Getting involved in summer activities with colleagues

There is something about the summer that is conducive to building relationships. It might be the warmer weather, increased daylight, or snowless driveways. Whatever the reason, people have more energy to engage with one another. There also happens to be an abundance of accessible activities to do in the summer. Not everyone can go skiing for the weekend, but everyone can get together for a picnic. This is equally true in the workplace, where fun activities with your colleagues are a great way of building relationships and increasing teamwork.

Morning exercise

Physical activity is an excellent way to start the day because exercise is a mood enhancer. However, it is often a challenge to summon the motivation to exercise on your own. It is all up to you. You can lighten the burden on yourself by inviting your co-workers to join you:

- **On the commute.** Some people are fortunate to live close enough to their office to be able to ride their bike or walk to work during the summer. Ask around the workplace to see if anyone else lives nearby you, and if so, ride or run along with them.
- **At the gym.** Some gyms offer group memberships, so if you join with your co-workers it could also be more affordable. Ask your local gym or community centre about offers available.
- **In fitness groups.** If your office is not near a gym and commuting to work might be out of the question, find an open area where you can do weightless exercises and stretches. Someone in your workplace might know yoga or Pilates, and could lead a class – the best way to find out is to ask! You can also plan a morning walk with a group of colleagues before it gets too hot in the afternoon, and before too many meetings get scheduled throughout the working day.

During work hours

Some colleagues may have obligations before and after work, such as dropping their kids off at school or continuing education. There are many summer activities for you and your colleagues to do during office hours:

- **Potluck picnic.** An outdoor potluck is a wonderful way to enjoy the weather while sharing a meal. It allows you to taste a diversity of foods, learn about your co-workers' cultures, and give everyone the chance to partake in a team event. Shared contributions are invaluable to bonding and team building.
- **Outdoor meetings.** If you have a meeting scheduled with your co-workers and the weather is nice, conduct it outside. Fresh air is a boon for clear thinking and stress-relief. If you don't need any papers, pens or other utensils, step it up a notch and transform the meeting into a walking-meeting – you will get the dual benefit for your mental *and* physical health!
- **Playing catch.** Rather than take a coffee break, take a 'catch-break' with your colleagues. Skill is irrelevant when it comes to throwing around a ball or Frisbee. It is about getting some light exercise, enjoying the fresh air, great weather, and having fun with others.

Post-work activities

Activities outside of the workplace remain a substantial part of team-building. Although it takes greater coordination, it is definitely worth it. The bond tends to be long-lasting because colleagues get the chance to interact with one another on a more personal level.

- **Team sports.** There might not be anything more cliché than the intra-office baseball game, yet it remains a fantastic tool to get everyone involved, support one another, and perhaps enjoy a celebratory meal afterwards. Baseball requires a minimum of 18 players though, so if you do not have the personnel for that, paintball or volleyball might be a good alternative. Regardless of which sport you choose, be sure to take the heat into account and always stay hydrated.

- **Group buying websites.** Some websites offer cheaper admission to events and summer activities, such as concerts, amusement parks, and festivals by selling at group rates. Going with your co-workers is not only a fun way to build relationships and work on team building; it is also more affordable.
- **Government parks.** Check on your government website to see if there are any parks within driving distance of your workplace. As a rule, access to government parks only require people to pay a nominal entrance fee (if any at all), making them an inexpensive way to simultaneously experience beautiful natural scenery, spend time with others, and enjoy some physical exercise.

Visibility and inclusivity

In order to get your co-workers together, you need to let them know where and when the summer activity is going to take place. Make the notification visible. You would not want anyone to feel left out because he or she did not know. Remember, the purpose of these activities is to create an inclusive environment for the office.

Some ideas to consider include:

- **Email.** Send an internal email to the people in your department, letting them know the details of the event.
- **Bulletin board.** If there is a bulletin board or communal white board in your office, make use of it. Try to make your notification 'pop' by using brightly-coloured paper or a funny picture that grabs attention.
- **Ask around.** The most effective way to gather participation is to ask in-person. You may be surprised how many of your colleagues have been waiting for this opportunity and appreciate your offer to include them!

Whatever combination of summer activities you choose to participate in with your co-workers, you are already on the right path to improving your engagement at work and assisting in team building. Happier colleagues are more productive colleagues and make for an even better workplace to come to every day!