

INDUSTRY INSIDER

Essential info for meeting professionals

Team Building Meets

GEOTEAMING

Team building can be such a yawn. Fill out this worksheet. Answer these questions. Compromise! Blah, blah, blah...blech. John Chen knows. He used to be there, worked at Microsoft for years, ho hum. Team building would be so much cooler if it was, like, a treasure hunt with high-tech equipment, with GPS receivers, digital cameras and hand-held computers. At least that's what Chen thought. Now it's what he does.

Owner of Seattle-based Geoteaming, Chen creates treasure hunt courses in cities worldwide and holds team-building events using the latest in GPS technology. Enter an item, find a location, answer a riddle, take a photo. It's fun—but most importantly, teammates learn to interact, strategize and trust.

"All learning should be fun, but you still need to learn," Chen said. "What's great about Geoteaming is that it teaches cross-team collaboration, which is the biggest ROI a corporation can get from team building. Corporations are so big these days, you have to have connection and trust between teams."

Chen's recent foray into team building isn't out of character. After leaving Microsoft in 1999, he spent two days in a Huntington Beach conference room with an executive coach trying to understand his "greater purpose."

"I always believed there was something I was supposed to do, I just didn't know what it was," he said. He walked away knowing a little bit more about himself and his drivers: technology, adventure and human change.

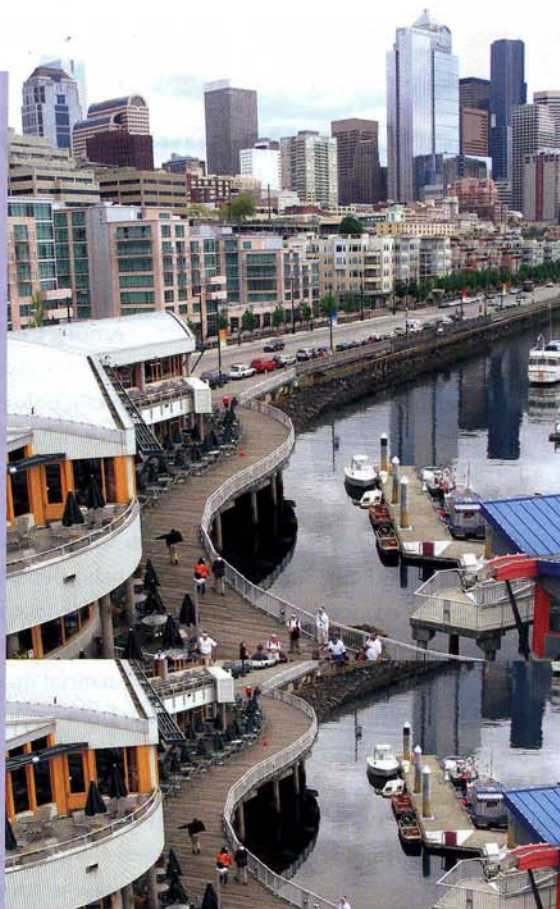
Welcome Playtime Inc. and "The Journey." Chen designed a nine-month program for 23 Fortune 500 executives, which culminated at six months with the scaling of Mount Rainier in Washington. The summit was a metaphor for the achievement of fundamental life goals, and his students recognized changes within themselves. *Fait accompli*. The Journey led to weddings and divorces, business successes and new professions.

Chen loved the course, but also knew it wasn't his final stop. In 2001, an advisor with decades of experience in "experiential" education e-mailed an article on geocaching, a treasure hunting game in which participants use GPS devices to hide, seek and find containers (or caches). Let's see: technology, adventure, human change—seems about right.

"A year after the sport was invented, I was already thinking that geocaching would make a great team-building activity," Chen said. "It's like The Journey, but it's something everyone can do."

That first year, Chen held six events; in 2007, he planned 140 events worldwide. For more information, visit www.geoteaming.com.

—Jessie States



GEOTEAMING



GEOTEAMING