

The Essential Corporate Retreat

*By John Deane, Owner, Wildwood Resort & Marina in Granville, Tennessee**

It's becoming clear that working remotely will extend into the post-COVID world. Companies are embracing Zoom, Microsoft Meetings, Google Meetings, and other televideo technologies for a lot of good reasons:

Attracting and retaining the best talent in many situations requires offering for them to work remotely.

Working remotely saves both travel and office costs.

Remote work contributes to the sustainability of the workforce by reducing burnout associated with long commutes and frequent airline travel.

This trend is driving companies to rely increasingly on corporate retreats to replace or supplement the office as the primary culture-building venue for face-to-face engagement between and among colleagues within the organization.

Examples abound of companies that used to schedule one executive retreat each year and are now booking quarterly retreats for their leadership team. These retreats ARE the in-person meeting for these organizations. Others may plan multiple retreats throughout the year, one for each of several business units within the organization, such as the sales and marketing team, the operations team as well as the company's leadership team.

Essential Elements of the Corporate Retreat

Several elements are essential for an effective corporate retreat:

Accessibility – The corporate retreat venue needs to provide participants with a getaway experience without being far away. An hour or two drive from a major city is close enough for those driving and flying in, but a five-hour drive from the nearest major airport is too far.

Comfort – Since most corporate retreats involve one to three overnight stays, the accommodations must be comfortable, with meticulously clean rooms, in-room coffee service, appropriate lighting, and individual temperature control. Hooks and shelves in the bathroom are in place, along with a large-screen television capable of streaming and providing network programming.

Food & Beverage – Happy guests are well-fed with delicious food and beverage offerings throughout their stay. They should be offered a varied and tasty menu with vegan/vegetarian options and a broad range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverage options.

Meeting Room – The meeting room is where business and bonding activities occur. The best meeting rooms have windows with great views and shades to darken the room when needed, large TV monitors for displaying presentations, ready access to coffee and refreshments, and excellent acoustics. The best meeting spaces have built-in televideo technology allowing select participants and faculty speakers to participate remotely.

Fun – It's essential to make time in the corporate retreat itinerary for fun. Examples include sunset boat tours on the lake, corn hole, bocce ball, horseshoes, Giant Jenga, and ping pong. Live music can enhance the retreat experience and inspire creativity. A bourbon-tasting or s'mores roast around the fire pit can often lead to breakthrough ideas.

The Great Outdoors Take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors. Enjoy activities such as hiking, kayaking, and many other fun activities. Even group meetings can be in an outdoor setting. Besides, outdoor activities offer more social distancing and are considered safer than being locked in a meeting room. If the weather permits, dine alfresco with your team.

Return on Investment

Corporate retreats are roaring back in a big way because they are an excellent investment in attracting and retaining talent. They create an environment where breakthrough thinking is encouraged by building a solid company culture that can change the organization's trajectory.

**John Deane is the co-owner, with his wife, Natasha, of Wildwood Resort and Marina in Granville, Tennessee, a boutique destination resort and corporate retreat venue. For more information, VisitWildwood.com.*