

Leadership Team Workshop How long does it take?

“Exceptional commitment and diligence created an open trusting environment that encouraged free thinking while maintaining direction. The skilfully facilitated process enabled us to clarify our aspirations for the future and determine actions to realise them.”

Director - TNT Express



As long as it needs! Over the last quarter century, management teams have come under increasing pressure to do ever more with ever less. Up to a point this works, although occasionally at the expense of people's health and homes. At the same time, up to a point, it has become counter-productive. 20 years ago top teams could take time out several times a year to reflect on past achievements and future challenges. Nowadays, however, many managers have quite unrealistic expectations of how much time they need to be working on their business instead of working in it.

Surprisingly some management teams think it sufficient to spend as little as half a day a year on their strategic thinking. That means their business is working for all of the year, based on brief and inadequate thinking time. This is madness! It is important to make sure you devote enough time to this important work. All processes take time. Team development, strategy innovation, visioning and planning are no exceptions. If you don't allow enough time you can expect sub-optimal results.

Workshop designs, processes and tools have also evolved, so that you can indeed get more out of less. It's obvious that a workshop does not start when you arrive at the venue, nor end when you leave. Awareness, and use, of the whole span of time from inception to realisation allows you to plan the process as one whole, often extending over many months, within which the core workshop can be a relatively brief event. By designing every step from beginning to end, you will greatly enhance your outcomes.

48-hours workshops are ideal. Getting people off-site together into a supportive ambience is itself valuable. Having them spend a night under the same roof also helps and extending that for a second night adds even more value.

The two overnights are quite different in character. The first disengages people from the past and the second prepares for the future.

The core process of such an event has a definite shape. It is like a play in three acts:

- Act 1. Coming together as a group (more than just social as it is important that the event is perceived to have begun).
- Act 2. Imaginatively embracing the work to be tackled with a factual basis and fresh minds, usually involving 'serious play'.
- Act 3. Thinking through strategies for implementation over the months ahead.

These phases of the process work best when Act 1 takes place before spending the night together, freeing the whole of the next day for Act 2. After sleeping on progress during the second night, Act 3 prepares people well for the work to follow.

Compromise this pattern at your peril. People often try to squeeze the process into two days with one overnight. It appears to save money. However, your event gets off to a shaky start, with no proper punctuation between Acts 1 and 2. It compresses the creative space and curtails fresh thinking. A little extra time allows for reflection and insight, making your workshop much more productive.

There is a natural rhythm to such processes and a full 48-hour event gives you best value for money. As participants can usually work most of the day before travelling for an early evening arrival, the actual cost of the longer period is minimal. For that little additional cost you will double the benefit from your event.

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