

HERCULES TROPHY: THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE CONCEPT

Any professional race car driver will tell you that the race can be won or lost in the pits. Each member of the pit crew must coordinate their work with the efforts of others, and take the initiative to do whatever it takes to deal with unanticipated problems. Similarly, you need full participation of everyone on your team for your company to come out ahead. This is especially the case in companies that have shifted in recent years to a more horizontal management structure.

0. INTRODUCTION

The goal of this paper is to explain why **total teambuilding and networking experiences** are indispensable for service companies that value their relationships with their employees, customers and suppliers.

In order to get a thorough understanding of the unique value of the Hercules Trophy concept, it is necessary to treat the effect of emotional bonding in today's businesses in several chapters:

1. Business Drivers – why participate
2. Team Dynamics
3. How Humour creates winning Teams
4. Why Hercules Trophy – the added value
5. Return on Investment
6. Conclusion

1. BUSINESS DRIVERS: WHY PARTICIPATE

MOTIVATE **HUMAN CAPITAL** TO RETAIN AND ATTRACT TALENT

- provide all employees unique experiences
- create emotional bonding and sense of camaraderie
- escape from work-related pressures
- find an experience that has a great effect on everybody

IMPROVE **TEAMWORK** TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

- integration after mergers, acquisitions or reorganisations
- bring virtual teams and mobile workers closer together
- break the walls between departments
- collaboration with international teams and cultures
- socialization of new employees
- removal of barriers that separate management from other employees

ENHANCE YOUR **NETWORK** TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

- create mixed teams with customers
- meet people in a different context and create lifetime relationships and stories
- connect with customers, suppliers and partners to strengthen the supply chain

STRENGTHEN **CORPORATE IDENTITY** TO DIFFERENTIATE FROM YOUR COMPETITORS

- make people proud to work for your organisation
- visibility of your brand, identity and values
- be there at the sports and business event of the year
- share positive energy before, during and after the Hercules Trophy

2. TEAM DYNAMICS

“People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defences, or the problems of modern society.” (Vince Lombardi)

“One definition of a team is: two or more individuals associated in some joint action. In the business world, these joint actions should have some mission or objective that achieves results. Most business-related teams, however, reflect the dictionary definition of a group—any collection of or assemblage of persons or things. Many groups of individuals who call themselves a team end up failing miserably. Often, the reason behind their failure is poor team dynamics. For our purposes, a team is defined as a **group of two or more individuals engaged in some joint action with a specific mission or goal. Team dynamics are defined as the motivating and driving forces that propel a team toward its goal or mission.**”(Six Sigma Team Dynamics)

Creating great teams requires a thorough understanding of the **3 phases** in Team Dynamics:

- **Feel as a team:** most companies tend to forget this crucial aspect. If people don't feel emotionally connected, they will never perform as a team.
- **Act as a team:** to act as a team, teammembers need specific skills like leadership, delegation, organisation, negotiation,...
- **Perform as a team:** to really achieve expected results, teams need to focus on clear objectives and have to keep constraints into account.



Hercules Trophy has a strong focus on the first phase, **Feel as a team**. We give companies, people and customers the opportunity to create **lifetime relationships and positive stories**.

We create a platform where people can easily connect on an **emotional** level and share **unforgettable experiences**. It's not just a one day event, but a 6 month **process**.

To experience **good vibrations** or **good vibes** in general terms to experience that a situation, company, person or similar is pleasant, emotionally aligned with oneself. Spiritually speaking it has good **karma**. Scientifically it's about **endorfine rush, adrenaline kicks and resonance**.

$$I(\omega) \propto \frac{\frac{\Gamma}{2}}{(\omega - \Omega)^2 + \left(\frac{\Gamma}{2}\right)^2}$$

When people are on the same frequency, they feel great. In physics this is described as resonance (Galileo Galilei). Due to the strict planning of the day, we create some kind of resonance between the participants. That's why people experience an **explosion** of emotions during and after the event.

Having fun is a fundamental ingredient to create winning teams.

In the next chapters, this aspect will be elaborated in further detail.

3. HOW HUMOUR CREATES WINNING TEAMS¹

"If you can laugh together, you can work together" (Robert Orben)

1) REMOVAL OF BARRIERS THAT SEPARATE MANAGEMENT FROM OTHER EMPLOYEES

There are certain barriers that naturally exist between managers and non-management members of the team—the most important of which is power and authority. When managers show that they can laugh with everyone else in the group, and—especially—can poke fun at themselves, the barriers come down, and the manager is viewed as a "regular person," like everyone else on the team. This is essential to open communication between bosses and their subordinates (see below).

Research has shown that when the manager initiates jokes and is also occasionally the target of jokes, s/he tends to be viewed as a friend, rather than a boss. This friendship, in turn, opens up comfortable and honest communication. The individuals conducting this research argue that the increased group cohesiveness that results from shared humor does result in increased team productivity, but only when performance norms are high. Since performance norms have continued to rise over the past decade, virtually all employees are now confronted with such high performance norms.

2) EMOTIONAL BONDING

As noted above, shared laughter and the spirit of fun generates a bonding process in which people feel closer together—especially when laughing in the midst of adversity. This emotional glue enables team members to stick together on the tough days ahead, when members of the team need each other to complete a project and assure quality customer service.

3) OPEN COMMUNICATION

A common complaint in many organizations is a lack of good communication with management. A lighter atmosphere, and a manager who shares humor with the team, is a powerful tool in opening up the channels of communication. It frees team members up to communicate openly, without fear of reprisal. This is especially important when an employee knows that his/her opinion differs from that of management.

4) TRUST

One of the by-products of shared laughter and good open communication is a growing sense of trust. This is also partly a result of the emotional bonding that occurs through shared positive humor. When comfortable and open communication is lacking, it breeds a sense of distrust, and there is no way that a team can function effectively when this occurs. Without trust, communications can quickly become defensive or distorted, setting up future misunderstandings.

¹ Ref: Paul McGhee, PhD, www.LaughterRemedy.com

5) IMPROVED MORALE

When teams have fun on the job and share laughter, they enjoy their work more; and people who like their jobs work more effectively together. This is an especially important benefit of humor on the job, since employee morale has been dropping in many companies in recent years.

6) REDUCED JOB STRESS

By reducing daily stress levels, humor and a lighter attitude help sustain the focused mental state required to do one's work effectively when under pressure; it allows you to get a lot done and get it done quickly. It gives employees the emotional flexibility required to bend without breaking.

Also, as anyone who's ever worked on a team knows, even when it's only a few team members who are experiencing stress, their emotional state can quickly spread to other team members, interfering with the entire team's performance. The greater the percentage of team members who receive the stress-reducing effect of humor, the greater the team's chances of success on a project.

7) INCREASED CREATIVITY

Humor is a natural stimulus for creativity. It opens up new ways of viewing things and stimulates innovative ideas for solutions to difficult problems. This effect is especially important in team settings, where the ideas of one person can serve to trigger novel ideas for resolving problems in someone else.

As noted above, a lighter atmosphere reduces fear of rejection of one's ideas, making team members more willing to take risks in proposing unusual ideas. Also when your own ideas are not adopted, a sense of humor helps "let go" of the upset we all occasionally feel when someone else's ideas are judged more valuable than our own. This frees you up to work more effectively with the ideas the team puts up on the table.

So you have every reason to Lighten Up.



Teams that Laugh, work!

4. ADDED VALUE HERCULES TROPHY

When companies consider participating in the Hercules Trophy, they should take the following differentiators into account:

- **Venue:** The Hercules Trophies are organised on the most suitable areas in every country, adapted to local culture and with a sense of holiday. It's an environment where everybody feels at ease.
- **Crew:** The friendly and professional crew is a big fan of the Hercules Trophy. They guarantee a smooth organization and help create this typical Hercules Trophy atmosphere which is ideal to connect with each other.
- **Catering:** Hercules Trophy provides plenty of healthy food and drinks. No waiting queues and great quality. The catering crew is integrated in the concept. They are all part of the big picture.
- **Team effect:** Hercules Trophy stimulates lifetime relationships between employees, family, customers and partners. People never forget a Hercules Trophy experience. They return to the office with tons of positive energy and amazing stories.
- **Entertainment:** Hercules Trophy creates a platform where the participants are the entertainers of the day. They make the day. Hercules Trophy helps them in making it the most unforgettable day of the year.
- **Trendsetter:** Hercules Trophy finds at least 6 new activities every year and innovates on an international level. In a yearly tradition people experience all the new activities.
- **Quality:** The organisers and partners have several years of experience in the corporate world before they joined the Hercules Trophy. Every detail counts. Quality expectations of our customers are high and we never let them down. We start from a winning format that exists for 10 years and only focus on that.
- **Customer incentive:** Companies can setup mixed teams with customers to create a true emotional connection you would never create during another customer incentive.
- **Networking:** Hercules Trophy creates a long lasting connection between the participants. There's not only a bonding effect within your teams, but also between the teams of your and other companies.
- **Supporters:** People come and watch the Hercules Trophy like they would go to a festival or a sports game. The participants will feel like the star of the day and supporters will experience a great day of laughter.
- **Partners:** Hercules Trophy is supported by federations, media companies and commercial organisations. Their presence gives the participants a feeling of a true competition. It's the business sports event of the year.
- **Teams of 4 to 7:** even with 4 people you can participate in a much bigger group, enjoy the day, defend the colors of your company and WIN! Everybody can participate, so not only the athletes will have a great day.
- **Fans:** the customers are fans and want to come back every year to see what we came up with and to enjoy the event with other people.
- **International competition:** Hercules Trophy is an international intercompany concept. Customers can compare their scores with peers in other countries. The Olympics for companies.
- **Website:** simple, complete, effective, scalable, professional, enables the community before, during and after the event, connects with other social networks..

5. RETURN ON INVESTMENT

“Your most precious possession is not your financial assets. Your most precious possession is the people you have working there, and what they carry around in their heads, and their ability to work together.” (Robert Reich)

We like to state that Hercules Trophy is an overall experience that combines different business goals on one day. You can always decide to handle every business goal by a separate solution, but you can also decide to combine budgets into one fantastic experience. In terms of return, this is always a better approach.

Experience has learned us that most of our fans combine two or more solutions on one day. That’s why Hercules Trophy is not just to be described as a teambuilding event. Below, you will find some typical scenarios used by customers:

- Teambuilding + Employee party
- Teambuilding + Employee party + Family day
- Teambuilding + Employee party + Networking Event
- Teambuilding + Employee party + Networking Event + Customer Incentive

Looking at the options, this means that participation usually comes from the budget in these departments within a company:

- Sales
- Marketing
- Communication
- Human Resources
- Fun team/Event team

The first time a company participates, it’s nearly always the sales or marketing manager who takes the initiative. They create a few teams with sales people to:

- Reward them
- Improve teamwork
- Enhance their network
- Emphasize the presence of the company in our competition

Some customers take it even one step further: why not see the Trophy as a milestone for personal targets?

- Sport: *“I will run 6 km”*
- Body: *“I will lose weight”*
- Health: *“I will stop smoking”*
- Mind: *“I will rebalance my life”*
- Food: *“I will eat healthy”*
- Business: *“We will donate 15 eur to our good cause”*

6. CONCLUSION

Hercules Trophy has been the initiative of a few corporate business men who cared about their people. They looked for a formula that would establish long lasting emotional connections between **all their employees**. When they finally noticed that this kind of event didn't exist, they started up their own business.

They found **sports** was a good means for people to get connected and to work towards common goals. Moreover, sports and business have a lot of **similarities**. Business men and athletes develop the same skills in order to be successful, like e.g. focus (on excellence, on present time, on team success), decision making under pressure, confident optimism, clear vision and goals, and many more.

By adding a lot of **well considered fun elements** and a strict planning in a safe environment, their initiative didn't miss the desired effect. The Hercules Trophy became a total experience, not only for the participants, but also for supporters. Soon, a lot of big, international companies subscribed with ever increasing teams.

Bearing in mind their corporate background, the organizers realized that innovation and customer-intimacy were the two key elements to invest in. They started to invent a lot of new elements to maintain a surprise effect for all these customers that kept coming back every year. But the most visionary element was to build an exhaustive, interactive website with a state of the art ICT infrastructure, in order to connect with the customers and keep the overheads low. Based upon the website, a huge Herculesfan community has been developing itself over the years, keeping the Hercules vibe alive throughout the year.

When companies realized what the effect was on their employees, they started to think about what this would do to their **customers**. A few early adopters started to organize Hercules Trophies for their partners; customers and employees. This is how Hercules Trophy, that was originally a teambuilding initiative, has evolved towards a sustainable customer event, with proven **networking effects**.

Some customers invited teams from all over the globe. Over **40 nationalities** got a taste of the Trophy. They were extremely excited about it. It was the beginning of the international breakthrough of Hercules Trophy. The concept started in new countries in Europe, Middle East and Africa.

The direct effect of subscribing mixed teams at the Hercules Trophy is at least 6 months of clearly improved teamwork. But the stories from the participants last for years, creating **real fans** from all over the world.

Since more than 10 years now, Hercules Trophy has been providing people with an enormous boost of positive energy, resonance and lifetime stories.