

Exercise Brainwave



Exercise Brainwave is a business simulation that involves participants in managing a range of events that take place in The Blakedown Centre a residential training centre.

The activity is dynamic and presents a range of realistic challenges and difficult decisions that many businesses face in the current economic climate. Change and uncertainty can impact organisations and people in many unexpected ways. Exercise Brainwave provides an

opportunity for participants to demonstrate and develop their ability to manage a range of behaviours and presents opportunities that if exploited with a little entrepreneurial thinking can produce sustainable business opportunities

Exercise Brainwave is not a computer simulated activity. What makes it realistic very quickly is the live nature of the events. Participants will receive unexpected enquiries from customers both via the telephone and in the post. Post is distributed by the obnoxious Patty Potts who cannot be separated from her iPod and despite a healthy addition to chewing gum never allows her mouth to become so congested that she cannot spread malicious gossip and rumour.

The activity ends with a management meeting which enables participants to reveal their proposals to overcome the issues facing the centre and take decisions that will impact the future direction and profitability of the organisation.

Characteristics of the roles

The activity has been designed to accommodate a group of 10-13 participants who form the senior and operational management team at the centre. Each manager has a unique management style and each manager is driven by well developed beliefs about the future direction of Blakedown. It is not expected or required that participants have prior knowledge of the specialism of their role or, for that matter, that they have knowledge of how to run a residential training facility. Every manager is required to manage people and situations; and, whatever the scenario, the general principles involved are exactly the same.



Meet the Management Team

A basic profile of the team is provided below. Participants are provided with a comprehensive profile to describe the role and their attitudes towards the issues they face in the role.

Managing Director

The founder of the company, an ex-property developer who spotted a commercially viable niche in the training market and acted accordingly. No past experience in the training and development market - a hard-headed entrepreneur with an authoritarian style with a strong determination to wage an unending battle against all the odds to keep Blakedown on its feet and increase its slice of a particularly competitive and recession-hit market

Sales and Marketing Director

A wealth of experience in marketing, but little or no direct experience in sales, no formal qualifications or past experience in training, responsible for consolidating and increasing Blakedown's share of what is proving to be a highly competitive market.

Facilities Director

An experienced ex-hotel manager, responsible for all aspects of Blakedown premises, accommodation and catering; additionally responsible for the operation of the company's 'conference hire' facilities

Training Director

Very well qualified and experienced in all aspects of training – ex head of training and development of a large training institution; responsible for the operation of the company's 'training hire' facilities and the design/presentation of Blakedown's own courses. Is assertive and will voice an opinion in an appropriate manner even when there is a risk of unpopularity with peers.

Personnel/Administration Director

An ex-personnel manager of a large insurance company, professionally qualified and widely experienced in all aspects of human resource management - some general experience in administration; responsible for the total personnel and administration functions at Blakedown. Never lets an opportunity slip by to remind peers of the strategic contribution of the HR function.

Finance Director

An ex-accounts manager, professionally qualified and experienced, is responsible for all the company's financial and accounting functions. Exerts a strong financial control over the company's affairs and is irritated by the apparent inability of some director-colleagues to

appreciate and to accept that what he/she says goes. Is often referred to by colleagues as scrooge, moneybags, and the bean counter.

Training Manager

Previously a training adviser with an Industrial Training Board. Responsible to the Training Director and a qualified and experienced trainer in areas of people-management and communications. The Training Manager was originally hired to be solely concerned with hiring residential training accommodation to clients who wished to carry out their own training activities, however, following a recent board decision, has taken on additional responsibility (with other members of the senior team) of designing and presenting some of Blakedown's own programme of in house courses. Is agitated that "Others" are not contributing to the in-house programmes as agreed.

Personnel/Administration Manager

An ex-personnel officer with a large telecommunications company - no professional qualifications, but widely experienced in all aspects of personnel and general administration. Responsible to the Personnel/Administration Director for the company's total personnel/administration functions. This role is affected by a boss who interferes in day to day routines but also fails to delegate.

Bursar

Since Blakedown is concerned with training and education, it was the Managing Director's decision to change the job title of accounts manager to that of 'bursar' (the traditional title of the treasurer of a college); thereby, in the Managing Director's view, enhancing the company's image. The present incumbent is an ex-accounts manager with wide experience, but no professional qualifications - responsible to the Finance Director for all accounting functions. The Bursar is concerned that a proposal for capital expenditure will prevent a decent pay rise for those who merit it.

Sales and Public Relations Manager

A sales representative of considerable experience. Has no formal qualifications in public relations and yet has had a degree of success with public relations activity but is facing some barriers. The conference hall facility does not include residential accommodation- and this is a disincentive to would-be customers resulting in a loss of numerous potentially lucrative deals

Head Chef

An ex-hotel head chef with excellent qualifications and management experience. Comes from a hoteliers' world, where the skills and consummate artistry of a master chef at the peak of his/her profession are fully acknowledged in word, the Head Chef has huge contempt for the job title and is acutely aware that some members of the management team tend to regard him as simply as a cook

The Head Chef is responsible to the House Director for the total catering function at Blakedown and, quite literally, the king-pin on which much of the company's presently good reputation depends. How does he manage this on a budget better suited to a soup kitchen?

Premises Manager

An ex-clerk of works - widely experienced in all aspects of premises upkeep - has proved to be similarly proficient where the maintenance and procurement of furnishings, etc. are concerned; responsible to the House Director for security and maintenance of Blakedown's

buildings, general equipment and furnishings and management of unit and service staff. The premises manager could be about to encounter unexpected problems in the form of a traffic accident on site and the wrath of the Housekeeper....watch this space.

Conference Manager

An ex-hotel receptionist and conference organizer - responsible to the House Director for the booking, organization (including liaison with clients) and smooth running of all Blakedown's hired conference facilities. The conference hall is not bringing in much business at present and there is a distinct possibility that the role of Conference Manager at Blakedown could come to a sudden end.

Applications of Exercise Brainwave

Exercise Brainwave provides opportunities for participants to transfer learning following a programme of management development. The activity is useful for supervisors to experience and develop an understanding of the issues facing senior management; Exercise Brainwave can also be used as tool to aid assessment of performance during recruitment, assessment and development centres.

Core Competencies Demonstrated during the Simulation

The dynamic nature of Exercise Brainwave often produces unexpected surprises. Experience, beliefs and attitudes all impact how individuals react to their roles and this can provide insights into the culture, management styles, perceptions of departments and leadership capability.

Exercise Brainwave provides the opportunity for participants to engage with the following issues and demonstrate the behaviours and skills listed throughout the simulation:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| ✿ Creative Problem Solving | ✿ Strategic Planning |
| ✿ Management Styles | ✿ Providing Timely & Effective Feedback |
| ✿ Confidentiality | ✿ Assertive Behaviour |
| ✿ Employee Reward | ✿ Employee Communications |
| ✿ Use of Power & Influence | ✿ Motivation |
| ✿ Evaluating Opportunities | ✿ Financial Control |

Core Competencies Demonstrated during the Management Meeting

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| ✿ Competing | ✿ Going straight in to win |
| ✿ Collaborating | ✿ Helpful to the other party |
| ✿ Compromising | ✿ Giving something to get something |
| ✿ Avoiding | ✿ Avoiding confrontation |
| ✿ Accommodating | ✿ Giving in to the other party |
| ✿ Originality | ✿ of contributions |
| ✿ Value | ✿ of contributions |
| ✿ Persuasion | ✿ Ability to persuade others |



spectrum

effective training solutions



The Scenario

The Blakedown Centre was founded in 1987 by the present Managing Director. From small beginnings, the company swiftly earned a good reputation as a residential training facility, available for hire to any organization seeking an 'all-in' residential venue at which it could engage in its own training activities.

The company took advantage of the slump in the property market by also leasing much larger, virtually custom-designed premises, which also enabled it to offer a 'conference venue' facility. However, some six months later, it became evident that Blakedown was not immune to the overall effects of the prolonged recession and, in a fairly desperate effort to attract custom, it reduced its charges by a considerable amount.

At this point, it should be mentioned that, right from the outset and as a matter of policy, the company's charges had always been pitched higher than those of its competitors, and this fact was stressed in its publicity which explained that, in return, it provided a 'blue chip' service which, in terms of quality, was second to none. Since, at the time of the reduction in charges, the directors accepted the Managing Director's argument that Blakedown's standards of service should, nevertheless, remain unchanged, there followed an extremely fraught period when the company incurred very significant trading losses.

Then, some three months ago and at the Managing Director's instigation, a last-ditch decision was taken which virtually transformed the company's fortunes; namely, that in addition to offering residential training accommodation and the conference facility for hire, Blakedown should market its own programme of residential training courses.