

GAME FOR SOME ACTION

The immersive and engaging quality of the game environment provides a powerful platform for learning and development, says Jayne Lusk. She explains why a Kiwi escape game requiring logic, lateral thinking and problem-solving skills is proving to be a great way to foster teamwork and re-energise staff.

GAMIFIED LEARNING AND

development is a fast-growing concept, particularly in Europe and the United States. The theory is simple: use the immersive, engaging quality of the game environment as the context for learning and development. Bringing a sense of fun, dynamism and healthy competition sets a positive platform for powerful initiatives, without the contrived environment learning and development delegates often dislike.

When the high-performing team at Nike NZ wanted time away from the office to re-energise and re-calibrate, they decided to take on the challenging Kiwi Escape Game in our specially themed space in central Auckland. With staff split into two teams competing head to head in identical game rooms, it was a perfect environment for the positive, competitive Nike team.

"We really had no idea what to expect," says Mike Caird, national sales manager. "Our teams were immediately immersed in the themed game rooms, with the clock on 60 minute countdown. We were hooked straight away!"

Billed as 'the most fun you'll ever have in a locked room', the escape games, designed by psychologists, are based around a challenging set of clues and puzzles that teams of two to six people need to solve on their way to uncovering a quintessential Kiwi mystery.

The fully themed game rooms aim to challenge people's minds in different ways, requiring problem solving skills, logic,

lateral thinking and teamwork. Game Masters monitor progress through live video feeds, providing hints and ideas when teams get stuck.

The minute teams enter the game rooms, things like hierarchy and politics are stripped away—people very quickly realise that embracing diversity of skills and different ways of thinking is the quickest path to success.

The puzzles are cleverly designed so that each and every person will make a contribution. Everyone feels valued and involved and people build new-found respect for their colleagues' approaches and abilities.

Nike's teams made swift progress through their respective game rooms, only needing a couple of hints each along the way. One team took a 'division of labour' approach, with sub-teams focusing on puzzles at some points in the game, while the other team worked together as a unit right through to the end. In the final analysis, not much separated the teams.

Mike says after his team had escaped, a big part of the benefit was reviewing what they had done well, and what they could have done better.

"The other team approached puzzles and interpreted clues in totally different ways and still got through in very similar time," he says. "It was really engaging to explore our problem-solving approaches, and the way we worked as teams. We headed back to the office energised and ready to apply our game learning to real life."

To capture and capitalise on

the post-game energy, Escapade also offers facilitated learning and development sessions tailored to what businesses are looking to achieve. The packages range from bespoke full-day experiences to lighter touch formats with a short discussion and discovery session following the game.

Fisher and Paykel Healthcare was another company to take on the challenge, adding bespoke facilitation to the game package. With a very busy production and manufacturing function and a number of new people, team members hadn't had much time to get to know each other out of work. Fisher and Paykel Healthcare was looking for a chance to create more cohesion, unity, and trust, giving the teams the platform to build rapport.

Our facilitators explored the challenges and opportunities with team leaders and stakeholders ahead of the games and created a simple learning and development activity to fit within the framework of Fisher and Paykel Healthcare's teambuilding day.

The game rooms were immediately lively and engaged under the pressure of the clock, and the teams very quickly found ways to leverage their diverse sets of skills.

Following the games, the facilitation focused on drawing out what the teams had learned about themselves and their colleagues in the game, and how they'd be able to apply that greater knowledge and understanding in the work context.

The facilitated packages are



great for businesses looking to target particular things—like improving communication, building teamwork, and breaking down silos, for example. We've had businesses looking to break down barriers between different departments, and others aiming to boost communication and problem solving ability. Our facilitators love working with people enthused and excited from their game experience.

Gamified learning and development—including escape games—offers a fresh, inclusive challenge that brings a sense of energy and good natured competition to the table. New Zealand is one of the very first countries to combine escape games with learning and development initiatives, which is exciting for HR practitioners and business leaders looking for new ways to engage, motivate and develop individuals and teams. 

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