training," (now "grown-up" to be Transformational Team-building,) is to ensure that your team owns the change.

In this way, managers and their teams, can drastically reduce the interpersonal war stresses, that once seemed inevitable within teams.

One of the big challenges to "managing" teams, as opposed to "leading" teams, is that most traditional managers still manage people, as if they are their children.

The moment that there is conflict, the traditional parent pulls the kids apart. "Stop that Mary! Go to your room Siphon. If you do that again Bavika, I will punish you!"

The only difference is that you cannot fire your kids!

Managers/ leaders that spend all of their time “managing diversity,” are in a boiling pot. They will never be able to focus on their time on doing what they are paid to do and will suffer the consequences of unnecessary stress, both physically, emotionally and in their relationships.

The only way to reduce this stress on businesses, clients, teams and their families is to get all team members managing their own behaviour.

All people are leaders.

This is a fact ignored in most teams.

I was in a local hardware store, a number of years ago, and chatting to a “Shelf packer.” As we were speaking happily, in Zulu, his supervisor marched up and arrogantly demanded that his "underling" go and do his other work. With suppressed anger, my friend bid me farewell and went off, to do his "superiors" bidding.

Little did the young supervisor know, that this same elderly gentleman was the chairman of a number of multi-million Rand development contracts, in his rural village. He could have learnt a lot from him, with a little more respect.

Perhaps this is an extreme example, so let’s take our Kwaito dancer - maKhumalo.

She runs her own home in the beautiful City of Durban. She manages the cleaning, laundry, cooking and kids in a suburban home. She runs a home in far-away Mahlabathini, where she is building a new home and she educates her 3 children. She is not only a “Dance leader,” she is an every day leader.

So why not place the leadership of workplace relationships, in the hands of your team members. They may even guide you, as is the example with our young supervisor. He certainly could have used some gentle guidance!

Increase the Ownership and Accountability

A true Transformational Team-build, with the correct amount of time allocated to the process, will dramatically reduce stress through increasing the ownership, accountability and responsibility of each and every team member!

Once your team decides how they will behave around each other, and what is not acceptable behaviour - they own it and can manage it.

With the right clearing processes, constitution and a 1 hour monthly meeting, this peer-driven process ensures that relationship management - is no longer the responsibility of the managers/ supervisors or the board members.

Transformational Team-building - with the commitment, and full participation, of all management and leadership - has the power to transform teams. And we have the evidence to prove it!

Challenges to successful outcomes

Some possible challenges to your team-build for diverse teams:-

- Leadership/ management sending only “them,” because “we” don’t need it.
- Not involving your greater team in the decision-making process. This can lead to poor attendance.
- Leaving critical negotiations in the hands of inexperienced and under-qualified team members (a properly facilitated transformational teambuild will positively change the very way in which your organisation functions.)
- Not having good committed project leaders.

Trying to cut costs by:

- Going for the shortest possible intervention. Always dedicate the time to change.
- Paying for a once-off intervention. Transformation is a process, not a brief happening.
- Saving on the venue. “Let’s do it in the board room.”
 - ▶ The program will be interrupted, by “emergency situations. If a team members are not available, the emergency is always resolved quite easily, in their absence.
 - ▶ People do not feel respected if the company is cheap, and not prepared to pay for an upmarket venue.
 - ▶ Attendance will be poor and no team-build can be successful, without the team.
- Cutting down on the quality and diversity of food and refreshments.
 - ▶ Many diabetics, vegans, vegetarians, followers of Shembe, Judaism, Islam, certain branches of Christianity, Hindus and numerous others - are often not properly catered for, during outings or training sessions.
- Utilising “cheaper” service providers who do not dedicate extensive time to understanding your people, your company and your country.

We hope that this story and [these guidelines](#), will help you to select your next teambuilding organisation, with great care.

And we will be delighted to hear from you, or just learn how the teambuild worked for your team.

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