



Putting the 'build' in teambuilding with HBOS

Three groups from the HBOS IT division visited Honduras to build a school for underprivileged youngsters.

"We presented the kids with various things we brought from the UK - toothbrushes, posters, pencils, books, etc. and their faces really made us feel very humble indeed. It really was something very special we did there - the local community were so very appreciative. It was a trip of a lifetime and exceeded all my expectations. A huge thank you to all at i-to-i"

Paul Beattie, IT Strategy, HBOS



The challenge

The main challenge was a desire to improve the overall effectiveness of teams across the HBOS IT department, a challenge which had been made more difficult as teams are rapidly formed and broken-up to meet changing business demands. Volunteering formed part of a development programme called 'Unleashing Team Potential', which aimed to tackle this challenge. Activities were rolled out both in the UK with local charities and in Honduras with Save the Children and i-to-i.

The approach

Running over a period of eight months, the Unleashing Team Potential initiative saw the IT department split into groups to take part in tasks designed to develop relations within their division. After each event, the most successful team would nominate one person to take a place in an 'ultimate team' as recognition of their work.

Each member of this group was given the opportunity to travel to the western highlands of Honduras to spend a week building an extension to a school for underprivileged children – team-building in a very real sense!

A key element of the programme involved seeing 'the bigger picture' and doing things for others without expecting anything in return. By volunteering in Honduras workers would know how to work as a team in order to help a group achieve its goals.

The benefits

As the ultimate demonstration of the department's teamwork, all IT workers were able to get involved and inspired by the prospect of an overseas visit.

Three teams of seven employees visited the La Esperanza area of Honduras to work on the same project of building an extension to a school. Every team played a vital part in the building process with each 'handing over' to the next.

The three teams' experiences were then used as part of HBOS' broader communications strategy to re-enforce the messages associated with the Unleashing Team Potential programme, as well as providing a reminder of

HBOS' commitment to supporting colleagues in charitable work. A video filmed during the project is being used during employee briefing sessions to raise awareness of the value of teamwork and to demonstrate teamwork in action. The legacy left behind (the school extension) will act as a constant reminder of the department's teamwork and of the programme.

Comments from the volunteers also speak for themselves: *"I had an awesome time in Honduras. I would recommend to any of you to consider this type of volunteering for your next holiday. It truly is a type of experience you'd love and never forget. It really has been a special experience for me"*

Paul Hill, IT Project Leader, HBOS

The results

As well as the amazing result of building a much-needed extension for a school in a very underprivileged area, the volunteers took home a wealth of skills to develop and share in the workplace. The following feedback was received:

"I have reinforced my belief in teamwork. We delivered despite our diversity."

"I have a greater understanding of the needs and expectations of others."

"I've also got better at communicating when I don't understand much of the language around me."

"I am more patient when working as a group. I am certainly less afraid of working in a team I don't know."

In addition, the experiences of those who participated on the trip were brought back into the workplace to encourage and inspire others. By speaking to colleagues and sharing their experiences, the team created higher levels of energy, an increased use of humour and a greater tolerance for others.

These attitudes were borne out of encountering people who were happily getting on with their lives in spite of having very few material goods. By seeing things from a different perspective, the teams were able to appreciate their lives and pass on their positive outlooks.

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