

Oh say can you see?

We can. Opportunity has no borders.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

Fidelity
INVESTMENTS

ADVISOR.CA

TAKE STAFF ON RETREAT

Stuart Foxman / October 1, 2013



Making staff on retreat can provide learning and team-building opportunities. Plus, employees will feel rejuvenated after time away from the office, which can increase productivity levels.

WHAT IT IS

An offsite meeting that lasts either one day or includes overnight stays, and discusses strategies to drive business outcomes.

WHY YOU NEED IT

Sure, you can hold professional development or brainstorming sessions in the office. But taking staff away changes the mood and

creates a productive learning environment.

“People think differently in a more casual setting, and conversations are more open,” says Sheila Campbell, a retreat facilitator in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Going away also removes distractions like meetings and calls, says Lanie Collins, a marketing associate at Nicola Wealth Management in Vancouver. She organizes annual retreats for upwards of 20 financial planners. “We’ve tried doing it in the office but people get interrupted.”

To make sure the office is covered, support staff can stay behind. Or take half the staff this time, and half the next.

HOW IT HELPS

Retreats can harness ideas, promote understanding of the business’s direction and create a collective vision. Agenda items should include improving communication, management methods and overall business goals. Meeting colleagues outside the office can strengthen relationships and morale. “You see people in a different light,” says Nancy Campana, president of Nouveau Event Planning in Windsor, Ont., “and that can make you more

HOW MUCH

We polled our experts. For an overnight stay, budget \$300 to \$500 per person, per day.

This covers rooms, meeting spaces, A/V equipment, meals and refreshments. Preferred locations for retreats vary, from rustic inns to all-inclusive resorts. Long-distance trips involving flights, high-end

compassionate and considerate of each other in the workplace.”

GOOD TO KNOW

A retreat isn't a vacation. It's work, so schedule it during the weekdays. Weekend retreats—unless they're to an exotic location—can eat family time. Fortunately, rates for most venues are cheaper on weekdays. And think about how to treat staff. Inside the office they're employees, but outside they're also guests, says Deidre Herosian, a Winnipeg event planner. Create a fun experience that includes down time with activities that everyone can participate in, like golf or cooking classes.

While it's vital to plan a retreat with clear goals, the biggest mistake Campbell sees is crowding the agenda. So focus on a handful of initiatives.

WHO CAN HELP

You may already have resources in-house to plan the agenda and handle the meeting logistics, such as a colleague who handles client-facing events. But this is a big job, so **take advantage of the sales and corporate meeting team at the retreat venue**, notes Collins. They can help, often at no extra charge. Depending on the scale and objective of the retreat, you may want to **hire an event planner to plan the schedule, or a facilitator to lead the meetings**.

Stuart Foxman is a Toronto-based financial writer.

facilities and outings (e.g., tickets to events) can drive up costs.

And if you want an event planner, budget an extra \$3,000; a facilitator is about \$5,000 for a one-day retreat.

There are ways to reduce costs. Check local deals, or plan when it's off-season.



Originally published in Advisor's Edge

Read this article and full issues on the iPad - [click here](#).