

When we first got the memo about the corporate retreat, I was unthrilled to say the least. I knew that I was expected to go. In our company, corporate events were not to be ignored. Our boss considered himself an expert on human psychology, and corporate team building, retreats, and other events were his chance to demonstrate his mastery to the rest of us. Nonetheless, there was an upside to it. It was a week with no work, and no one minds that. I tried to think about it as a paid vacation, and put the thoughts of jargon and mumbo-jumbo out of my head.

I had never been on any real corporate retreats before. I had gone to a couple of events that tried to describe themselves as a corporate retreat, but usually they were simple business meetings designed to psych us up for some new project. Some of them were pretty informative, but few of them really constituted a break from the hustle and bustle of day in and day out work.

This corporate retreat was different. Right off the bat, we realize that. For one thing, the boss wasn't leading. Instead, we were led by an experienced outdoor guide. It started off very simply, without corporate icebreakers like most of the events have. That was another change from the norm, and I found it refreshing. Right from the get-go, things were looking better and better.

What I liked so much about the corporate retreat was that it was big on adventure and self-reliance, and small on talk. Basically, it really was a retreat for the whole company. Later when I saw the website, I figured out how they had successfully sold it to the boss. They talked a lot about how developing self-reliance in an outdoor environment will translate to better business leadership skills - something that I knew he would have gone for.

In reality, however, the real benefit was that it was giving us time to relax. At first, it was pretty hard being away from all the conveniences of modern life. Being in the middle of the woods, you couldn't turn on the lights, get away from the insects, put on the air conditioning, or even hear a radio. After we got used to it, however, the corporate retreat was a lot of fun. There was drumming, workshops on traditional crafts, and plenty of chances to share our experiences with each other.