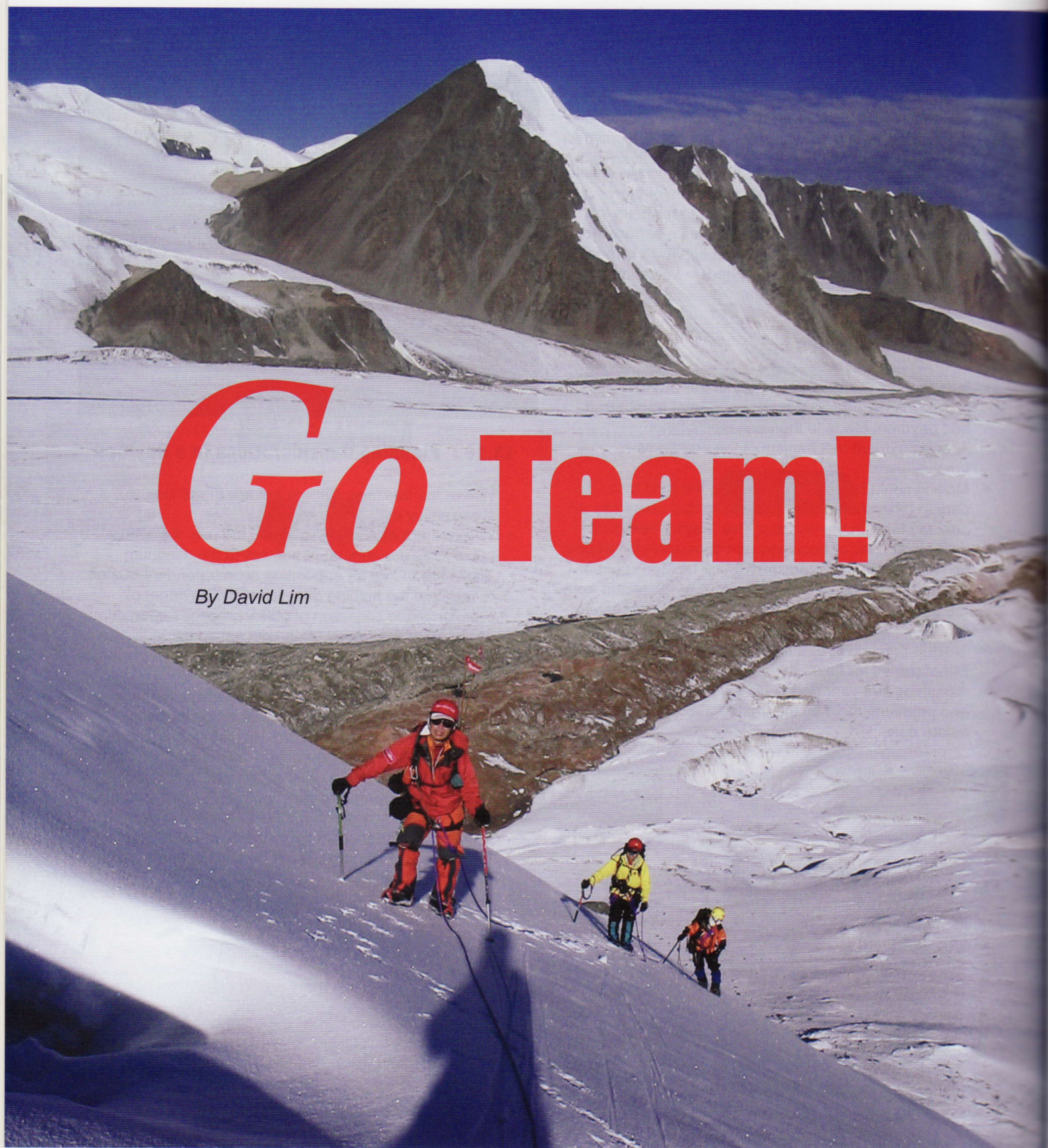


# Go Team!

*By David Lim*





## Go Team!

A team of two tackling a steep mountain ridge, bound only by the trust between them, and a slender thread. A marketing team rolling out a pitch to a key potential client amidst fierce competition. Two different goals, environments but with one common force multiplier – the power of teamwork.

Teamwork and how groups of individuals move towards a high level of performance is one of the least understood aspects of organizational development. Some diverse examples in the past include the exciting stages of the development and delivery of the Apple computer in the '80s, the recovery of the Apollo 13 crew after a near-disaster, Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary's final summit push on Mt Everest in 1953 – all are marvelous and very different examples of great teamwork.

In my context, my Everest teams of 1998 and 2001 displayed marvelous teamwork, against potentially lethal conditions, as well as overcoming personal ambitions to contribute to overall team success and safety.

When people are empowered to behave in a way so that everyone on the team feels great, and want to see others succeed; produce their best work, then that team is fast becoming a high performing team. The following represent some key strategies in creating high performing teams:

### Clarity of Goals:

The most important strategy is for a team to develop a crystal clear goal that they can not only see, but also feel. It has to represent an exciting three-dimensional future that can work backwards towards their present state; and then choose the right actions to bring into reality. What doesn't work are fuzzy, ever-shifting goals, which are not articulated powerfully, and those that have a drifting time-line to completion.

### Consider Trust as a Communication Skill:

The most critical element in managing expectations and disagreements in teams is quality, unambiguous communication. This is where communicating and reaching agreement



at each stage of a project and next steps are critical. Getting 'buy-in', building rapport and managing disparate interests are key skills everyone should have. When you have good communication, you get trust. Trust, is essentially, a communication skill, and can, even overcome personality clashes in a team.

At Everest Motivation Team, we believe that quality facilitation of experiential learning activities to be an effective change catalyst. Facilitation creates a safe environment for teams to share their views and disagreements, and open space to 'grow'. As participants have never done many of these activities or challenges, they approach them in as natural a way as possible i.e. we get to see them expressing behaviours they would normally display. Adventure-based learning is another tool where certain challenges can evoke powerful emotional, and subsequently, effective learning experiences.

### Teambuilding Is A Process, not an Event:

In recent years, "teambuilding" has become a dirty word. Many of the activities used by experienced facilitators are also being used by companies, which are more into managing events and entertainment, rather than delivering the skill of facilitating change and self-derived learning in teams. These programmes are great for organizations looking for fun and games. However, you will not achieve a more serious outcome since outcomes-based facilitation is absent – or worse, poorly executed by ill-trained 'instructors'. Some clients also focus too much on an activity's mechanics, rather than the potential opportunity to facilitate learning from the activity's outcomes. They want their people be 'doing' a variety of new and different activities, instead of considering the appropriateness of these activities in creating better teams.

In short, I think people are getting confused between organized 'races', potentially unhealthy competitions, and actual teambuilding.



Many 'teams' are merely work groups – groups of people working in an office who only come together, or share resources when the situation requires. Moving them from this stage to an authentic team stage is a process demanding time, mutual supportive behaviours purposeful communication, and a unifying goal. All these elements must be encouraged and developed to reach the goal of becoming an authentic team. You can now actually track a team's effectiveness after a teambuilding session using a variety of tools, so there can be some ROI that is measurable. After all, if you were paying for a teambuilding programme, would not you want to track results afterwards? Amazingly, few clients understand the importance of tracking or are not able to commit to teambuilding as an ongoing affair.

### Change Your Language to Manage Change

Some of the keys in successfully persuading a team why the change is necessary involve rapport-building skills, and leadership behaviours which address the various motivational triggers of a team. It is vital at this stage that the language used in the office should be positive, and is framed to enhance 'possibilities', and 'opportunities' as a result of the changes. This helps the process of change rather than the use of dismissive language and belief statements that hold back change rather than promulgate it.

Applying a psychological or assessment tool to a team can also help identify ( depending on the profile used ) differ-

ences in values, risk quotients, and motivational drivers that can affect a team. Combining such tools with appropriate teambuilding measures is taking the strategy of managing teams to the next level by closing the gaps between the team members. Subsequently, small group coaching or specific individual coaching is an effective follow-on in helping lessons learnt in a 1 – 2 day programme actually take root.

Some companies have included a teambuilding component into the fabric of their human resource development, rather than just a one-off, or an annual event. Clients of ours which qualify for such commitment to this process include AP Moller, whose merchant shipping officer cadre go through a thorough technical, cultural, and adventure-based programme where they derive learning through rigorous facilitation. We've run quite a number of these programmes based on a process and people-based leadership model. Another company that has an admirable belief in the efficacy of experiential-based teambuilding is OSIM. Others I can think of include the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, PepsiCo and Singapore Telecom

Ultimately, you have to decide for yourselves if you are seriously into developing great teams through teambuilding and other processes, or are merely organizing a 'fun' event for your people. Choose wisely.



*David Lim, Chief Motivation Officer  
of Everest Motivation Team Pte Ltd.*

**David Lim** is Chief Motivation Officer of Everest Motivation Team Pte Ltd., a leadership and teambuilding consultancy. He led the landmark 1st Singapore Everest Expedition in 1998, and nearly 50 other climbs and expeditions. His team combines real-life leadership experiences innovative tools and methodologies to create high-performing teams and leaders. David and his team have presented and delivered programmes in 13 countries and 23 cities.





## Build Great Teams, Grow Great Leaders

At Everest Motivation Team, we work with you to create a fun, learning environment that will identify and produce:

- winning team behaviours
- stronger relationships
- collaborative mindsets
- group energy for common objectives
- greater "a-ha" moments as teams discover their
- greatest strengths – or weaknesses

## How Are We Different?

Our facilitators and trainers have led Mt Everest expeditions, sailed the seas and flown the skies. We have walked the talk, and also lend a depth of decades of professional corporate experiences to help your teams.

Programmes are from a 1/2 day to three days, indoors or outdoors. Using a mix of experiential learning methods, and skilled facilitators, we debrief each team challenge to your unique outcomes. Activities range from high-energy adventure-based learning programmes, to problem-solving indoor challenges – or a mix of both.

For better results, we can design a complete organisational teambuilding initiative with a teambuilding 'inventory' of your teams; and track your Return on Investment

Does your present provider offer a quantitative and qualitative means to track your team's progress and results? We do! Additional tools include motivation profiling, corporate values, 360 feedback assessments, coaching, and leadership evaluations. Contact us at [office@everestmotivation.com](mailto:office@everestmotivation.com) for a discussion about your needs.



Join the Oct 17th Out of the Box session at the 8th Asia Pacific Financial Planning Conference with leading corporate coach, best-selling author, and Everest expedition leader, David Lim. He is also founder of **Everest Motivation Team**.

Contact us at [office@everestmotivation.com](mailto:office@everestmotivation.com) for a free needs analysis.

**Participants felt that the teambuilding sessions were not only fun but drew many valuable lessons which could be applied at work. I found the debrief after each session to be very insightful, much better than those we had previously**

Ms Soon Fui Yoon  
Regional HR  
Spring ASPAC



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