



**SET OUT IN
SEARCH OF
A
STRONGER
TEAM**

BEST BETS FOR CORPORATE RETREATS (P.52)

seattle MONTHLY business

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO LOCAL BUSINESS

MAY 2006

THE PUGET SOUND SALARY SURVEY

**ARE YOU PAID
WHAT YOU'RE
WORTH?**

COMPARE YOUR
PAYCHECK WITH
THE REST OF
THE COUNTRY



SENIOR MOMENTUM

Dan Madsen's Leisure Care reinvents the retirement home rules

CHAIN REACTION

Which local companies will hit the franchise jackpot?

CUT THE CLUTTER

Efficiency enhancers to help get the job done



You'll search for a box. Inside, you'll find a team!

PALM TREES SWAY IN A GENTLE BREEZE and crystal-clear water laps at the shoreline. You can almost hear the beach calling your name as you dream of sunscreen ... until you realize that you'll be stuck inside an air-conditioned room discussing corporate strategy at a retreat.

To make matters worse, it's slowly dawning on you that you won't get to go outside for the duration of your stay in this beautiful tropical paradise. And you're going home without that tan you'd dreamed of.

Those of us confined to our cubicles may be tempted to roll our eyes and say, "Yeah, cry me a river, buddy." But according to corporate retreat expert John Chen, the above scenario is not uncommon and is one key factor that can cause a retreat to fail.

"If you come to a beautiful location and sit in a conference room for three days, [you] are really going to be mad," says Chen, CEO of Playtime Inc., a Seattle-based company that arranges corporate retreats and team-building, leadership and training exercises. "Once you get to a great location, take advantage of it. If you're going to Hawaii, hold some of your business lunches outdoors."

As important as location is, it's only a small part of a successful retreat. After all, real estate agents are the only ones who believe location trumps all else—and since realtors don't plan many retreats, it's

"One of the things we struggle with here is why—why are we having a retreat?" Hartman says. "That's a question that's being asked a lot more. Can we justify the expense? Can we justify the staff time? If we're holding the retreat, what are [attendees] going to get out of the face-to-face interaction? If we can't answer it, why not send them an e-mail?"

FIND A GOOD THEME. A strong, well-developed theme can help reinforce the overall goal of any retreat.

As an example, Chen mentions the case of an outdoor retailer that had five stores under one roof. Although the departments were all in the same building, there was so little cooperation between individual store managers that even shoppers were jarred at the difference between departments.

The goal of the company's retreat was to foster cooperation and to emphasize the theme of "whole store shopping." Team-building exercises required people from each of the shops to work together yet, at the same time, compete with each other to complete a specified task. Managers got Chen's "competitive/collaborative" message and began prominently displaying merchandise from other departments in their own stores. The result was a drastic increase in sales that met the company's aggressive goals, Chen says.

RETREATS THAT WORK

How to plan corporate getaways that people actually *want* to attend.

{ By David Volk }

always a good idea to look at a list of recommended event "dos and don'ts" before securing your site.

This checklist may be short, but it could mean the difference between success and failure. Sure, getting out of the office is great, but the escape pays off best when the effort adds to the bottom line.

KNOW YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME. It may sound simple, but many companies don't even ask the most important question before planning a retreat, according to Julie Burke, owner of Tall Order, a Vancouver, B.C.-based firm that creates food-based, team-building activities. "The first question I ask people is, 'What is your objective?' They don't think that through," Burke says.

Reasons for retreats are as varied as the organizations that hold them. The sales people might gather to discuss the addition of product lines or new approaches. At the same time, the executive staff might meet to engage in a bit of strategic planning.

At the Association of Washington Cities, the typical goals for most meetings are to forge connections between veteran members and newcomers and to give new members more information about the organization and leadership development, according to DeAnn Hartman, the association's meeting and workshop planner.

PJ Hummel, the owner of the Tacoma-based event production company, PJ Hummel & Co., remembers an ice cream company client that was planning a retreat after a particularly bad year that required staff layoffs. The company chose the theme "The Tides are Changing," Hummel recalls, a concept that not only allowed executives to acknowledge the difficulties by talking about the need for change, but also helped dramatize the need for a new direction and emphasize that they were all in the same boat together.

One of Hummel's banking clients used the theme "high octane" to dramatize the benefits of speed, efficiency and cooperation in working together. The concept, she says, enabled executives to hammer the point home by emphasizing how auto-racing crews collaborate to achieve a common goal.

BECOME A SOCIAL ENGINEER. Make sure every moment counts and supports the theme. When Chen plans a cocktail party at a retreat, for example, he arranges the seating so that certain conversations occur and the right people meet. "If a retreat is well thought out, each piece builds upon itself for an exponential result," he says.

Hummel agrees. If one of her events calls for a party, she supplies her own furniture to make sure that people will sit





PLAYTIME, INC., CEO JOHN CHEN, THE SELF-STYLED "BIG KID" OF CORPORATE RETREATS, IS FAMOUS FOR HIS GEOTEAMING CONCEPTS, INVOLVING THE USE OF GPS UNITS TO FIND HIDDEN CACHES. TEAMS MUST COLLABORATE TO REACH A COMMON GOAL, YET STILL COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER, FOSTERING BOTH COOPERATION AND FUN AT THE SAME TIME.

close to each other. She brings in square tables for meals and has people eat "family style" to encourage participants to meet new people.

She also uses stand-up, bistro-style tables at parties because it forces strangers to come together and get to know one another.

"The whole point of it is so that people don't park at a table and talk to the four people they know," Hummel adds. "People won't sit down at a table with people they don't know."

DON'T DO THINGS YOUR PARTICIPANTS WON'T VALUE.

Planners must be able to gauge the abilities and comfort level of the employees attending the retreat. Not all may be interested or even able to participate in intense physical workouts.

One of Chen's favorite examples is the story of a company that chose a corporate Olympics as its team-building exercise. The event failed miserably because "it had nothing to do with the goals they had, and they lost many participants to the bar," he explains.

Fortunately, physical activities aren't the only option. While Tall Order favors food-oriented tasks, Playtime Inc. opts for geoteaming, an event using GPS satellite units and other technology to help team members find a hidden cache.

The activities may be different, but the intended outcome is the same. The format is just less threatening, Burke says.

"Most of the [participants] are happy. They're laughing. You're going beyond their comfort zone," Burke adds, but "it's not asking someone to jump off a bridge or climb a 12-foot wall."

The lesson applies to other aspects of retreats as well. Chen has also seen firms host expensive dinners for workers when many employees with families would have preferred a cookout so they could bring their kids and be in a more relaxed setting.

FOLLOW UP ON THE LESSONS LEARNED.

No matter what activities you choose, talking about the lessons learned during the gathering and reviewing them later on—known as experiential learning—is as important as the retreat, Chen says. He even has the numbers to prove it.

Chen asked experiential education expert Simon Priest to study Playtime's team-building activities. Priest found that Chen's participants not only retained the lessons learned longer than they would have in a classroom setting, but also showed continued improvement with follow-up training.

In fact, Priest's research showed that teams without follow-up instruction typically reverted to their old work habits and practices within six months, while teams that had a review typically retained 65 percent of the gains they made over the same period.

Find a site that has something for everybody. To make a retreat appealing, the destination should be enticing and interesting, even if it's only a one-day event.

The Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce took this lesson to heart when it planned its staff retreat last December. While the organization didn't have much money, it still wanted something special, according to Evelyn Lemoine, the chamber's vice president of human resources. So, the nonprofit opted for a one-and-a-half day gathering at the Top of the Market in Pike Place Market. Because of the central Seattle location, participants were able to spend the night at home and finish the following day.

"It was nicer than some ugly room. It had a view of the water," Lemoine says. "It felt like a good place to work." The savings allowed the organization to take everyone out for drinks at the end of the first day, she adds.

As the Chamber's experience shows, having a beer budget doesn't have to ruin a good retreat. **58**

WHERE THE ELITE MEET TO RETREAT

How to 'get away from it all' without going too far or spending too much.

» If finances keep your retreat options close to home, don't despair. Washington may be short on hot, sun-kissed sand, but it still has plenty of nearby (mostly affordable) getaways that are surrounded by beauty.

There's the in-city hideaway mere minutes from downtown that feels like someplace hours away. There's also the horse ranch near the foot of Mount Si, the quiet woodsy spot near the airport and the gourmet escape that's just a short ferry crossing from the city.

Here are some options, beginning with the most affordable, that you may not know about, but can fit a range of budgets:

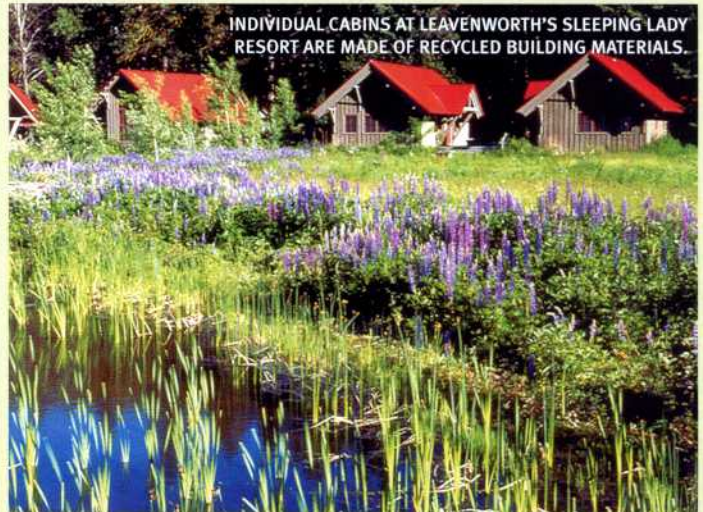
TALARIS (4000 NE 41st St.; 206.268.7000; talariscc.com.) The slogan "minutes away, miles from distraction" says it all. Talaris may be near University Village, but the fountain, duck pond and winding road into this 18-acre property make it seem a world away. High ceilings and large windows in meeting rooms give it a lodge feel. When daytime meetings aren't in session, participants can lounge on the lawn, read or play croquet. The 31 on-site guest rooms, starting at \$120 per night, are available for overnight retreats, and the 5,000 square feet of meeting space can accommodate up to 140 guests. Packages start at \$69 per person, per day.

CEDARBROOK WASHINGTON MUTUAL LEADERSHIP CENTER (18525 36th Ave. S, SeaTac; 866.901.WAMU; cedarbrookcenter.com.) The feeling is "upscale residential" at this hidden retreat situated adjacent to a wetlands area near SeaTac International Airport. Its living-room-style (yet still high-tech) parlors at the entrance of both guest room wings add to the homey atmosphere and encourage lodgers to interact with each other. There are 102 rooms, but retreats are rarely scheduled concurrently. Meeting packages start at \$75 per person; overnight guest rooms start at \$179 per night.

ROSEBUD RIVER RANCH (North Bend; rosebudriverranch.com) This relatively new retreat at the foot of Mount Si doesn't have guest rooms, but it does have something that most other sites don't: horses. Equine events are the most expensive options (prices vary depending on group size) and have room for small groups of 16 to 30 people. For occasions sans horses, however, companies can opt to meet in a 1,200-square-foot, lodge-style room with picture windows looking out over a football-field-sized lawn to a view of Mount Si. Day meeting space fits up to 75 people and includes use of the miles of hiking trails and outdoor social areas. Price varies depending on group size, but is usually in the \$1,200 to \$1,500 range.

FORT WORDEN STATE PARK CONFERENCE CENTER (200 Battery Way, Port Townsend; 360.344.4400; fortworden.org) This century-old former military garrison at the entrance to Puget Sound doesn't have the amenities of a modern conference center, but it has lots of history. Despite limited connectivity, there are

plenty of meeting places, lots of wide-open spaces and unique lodging in the Victorian houses that once served as officers' quarters. When they aren't in meetings, visitors can wander trails, walk the beach, roam the empty artillery emplacements or re-enact scenes from "An Officer and A Gentlemen," which was filmed here. Rates start at \$98 per person.



SLEEPING LADY (7375 Icicle Rd., Leavenworth; 800.574.2123; sleepinglady.com) Northwest broadcasting magnate Harriet Bullitt built this mountain retreat just outside of Leavenworth, using environmentally friendly design and emphasizing community. The meeting, guest and dining rooms are all in different structures, so visitors can experience the great outdoors while walking between buildings on the 67-acre property (pictured above) overlooking the Icicle River. Rooms are arranged in clusters, and each grouping points inward toward a courtyard so guests have a common space in which to talk. Rates are inclusive and start at \$250 per person for single occupancy, but dip to \$135 for quadruple occupancy.

ALDERBROOK RESORT (10 E Alderbrook Dr., Union; 360.898.2200; alderbrookresort.com) A high-end property with a view to match, Alderbrook is situated on the southern end of Hood Canal, offering impressive views of the Olympic Mountains. The facility has a lodge-like feel, but includes everything a high-tech retreat facilitator would need to simply plug in and go. The ballroom has windows that stretch nearly from floor to ceiling and the meeting room features a fireplace. Retreat attendees with a golfing jones are able to book preferential tee times, as well. There are 77 guest rooms, and rates start at \$200 per night.

THE INN AT LANGLEY (400 First St., Langley; 360.221.3033; innatlangley.com) The highest-end option may well be the most distinctive. Meetings at this 26-room facility on southern Whidbey Island can be held in a 550-square-foot conference space with 15-foot-tall windows and a view that runs from Penn Cove to the distant Cascade Range; food-related events also can be held in a 990-square-foot chef's kitchen. The kitchen has a two-sided, river-rock fireplace, plus handmade tables and buffet bars that double as presentation areas for speakers. One of the most popular activities is an exercise in which teams help create their own desserts. Rates start at \$265 per person per night. —D.V.

NORTHWEST RETREAT VENUES

Looking for a greater variety of places to hold your corporate retreat? Listed below are hotels, resorts and a wide variety of creative locations to make your team-building activity a memorable experience.

| Venue | Capacity | Sq.Ft. | Price | Venue | Capacity | Sq.Ft. | Price |
|--|----------|---|--|--|----------|--------------|--|
| ALEXIS HOTEL 1007 First Ave. Seattle 866.356.8894 alexishotel.com | 150 | 620-1,716 | \$600-\$3,500 | MAYFLOWER PARK HOTEL 405 Olive Way Seattle 206.623.8700 mayflowerpark.com | 200 | 579-1,500 | \$185 per person |
| ARGOSY CRUISES 1101 Alaskan Way, Pier 55 Seattle 206.623.1445 argosycruises.com | 600 | Boats range from 36 to 180 feet in length | \$1,500 (and up, includes private boat and luncheon) | MEYDENBAUER CENTER 11100 NE 6th St. Bellevue 425.637.1020 meydenbauer.com | 3,500 | 1,000-36,000 | \$4,800 per day (AV equipment and catering are an additional cost) |
| BELL HARBOR INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER 2211 Alaskan Way, Pier 66, Seattle 206.441.6666 bellharbor.org | 5,000 | 160-20,665 | \$67-\$20,000 | THE MUSEUM OF FLIGHT 9404 East Marginal Way S, Seattle 206.764.5720 | 3,500 | 528-141,000 | \$200-\$20,000 per event |
| BELLEVUE WESTIN 600 Bellevue Way NE Bellevue starwoodhotels.com 425.638.1000 | 700 | 239-7,300 | \$600-\$30,000 | THE MUSEUM OF GLASS 1801 Dock St. Tacoma 253.284.4719 museumofglass.org | 340 | 3,900-6,900 | \$75-\$4,500 per event |
| HOTEL BELLWETHER One Bellwether Way Bellingham 360-392-3100 | 700 | 234-5,960 | \$75 per day (Includes meals) (Customizes to guest, works with budgets only) | THE GOLF CLUB AT NEWCASTLE 15500 Six Penny Ln. Newcastle 425.793.5566 newcastlegolf.com | 350 | 650-5,200 | Varies depending on time and date of event |
| CHINESE ROOM AT SMITH TOWER 506 Second Ave. Seattle 206.622.3131 chineseroom.com | 99 | 1,866 | \$300-\$2,000 per event (Depending on time & date) | QUINULT BEACH RESORT & CASINO 78 State Route 115 Ocean Shores 360.289.9466 quinultbeachresort.com | 800 | 1,395-16,000 | \$200-\$300 per event |
| COLUMBIA TOWER CLUB 701 Fifth Ave. Seattle 206.622.2010 columbia-tower.com | 350 | 210-2,622 | \$50 per person (includes breakfast & lunch) | RESORT AT PORT LUDLOW One Heron Road Port Ludlow 877.805.0868 portludlowresort.com | 60 | 405-784 | \$300 per day |
| COLUMBIA WINERY 14030 NE 145th St. Woodinville 425.488.2776 columbiawinery.com | 250 | 576-3,744 | \$550-\$7,800 (including food and beverage minimum) | SEMAHMOO RESORT 9565 Semiahmoo Dr. Blaine 360.318.2000 semiahmoo.com | 1,000 | 204-7,200 | \$285-\$305 (off season) \$315-\$345 (peak season) |
| THE EDGEWATER 2411 Alaskan Way, Pier 67, Seattle 206.728.7000 edgewaterhotel.com | 200 | 300-2,600 | \$450-\$6,000 per days | SHERATON TACOMA HOTEL 1320 Broadway Plaza Tacoma 253.572.3200 sheratontacoma.com | 1,800 | 528-14,336 | \$150-\$4,000 (for space rental only) |
| EMERALD DOWNS 2300 Emerald Downs Drive, Auburn 253.288.7000 emerald downs.com | 1,000 | 322-5,041 | \$18-\$32 per person | SUN MOUNTAIN LODGE PO Box 1000 Winthrop 509.996.2211 sunmountainlodge.com | 300 | 380-2,100 | \$197-\$299 per person (for "Complete Meeting Package") |
| FAIRMONT OLYMPIC HOTEL 411 University St. Seattle 206.620.1700 fairmont.com/seattle | 750 | 325-5,100 | \$25-\$125 per person (Catering) | TPC AT SNOQUALMIE RIDGE 36005 SE Ridge St. Snoqualmie 425.396.6000 tpcsr.com | 450 | 1,600-4,200 | \$2,500-20,000 per day (additional cost for AV equipment and catering) |
| KIANA LODGE 14976 Sandy Hook Rd. NE Poulsbo 360.598.4311 kianalodge.com | 1,000 | 1,150-9,800 | \$25-\$40 per person | WASHINGTON ATHLETIC CLUB 1325 6th Ave. Seattle 206.622.7900 wac.net | 350 | 285-3,270 | \$500-\$6,300 |
| KITSAP CONFERENCE CENTER 100 Washington Ave., Bremerton 360.377.3785 kitsapconferencecenter.com | 660 | 696-6,000 | \$31-\$55 per person | THE WOODMARK HOTEL 1200 Carillon Point Kirkland 425.822.3700 woodmarkhotel.com | 300 | 380-2,100 | \$197-\$299 per person (for "Complete Meeting Package") |
| MUCKLESHOOT CASINO 2402 Auburn Way S Auburn 800.804.4944 muckleshootcasino.com | 300 | Space varies | \$10-\$30 per person | WORLD TRADE CENTER 2200 Alaskan Way Seattle 206.441.5144 wtcseattle.com | 170 | 250-1,800 | \$6.50-\$53 per person (catering) |