

Team Building Zakopane, Poland

An account by Samuel Charles Burnage

After two days of intensive meetings, we participated in various team building exercises and tasks. Firstly, we travelled by coach to the countryside where we split into two groups and did several puzzle-cum-orienteeing based tasks, eventually finding our way to the river separating Poland and Slovakia, where we had a spot of lunch. Next, we split into two groups and canoed along the river for about sixteen kilometres, where we then had to construct a raft in order to travel the remaining kilometre. Upon arrival at the campsite, after a somewhat tiring journey, we constructed the military tents (and by us, I mean the ESRs did so successfully, the PIs? Not so much). After doing so, we walked on hot coal in order to earn our dinner, and conversed into the early hours of the morning. The following day, after breakfast we partook in a number of puzzle-based exercises, some of which were quite physically strenuous. Finally, we finished the day by completing a high rope course before travelling back to the hotel, in a coach somewhat quieter than the journey there.

All in all, I really enjoyed my time in Poland. The meetings were very informative and gave me a much better grasp of the workings of the project. The large variety of exercises required several different skills which helped include everybody. This certainly helped open lines of communication and improved the team dynamic of the group. I believe it will certainly help the advancement of the project and I am definitely looking forward to future meetings.

Zakopane teambuilding course

First of all, I would like to thank all collaboration partners for a wonderful teambuilding experience in Poland. It was a great pleasure to meet ESRs and senior researchers personally. We were able to discuss project details, which could have been seen insignificant if written in an email, but in fact were crucial for better understanding of our common goals and tactics to achieve them. Moreover, getting to know people in not so formal situations was of great help in understanding of the personalities and ways of thinking of my colleagues. The well-planned teambuilding activities helped me to overcome communication barriers and resolve some misunderstandings with ESRs. This knowledge would be essential for our productive communication in the upcoming years in the project and, hopefully, long afterwards. I believe, that this experience will definitely lead to creative and dynamic collaboration between students and project management. Thus, I have only positive memories about our small teambuilding adventure and I am looking forward to meet all project partners soon at the workshop in Berlin.

Kind regards,
Liliia Mavliutova

Being A Real Team after Team Building

Every day in our lives, each has to learn to improve their communication skills, develop both individual and team roles, manage time, create long-term benefits and better relationship with their collaborators at the workplace. These all individual objectives can cause conflict between two people or sometimes in a group. On the other hand, the people who work in the same place or for the same purpose should be able to create very effective team work because the oppositely difference of opinions among people can block the ideas and benefits on working as a whole team and consequently leads to hamper the success of the goals. For this reason, some organization companies serve “*team building activities*” to the members of a team. Team building activities aim forming productive teams, creating an atmosphere for clear cooperative objectives, improving team spirit and teamwork soul, building effective communication and closer relationship among team members, developing the quality of working as a team and the most important one, breaking down the barriers between individuals through a team in any activity.

In our BioCapture Project, all group leaders and PhD students had participated in team building activities in Zakopane, Poland. In our team building concept, there were six different outdoor activities: *geochallenge* (based on five different missions about finding coordination by GPS device after completing some tasks in forest like starting fire by wood sticks, passing over ropes as blindfolded, building catching lever from wood, explaining coordination by using sign alphabet); *building a boat* (based on building a boat by using wooden, rope and flotation rings to cross a river and understanding how to design a handmade boat due to brainstorm and manpower among team members); *rafting challenge* (based on a path across rough river and paddling across unchartered waters, reflecting the strategically and wisely performance of team to manage and work together in the boat while getting wet and splashing in the waters); *survive in the wild* (based on firstly preparing camping area, setting up camping tent; then the firewalking game which was about walking bare feet on real fire requiring self-motivation, concentration; eventually ended up with providing high motivation, self-confidence, and giving a feeling like standing up after any trouble in both individual and/or team based matters in any type of real life situation); *the strength of diversity* (four different platforms based on brainstorm, mind and intellectual games like memorable puzzle, pyramids game which is about carrying the wooden blocks from biggest to smallest from one stick to another, one by one in each time, designing a picture by putting each piece of puzzle to the right place from mixed pieces; in terms of strategical games like building a tower by boxes requiring trusting each member and wisely building up a highest tower by placing the boxes due to one of the team member while the others controlling and trying to keep up the tower in the balance, controlling and carrying wooden blocks by each person with a connected rope system with the purpose of opening a box requiring managing the rope in the balance all together, creating human skateboard on the grass; in terms of individual courage and motivating other team members game like crossing the river by rope from scary height level).

I believe, first of all, the time that we all spend in team building activities gave benefits on breaking down the barriers both political and personal, empathizing the approaching of different cultural-based people in missions, eliminating the discriminations among people, and having fun all together. Moreover, the benefits of our team building are generally can be divided three

different subtitles: communication, leadership and role reversal, and awareness to create effective team work and to be a part of team spirit.

The most important gain of team building (communication) can lead to improve the communication among people and help to improve how to interact with the people who work in the same workplace and/or for the same purpose. The face-to-face communication can significantly and effectively help to understand better the people that we used to interact with them out of our daily communication ways like e-mail or phone call.

Leaderships and role reversal could be the most interesting and inspirational way to set out of usual roles of the members of a team. The ways of role reversal gives light on both identifying leadership qualities in individuals or specific areas where the people can be contributed themselves as leaders and trying to find themselves in different areas unexpectedly talented. There is one saying about role reversal is “team building is an opportunity to try on new pairs of shoes and see how they fit on you!”

In terms of awareness, there are a lot of things that each person can realize some as individual and/or the whole team. Self-awareness, self-development, personal empowerment, creative thinking, alternative ideas and inspiration, emotional triggers, non-verbal communication, life style and choice, life attitude, cultural diversity and understanding could be some part of the realization circle in team building to aware the positive and negative sides of ourselves and collaborators; therefore, these points can allow to improve the gaps in individual personal characteristic and/or the spirit of teamwork.

Under the light of the benefits of team building (communication, leadership and role reversal, and awareness), I can order the points that I see in myself. All these activities helped me to deeply understand the highlights of each individual person for their contribution in teamwork. The positive and negative sides of the people that I am going to mostly work together in coming years, became clearer due to the way of verbal communication. In some outdoor activities, I found different me in myself. When I became the person who was keeping the GPS device in geochallenge game and giving the coordination to other team members, this was my new shoes feeling myself taking care of all the team. This wasn't big challenge; however, this situation made me responsible person who should be aware of the others because they put their trust on me. Additionally, crossing the river by rope from very scary height for me was one of the turning point in my life in spite of the fact that I had acrophobia, I agreed immediately to encourage myself. The time passed through the river by rope was the most exciting moment in my life until this time and I really felt myself “I have enough power in me to make myself encourage and discover the adventure in any type of issue.” Lastly, thanks to the firewalking activity, I honestly aware that there is nothing to escape or scare in life and I realized that I have my own motivation in myself to make me physiologically, spiritually, and psychologically very strong person.

As a conclusion, team building is the most important event to come together all members as a team. The team building activities provide a long way to achieving better workplace relationships; therefore, the team has a positive impact on company processes and goals. We all in our project came together from different countries with different cultures, personalities and we found ourselves for the same purpose and sincerely, I can say that I feel BioCapture team became a visual real team after team building.

Anil Incel
PhD Reseacher

Malmö University