

A GUIDE FOR LEADERS WHO WANT TO BUILD A CULTURE THAT STICKS

WHAT IS PROFITABLE FLUFF?

Why Intentional Team Building Is the Investment Your Team Is Missing



I USED TO THINK **ALL TEAM BUILDING WAS A WASTE OF TIME - JUST FLUFF.**

AND SOME OF IT IS...

BUT INTENTIONAL, FACILITATED FUN ACTIVITIES CAN ACTUALLY **CHANGE TEAM AWARENESS AND INSPIRE MORE PRODUCTIVE BEHAVIORS.**

THAT IS **PROFITABLE FLUFF!**

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

If you suspect that your team is capable of more than it is delivering, you are right.

This guide walks you through what is actually holding them back...

(And shares what to you can do about it)

01 THE THING NOBODY IS TALKING ABOUT

Why talented teams consistently underperform, and who is actually responsible.

02 THE COSTLY MISTAKE MOST LEADERS MAKE

The real difference between recreational activities and intentional team building.

03 WHAT INTENTIONAL ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

The G.R.E.A.T. framework for culture that actually sticks.

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Verified data leaders need to justify the investment, plus the objections you will hear.

05 BUILDING A CULTURE THAT STICKS

The four phase Sticky Culture Cycle, and the parables behind each phase.

06 WHAT TO DO NEXT

Three clear paths forward, depending on where you are right now.

01

SECTION ONE

THE THING NOBODY IS TALKING ABOUT

There is a piece missing in most organizations' annual planning.

It is not talent acquisition. It is not strategy. It is not budget or technology or process, although leaders who ignore it will waste plenty of all three.

"The successful teamwork, culture, and productivity every organization seeks are all symptoms of leadership. Businesses rise or fall based on the quality of their leaders."

— SEAN GLAZE · GREAT RESULTS TEAMBUILDING

I learned this the hard way, and not in a boardroom. I learned it on a basketball court.

As a young coach, I was obsessed with the right things: better plays, better conditioning, better skill development. I was protective of every minute of practice time. I was not going to waste a single minute on anything that did not directly help us win.

Including, for years, anything that looked like team building.

Team building was soft. Team building was fluff. I And had games to win.

What I eventually discovered, after enough losses to make me genuinely coachable, is that I had been right about one thing and dangerously wrong about another.

I was right that some team building is fluff.

I was wrong to assume all of it was.

There is a category of investment that is not fluff at all. **It is intentional, well designed team activities that actually impact culture and changes how people see and treat each other.**

I have since started calling it **Profitable Fluff.**

And it changed everything about how I lead - and how the teams I work with have performed.

WHY GOOD TEAMS UNDERPERFORM

Talent is not the problem. Connection is.

Walk into almost any organization, a sales team, a hospital unit, a school faculty, a manufacturing floor, and you will find the same thing...

Smart, capable, hard-working people who are not performing at the level they are capable of.

They have talent. They have processes. They may even have a strategy they can recite. But something is missing. The results do not match the potential. The culture feels flat.

People are doing their jobs, but they are not really playing for each other.

WHAT CULTURE ACTUALLY IS

Culture is not the snacks in the break room or the perks in the benefits package.

Culture is the **sum of behaviors that are allowed and repeated on your team.**

And it is always a symptom of leadership.

Most leaders were promoted because they excelled at something other than leading. They were great engineers, great salespeople, great clinicians... then someone gave them a team without a playbook.

So they do what they know: strategy, metrics, deliverables. They hold meetings. They manage performance.

And they get results that are adequate, but rarely exceptional. Because they are missing the piece that transforms a group of talented individuals into a team that genuinely wins together.

TALENT IS IMPORTANT. STRATEGY IS IMPORTANT ...

BUT TEAM BUILDING AND CULTURE AFFECT HOW WELL YOUR TALENT IMPLEMENTS YOUR STRATEGY!

- Effective communication generates 4.5 times higher talent retention. (BIT, 2021)
- Connected teams demonstrate a 21% increase in profitability. (GALLUP, 2020)
- Millennials prioritize 'people and culture fit' above everything else. (HBR, 2021)
- 52% of CEOs perceive their workplace culture as toxic. (CEOWorld Magazine, 2024)

THE COSTLY MISTAKE LEADERS MAKE

When leaders finally decide to invest in their team's culture, they almost always make the same mistake. They plan a fun event.

Happy hour. Bowling night. An escape room.

A cookout. Maybe a ropes course if the budget stretches.

Their people enjoy it. Laughter happens.

A few photos get posted on the company intranet.

And then everyone returns on Monday exactly the same as they left on Friday.

"Nothing changed, because nothing was designed to change."

— THE FLUFFY EVENT TEST

That is the difference between recreational activities and **intentional team building**.

It is the most important distinction any leader can learn.

And you can't unsee it...

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES	INTENTIONAL TEAM BUILDING
Focused on entertainment	Focused on transformation
Creates a temporary morale lift	Creates lasting behavior change
People enjoy it and forget it	People apply it and remember it
Designed around a venue	Designed around your team's specific needs
Anyone can organize it	Requires a skilled facilitator
A nice but forgettable afternoon	A strategic investment with real outcomes

Fun is a feature.

Connection, self-awareness, and behavior change are real outcomes.

NOT ALL FLUFF IS PROFITABLE

Recreational activities don't inspire real change.



They look the same
from the outside.

They're not.

Five hidden costs of treating CULTURE events as optional.

- **Retention bleeds.** Your best people have options. They do not leave jobs. They leave cultures. And they rarely tell you the real reason in an exit interview.
- **Collaboration stalls.** People protect information, work in silos, and avoid the honest conversations that would actually move things forward.
- **Leadership impact diminishes.** The quality of your strategy is only as good as the culture executing it. A brilliant plan in the hands of a disconnected team produces mediocre results.
- **Managers burn out.** Leaders spend enormous energy managing conflict, communication breakdowns, and disengagement that intentional team building would have addressed upstream.
- **Onboarding fails quietly.** New hires absorb whatever culture already exists. Without intentional culture work, you do not shape the culture. The culture shapes your new people.

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SECTION THREE

WHAT INTENTIONAL LOOKS LIKE

*When I am asked what separates a program that changes a team from one that just entertains, my answer is always the same: **design, facilitation, and follow-through.***

The program activities you choose for your team are tools...

What matters is how those tools are used, the discussion they create, and what happens next.

OUR FRAMEWORK FOR BUILDING A G.R.E.A.T. TEAM CULTURE:

G GOALS.

Every great team has a clear, compelling, consistently shared goal. Not a vision statement on a wall. A sentence that answers: why are we here, and what are we working to accomplish together?

R RELATIONSHIPS.

Teams that genuinely know each other, their backgrounds, motivations, and real challenges, collaborate more openly and extend more grace when things get hard.

E EXPECTATIONS.

Clear work agreements about roles and standards, combined with a culture that treats mistakes as learning rather than liability, creates the psychological safety where people take smarter risks.

A ACCOUNTABILITY.

Real accountability is not fear of consequences. It is empathy. Caring enough about your teammates to meet your commitments because you understand the impact when you do not.

T THANKS.

What gets recognized specifically gets repeated more enthusiastically. Leaders who wait for an annual banquet to celebrate their people are leaving momentum on the table.

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THREE OBJECTIONS EVERY SKEPTIC RAISES

Answers you can use in the next budget meeting.***"We do not have time for this."***

You do not have time not to do this. Every hour spent managing the downstream consequences of a disconnected team, is time you could have recovered with upstream investment. A well-designed half day program can accomplish what would otherwise take months of awkward conversations to surface.

"We tried team building before - and it did not work."

What you tried was recreational. You hired a venue, not a facilitator. You planned an activity, not an experience. A bowling alley can host a team event. It cannot change how your people communicate, lead, or hold each other accountable.

"Our team does not need this right now."

The best time to build a roof is before it rains. Leaders who wait until culture is in crisis spend five times more energy on repair than they would have on prevention. The organizations that build culture before the wheels come off perform best when it matters most: during change, pressure, and adversity.

WHAT A WELL-DESIGNED PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHES

Specific outcomes that generic events never create.

- **People learn things about each other they would never discover in a meeting.** That awareness becomes the foundation of genuine trust.
- **Leaders surface conflicts, communication gaps, and cultural friction in a safe environment,** before those issues show up as missed deadlines or lost talent.
- **Values become real.** Abstract words like integrity or collaboration become shared, specific, behavioral expectations that people can actually hold each other to.
- **People stop performing for their manager and start performing for each other.** That shift is the difference between a compliant team and a committed one.
- **Leaders leave with a concrete picture of what their team needs,** not a general sense that morale is low or communication could be better.

THE STATS YOUR CFO WILL RESPECT

Here are the numbers.

Not to persuade you that people matter, you already know that. To give you the language to justify this investment to the people who speak primarily in ROI.

23%

higher profitability from highly engaged teams, with measurable revenue impact across all company sizes
GALLUP · 2024

260%

more motivated in high-trust organizations, with 41% lower absenteeism and 50% less turnover intention
MIT SLOAN MANAGEMENT REVIEW

51%

lower voluntary turnover in highly engaged organizations, a direct return on intentional culture investment
GALLUP · 2024

50–200%

of annual salary is what replacing one employee costs, and culture is the number one reason people leave
SHRM



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SECTION FIVE

BUILDING A CULTURE THAT STICKS

Most culture initiatives fail, not because the intentions are wrong, but because there is no system behind them for ongoing application or reinforcement.

THE “STICKY CULTURE” CYCLE

1. INSPIRE WINNING TEAMMATES

Leadership does not own all of the team culture. Every individual has a role and can commit to the positive attitudes and behaviors that make them the colleague others are grateful to work alongside.

PARABLE: 10 COMMANDMENTS OF WINNING TEAMMATES

2. STAY COACHABLE THROUGH CHANGE

The teams that sustain performance through disruption and growth are the ones whose people remain hungry, honest, humble, and habit driven. Staying coachable is a competitive advantage.

PARABLE: STAYING COACHABLE

3. DEVELOP EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Culture is always a symptom of leadership. Before anything else changes, the people in positions of influence need to grow their awareness, challenge their assumptions, and improve their interactions.

PARABLE: WHAT EFFECTIVE LEADERS DO

4. BUILD A GREAT TEAM CULTURE

Using the G.R.E.A.T. framework, leaders design intentional experiences and establish the norms, conversations, and systems that transform a group of talented individuals into a genuinely cohesive team.

PARABLE: RAPID TEAMWORK



WHY THE QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Intentional Team Building Activities Truly Affect Your Culture

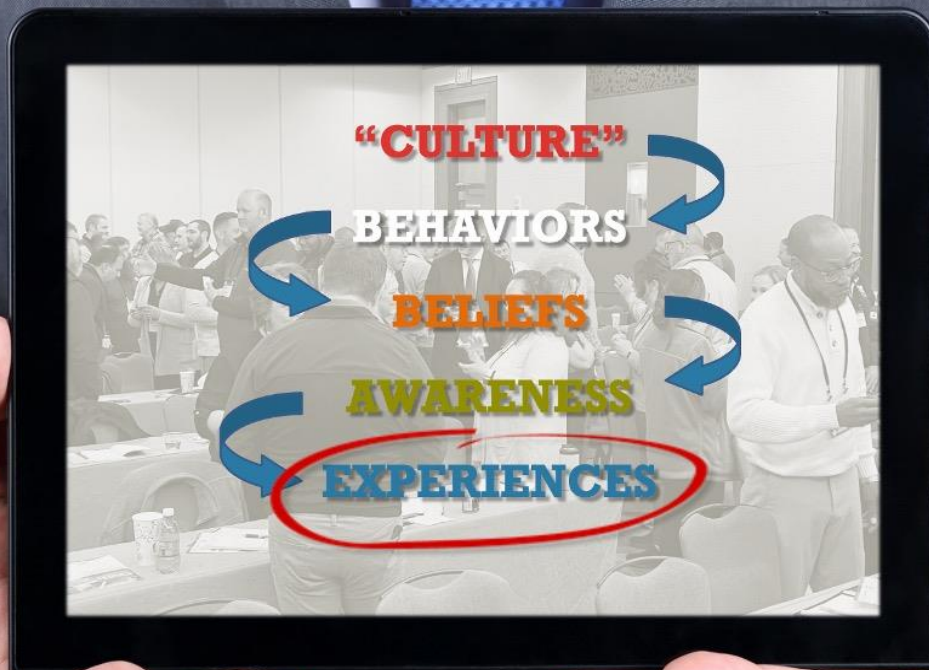
If **CULTURE** is the sum of your team's repeated and allowed behaviors...

And those team **BEHAVIORS** are driven by individual beliefs...

And those **BELIEFS** are inspired by each team member's awareness...

And **AWARENESS** is what we notice and recall from past experiences...

Then the **EXPERIENCE** that you choose for your people is the single most important factor in determining whether it will feel like empty entertainment, or will resonate as something that is sticky - and **change how people see and treat each other!**



THAT IS WHY YOU DON'T WANT FLUFF.
YOU WANT PROFITABLE FLUFF – EXPERIENCES
THAT INSPIRE BETTER TEAMWORK

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SECTION SIX

WHAT TO DO NEXT

If something in this guide resonated, here are two clear and profitable paths forward - depending on where you are right now...

If you're planning a team event in the next 90 days:

Reach out to sean with your information at <https://greatresultsteambuilding.net/contact/> and check his availability.

Send a message about your event and describe what outcomes your team needs.

Most clients book 4–12 weeks out, so now is the time to secure your date!

If you're building the case for an event internally:

Take Sean's free Culture Assessment at <https://greatresultsteambuilding.net/assess/>

It will help you identify exactly where your team's productivity gaps are –

And you'll have data for the next budget conversation to discuss how Sean can tailor an event to fit your team needs.

Planning a conference and want a truly engaging speaker?

Visit <https://greatresultsteambuilding.net/team-building-speaker/> to learn more about Sean's interactive keynote messages to identify the experience that fits your team.

You know that your team is capable of more.

*The only question is whether you're going to invest in fluff – or **Profitable Fluff!***



"We are now three weeks post event and our team is still talking about Sean and the event. They want him back already! They continue to talk about what they learned in the event"

Ray Mashburn
Executive Director at WAIKATO



"Thank you so much, Sean! The team loved your keynote, and several of them listed it as their favorite part of the day in the survey"

Leslie Bamberg
Senior Manager at CISCO



"You're a ROCK STAR! Really, your session struck such a great balance between fun, conversational, light, yet at the same time, deep, impactful, and memorable!"

Carol Feigenbaum
Marketing Director at NETBASE QUID

SEAN GLAZE

LEADERSHIP SPEAKER · TEAM BUILDING FACILITATOR · EXECUTIVE COACH