



GOOD TEAM WORK DRUMS UP SUCCESS

An essential ingredient of any successful business is a strong team environment. Get it right and the dividends will be there for all to see in terms of productivity and goodwill. But if the chemistry is wrong, even within a single department, an organisation's whole structure can suffer critical damage.

There are many ways of addressing the problem. South Gloucestershire company Bendragon Human Partnerships, for example, encourages the most up-to-date scientific approach, using psychometric tools linked to workshop-based programmes and individual coaching as a route to greater morale and motivation.

And then there's the rather more elementary approach espoused by a Bristol-based company who say that an excellent way of establishing togetherness in the workplace is through a very straightforward activity – banging a drum!

Jason Flintner and Simon Carver, well known local musicians who write music for film and television and have extensive commercial backgrounds, are partners in the delightfully named business, HumDrumStrum. A while ago, they decided to make more use of their drums and other percussive

instruments by setting up "drum circles", where communities are encouraged to come together, make music and get to know one another a little better.

Transferring the process into the corporate world followed shortly afterwards, Jason explained: "A lot of companies send their employees on activities such as paint-balling and white-water rafting as a way of developing a better team ethic. This may be a lot of fun but I have serious doubts whether chucking paint at one another for a few minutes will help bring about any significant long-term change in a company.

"Our approach offers a more meaningful alternative. That's because the drum circle removes the competitive element of many teambuilding activities by having everyone from managing director down to the most junior member of staff participating at the same level.

Participants at one of HumDrumStrum's drumming workshops

"By drumming together and creating music – and on a primal basis we all have inherent rhythm – people embrace something new yet challenging, develop a group cohesiveness and ultimately relax and have fun. To some, it may be embarrassing at first, but give it 20 minutes or so and most people will let go."

Drum circles can be organised as a company "jolly" – perhaps as an ice-breaker before the serious business of a conference or training day or even as a fun item at a firm's summer barbecue. But HumDrumStrum also takes it to another level by talking in advance to a client's managers or HR department and analysing the company's underlying problems.

"It might be that one department just doesn't get on with another, that the boss is unpopular or that some people won't mix with those in lower level jobs," Jason continued.

"Once we know what is involved, it is sometimes possible to pick out certain individuals and ensure that, unknown to them, they play an active part in the session. The circle is a completely levelling experience. By encouraging people to communicate and produce music that is original, they will hopefully begin to believe that the 'ogre' they work for isn't quite as bad as they originally thought."

HumDrumStrum stress the importance of following up these one-off sessions. Sometimes, they send in their own management training professional. "Often, the process works as a catalyst for totally new strategies within companies," said Jason. Get drumming, he adds – it's the perfect antidote to this "mad, intense,

"By drumming together and creating music – and on a primal basis we all have inherent rhythm – people soon begin to have fun."

gadget-dominated world. Remember that man was drumming and chanting long before he learned to communicate by talking – it's the oldest known form of team building and it still works."

