

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/clips/team-building-tactics>

Giving hoodies is no small thing, says SendGrid CEO Sameer Dholakia. From the military to sports, uniforms foster camaraderie and inspire individuals to work toward a shared vision of success. Dholakia also explains why money spent on ways for employees to bond outside of the office is worthwhile: They will work even harder for each other when they're back in the office.



Transcript

- Give your new teammates a uniform.. Give 'em a uniform.. This may sound like a ridiculously tactical nit.. And I will tell you, I think it is one of the most powerful things done by any team.. Because, again, as an entrepreneur, think what you are doing is amassing a group of people and getting them into, forging them into, being a team that is gonna go take some hill together, right? Think about the greatest teams, whether it's in athletics, the military, pick your walk of life where you'd see a team.. It is highly common that they have a uniform.. And so at SendGrid, we serve a lot of, we go to lots of hackathons, we serve literally hundreds of thousands of developers around the world.. We hand out these blue SendGrid T-shirts, I think it's something like 10,000 a year, to developers.. But these blue hoodies, Jose, one of our founders is wearing, this blue hoodie is given to each new employee and only to employees.. Those hoodies are like these prized possessions and they show up on your very first day..

You get your laptop, your key card, and your blue hoodie.. And you walk into any of our offices and you'll see on the coat rack, lots and lots of these hoodies.. It's a uniform, they feel part of something that is larger than themselves.. Right? As they say, like in athletics, you'll often hear great coaches say "You play for the name on the front "of the jersey, not on the back." This is not about your name, it is about the team's name.. That's who we play for.. Creating that mindset amongst the teammates in the business you're about to build, I would argue is critically important.. Building connective tissue is a catchphrase that we talk about a lot at SendGrid.. It sounds kinda hokey again, soft skills, people stuff.. I believe that there is no investment too large for us to make in building connections across our teammates.. Where they get to know each other as people, as human beings, not just colleagues..

So we invest in things like this giant picture here is, you noticed the beach in the background, every January we fly the entire company down to Mexico.. In this case it's Cabo, other years different places.. But we get the entire company together in January, and, by the way, we do it again in June.. And we have a full day, day and a half actually, of content and alignment-hard business stuff.. And then we have a day where folks just hang.. And they're just by the pool together.. They're going and playing beach volleyball together.. They're going kayaking together.. But building relationships where they actually care about each other as human beings.. When you come back into the workplace, you now start playing for those teammates at a whole different level, at a whole different level..

Because you've got a connection to them that is very different.. So we invest a lot of time and a lot of money into these things.. And you go all the way down to interest groups.. We've got a wine lovers group and an outdoors activity group.. You create opportunities for folks to get to know one another as people..