

# BLUE CHIPS INDULGE IN FUNKY FILM-MAKING

CO Magazine



**New-age initiatives are creeping into stuffy corporate corridors. Find out how some snappy film-making can go a long way to boosting morale. Boeing (in Seattle) and GE (in Melbourne) did.**

Nothing like a little bit of Academy Award glamour and funky film-making to beef up saturated staff members who would rather run a mile than engage in yet another 'team-building' exercise. Rock-climbing, sailing and rope exercises. You name it, they've done it and they don't want to do it anymore.

Film-making might seem a bit too 'fast company' or wacky for blue chips and it might not result in a radical transformation of your business, but it can go a long way to freeing creativity and building team spirit. And, that can't be bad for business.

Just ask the world's top airplane maker Boeing and major corporations like GE Fleet Finance. They no doubt have a lot in common being among the cream of the business cream, but perhaps a lesser known similarity, is their option for a novel way to foster team-building.

Enter ScreenDreams Entertainment, which offers 15-minutes-of-fame workshop modules to blue-chip executives across the globe. The novel idea is the

## Boeing Case Study

**The problem:** Boeing was looking for something to bring its team together quickly. It was a special team formed in January and members had been pulled from different business centres. The group's goal was ambitious: to design a new methodology for software development and then go out and sell the system across the entire company, all within a year. Right away though, the team leader saw that the team was in trouble. Personalities, old ways of thinking and loyalties to previous business centres threatened the success of the project.

**The dynamics:** Nobody really wanted to do attend the team-building workshop. Having tried them all, nobody wanted to sit around talking, analysing their work methods, or any of the usual facilitator-led

**The tactics:** ScreenDreams Entertainment didn't talk about team building or any other business issues, but quickly threw the participants into the film-making experience. By lunch, the mood was more positive. By dinner, everyone was enjoying the process and couldn't wait for day two. By the gala celebration and screening at the end of day two, the business group had transformed into a group of old friends. Everyone was laughing and having a great time, storing away these new memories of each other for the future.

**The result:** Feedback forms revealed that the differences had dissolved and the team had jelled. At a company meeting the day after the workshop, everyone involved reflected on what they had experienced from the workshop. They rated the film-making technique or getting to know each other as dynamic in that it got everyone to use the

other side of their brain. The new discussions were seamless and any previous barriers were not seen as a factor.

**Slics sums up:** "Having worked with companies for the past 15 years in developing programs for culture change, customer service and stress management, I have never seen such a dramatic transformation. It was wonderful to watch these left-brain engineers click in and go for it. Along with some pretty good films, the by-product was a new level of team work and creativity in the group. It's very encouraging."



brainchild of Australian academy-award-nominated (Moulin Rouge) sound engineer Guntis Sics, whose credits also include 'Priscilla Queen of the Desert' and 'Babe', and Joel Leskovitz, the US-based director.

Sics and Leskovitz call on their contacts in the film industry to bring in professional filmmakers to guide groups. Participants develop the idea, write the script, direct, act, and shoot all the footage. The film is edited by experienced film editors and screened for the entire group at a gala dinner and awards ceremony, where participants vote for Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director, and Best Picture.

The film-making workshop modules give executives an opportunity to open new pathways to communication, and enliven group dynamics and creativity. And, they give them a chance to flex their right brain muscles in a fast-changing work place where different skills are needed.

Left brain analytic skills must now be balanced with right brain values like telling stories and expressing deeper values. Abundance in an information age has certainly unleashed prosperity (for many), but it has also placed a premium on less rational sensibilities like beauty, spirituality, emotion, and more people are searching for meaning.

Exercising right-brain skills goes a long way to making workers realise they are humans, not just workers, and many more chief officers are realising that allowing workers to be themselves while still performing

their functions ultimately results in better output for the organisation (see Steven Segal's article on page 62).

In today's world with outsourcing and virtual working becoming a way of life, these film-making workshops also provide a fantastic opportunity to enable 'long-distance' workers to get to know each other quickly.

"In team-building we move across many industries and many cultures. Are they so different? In some ways, yes. In others, no. If you cut me do I not bleed?" says Sics, who "really enjoyed" doing the Boeing and GE jobs so close together. "It gave me great insights into some aspects of human thought and creativity, something I already had knowledge of after working in 42 countries during my film career.

"The Australian films are a little raunchier than the Americans, while the American films are somewhat more emotional. Like most Australians, the blokes are very keen to get into drag and have a good laugh. Cultural differences, however," he explains, "are really only apparent in the area of how seriously people take the whole thing. Application to skills and tasks, for example, are all the same, although Americans do seem to come into it from a more serious angle."

Today, Sics has every confidence in ScreenDreams Entertainment's templates for the film-making workshops. "I no longer worry that something might not work out or that we'll fall flat, because I've seen the alchemy work too many times now," he says. "The key ingredients are all in place. They might need a tweak here and there, but they fundamentally work. It's like drawing blood. If you stick a needle in, you're bound to get some. Similarly, push the right buttons and people's creativity comes pouring out." **C**

### GE Fleet Finance Case Study

**The problem:** GE wanted to put a human side to its business because almost everyone there had never met anyone else. They spent a lot of time talking on the phone and emailing, but almost no time face-to-face. Chief officer Jock Stewart decided they all needed to meet and then wanted to do something that would not only break the ice, but keep it broken.

**The dynamics:** Participants, 90 percent male, were waiting in "one of the

plushest" conference centres the ScreenDreams Entertainment team has yet been to. Participants seemed open to the idea.

**The tactics:** ScreenDreams Entertainment opened with anecdotes about the life of film and acting, and plenty of dry humour. In this case, the decision was to go longer with the opener and let people relax into the idea a bit more. This strategy seemed to work. The crowd warmed to it straight away, and in no time, laughter rippled through the room. The participants also responded extremely well to a talk about value and creativity in the work place, with many getting involved in longer conversations.

**The result:** Teams came back elated about films and the mood was boisterous at the gala dinner. All four films went down a treat. The lots of interest in and questions about real making and movie stars.

**Sics sums up:** "We got a 10-out-of-10. A perfect score. And we were very happy with that."

Boeing engineers in a scene

