



# UPDATE

*Summer 2001*

## *Highlights*

### **REAL TEAMBUILDING**

This issue of UPDATE focuses on REAL TEAMBUILDING. We believe that “the games trainers play” no longer have a place in today’s highly competitive workplace. That is not to say we believe that work and fun are mutually exclusive, but instead, for teambuilding to be a valuable experience, the teambuilding session must include learning. That learning, in turn, must be directly transferable to the workplace. To accomplish this goal, we work with clients to define their goals and objectives for the session or event. We then design a teambuilding session that meets those goals and objectives in real environments with real people. We attempt not to plan an event that has little value added, particularly to the real world our clients work in, but we focus on those activities that each participant, as well as each team, can take back to the workplace. The challenge is to do all this and still have fun! We are able to draw on over 25 years of team behavioral work while bringing in fresh and youthful ideas in an environment that results in meaningful and REAL TEAMBUILDING! We hope you enjoy this article.

## Stories from the Mystic Adventure Challenge

On July 15, A.C. Macris Consultants hosted a teambuilding activity for Tommy Hilfiger Footwear, Inc. during the company’s seasonal sales meeting in Mystic, CT. The activity, dubbed the Mystic Adventure Challenge, was created according to the client’s request for a competitive, “Survivor”-style activity. The Mystic Adventure Challenge divided the participants into five teams of approximately ten members each, named after local Native American tribes. Each tribe was given the same equipment, including a variety of maps and charts, several disposable cameras, a fishing pole (but no bait!), and guidebooks with detailed instructions and challenge activity information. The tribes then sent several members out on 15-foot boats on the Mystic River to complete a number of activities, including a treasure hunt, a buoy search, a photo hunt, and fishing. Other team members explored the local towns of Mystic, Old Mystic, Noank, and Stonington on bikes, searching for photos, making grave rubbings, and learning about the history and heritage of the area. Still more team members went to the Mystic Seaport to participate in a “Life at Sea” search created through a collaboration between A.C. Macris and the Seaport Interpretation department. For the program’s culmination, a tribal council of two judges held court as tribes presented their findings. The tribes were all very competitive, and spent over three hours vying for points! We would like to share with you some of the most memorable stories from the Mystic Adventure Challenge, and hope you will find them as interesting as we have.



The president of Tommy Hilfiger Footwear, Inc. caught a beautiful striped bass while fishing on the Mystic River. Catching a fish was worth 35 points for his tribe, Scaticook, so his teammates were thrilled. But after consulting the regulations for the state of Connecticut, they found their striper was just under legal size. The tribe, after briefly discussing their options, took a photo of the proud president and his catch and then released the fish back into the river. Even though they were empty-handed while the other tribes were proudly showing off their fish at the closing ceremony, Scaticook still received their 35 points and a photo suitable for framing.

While biking to Noank in search of 30 precious points for the Scaticook tribe, an account executive got a flat tire. She phoned support staff and told them her problem and location. The support staff then contacted Mystic Cycle Center, which sent out a mechanic to change the tire while the account executive’s teammate continued on to Noank to earn their points.

Once her tire was repaired, the account executive was back on the hunt, unscathed by her brush with disaster.

The Paucatuck tribe's boat team had already caught their fish and was in search of the items on the photo hunt, especially the children fishing. After cruising around unsuccessfully, they spotted a young child sitting on the town dock with his parents. The team photographed him holding their fishing pole, then gave the pole to the happy child. At the closing ceremony, when they presented the photo, they told the details of their story, including the conversation they had had with the family.

The eventual winners of the competition, the Paucatuck tribe, found that to earn their points, they had to go the extra mile—literally. One of the tribe's bike team members had a minor accident when trying to bike while communicating with other team members on his cell phone. Although he was not badly injured, the biker and his partner returned to the cycle center a little early, leaving several challenges incomplete. The tribe's Seaport team, however, had finished their challenges with some time to spare, and rather than sit back and relax during their extra time, offered to pick up the slack for the tribe. The Seaport team members hiked over a mile uphill to help complete the bike team's challenges, while bike team members coached them via cell phone from the cycle center. The tribe's victory was a testimony to the teamwork, creativity, and cooperation they exhibited during the challenge activity.

The Mohegan tribe was fiercely competitive, and its bike team refused to leave any question unanswered. One of the challenges on the bike hunt was to find, on Mystic's Captains' Row, the home most recently occupied by a sea captain. For bonus points, a team could find which classic submarine book the captain authored. When the Mohegan bikers found the home, they decided to go for the bonus and knocked on the front door. The home's current owner opened the door and invited the team inside. Not knowing the story himself, he called a submarine captain friend, who was able to give the team the correct answer. The Mohegan tribe tied for first-place with the Paucatuck tribe, due in a

large part to their determination in completing all their challenges.

Some of the most amusing moments of the competition actually happened during the closing ceremony. One of the tribal council's judges challenged the Paucatuck tribe to sing the theme song from "Gilligan's Island" and identify each team member as a character on the show. The tribe rose to the challenge, and stood and sang loudly—Gilligan, the Skipper, the Professor, Ginger, Mary Ann, and the rest of the gang. The Paucatuck tribe's vocal ability was tested again later in the closing ceremony, when the tribe's Seaport team was asked to sing a sea chantey they learned during their challenge activities. The entire Paucatuck tribe joined in and sang a "line chantey" to the amusement of the tribal council and the other tribes.



Through the Mystic Adventure Challenge, team members were able to focus on strategy, creativity, and leadership in a fun and competitive setting. They also had the opportunity to get to know their co-workers better—most participants said that the activity had a positive impact on their relationships with other team members—outside of a strictly business atmosphere. The feedback we received also indicated that participants really enjoyed and appreciated being able to interact in the local Mystic community, and also enjoyed being able to choose whether they participated on boats, on bikes, or at the Seaport. According to most responses, the only boring part of the activity was the bus ride to and from the Mystic Hilton. Taking that into consideration, we certainly believe this event was a success.

UPDATE is published quarterly by A.C. Macris Consultants. UPDATE's charter is to provide interesting articles, on timely topics, authored by people in industry, academia, or business.

Please contact us at the following:

**Telephone: 860.572.0043**

**Toll Free: 888.225.4963**

**FAX: 860.446.1882**

**E-mail: ACMPC @ [acmacris.com](mailto:acmacris.com)**

U.S. Mail: P.O. Box 535, Mystic, CT 06355

*This UPDATE Newsletter is copyrighted material. All rights are reserved. It is against the law to make copies of this material without getting specific written permission in advance from A.C. Macris.*

# REAL TEAMBUILDING

REAL PLACES + REAL PEOPLE + REAL OBJECTIVES = REAL TEAMBUILDING

Teambuilding is a widely used term that conjures up images of people having fun, swinging from ropes, building Lego houses, etc., etc., etc. Years ago we designed “team training” which had a very technical connotation, and focused on very specific team/crew oriented tasks. Teambuilding, however, was something quite different. It was a chance for co-workers to interact in a non-business environment and learn that, despite their work related job, their co-workers are regular people – just like themselves. Today, as the business world becomes more competitive, time for such “fun” is being challenged — unless there is a real outcome that is transferable to the real workplace. **The RESULT: Real Teambuilding!**

## REAL PLACES

**O**ur teambuilding activities are designed to take place in destination locations. Working with our clients, we can design a program to fit the location of their choice—be it boating in the coastal seaport town of Mystic, Connecticut, or exploring the rapids in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We can design your teambuilding activity to take place right in your company’s backyard or halfway across the country or the world. Because we set our activities in real places, participants can interact within real communities—there is no need for a simulation of a community



## REAL PEOPLE

**D**uring an A.C. Macris Consultants teambuilding activity, the facilitators are the same people who designed the activity. Because our programs are so specialized, our facilitators run the programs to make sure the teams receive the attention and supervision necessary for their success, yet the facilitators don’t interfere with the teams’ efforts to complete the activity. Our facilitators have the education, training, and experience to know when to step in and when to step out during a teambuilding session.

## REAL OBJECTIVES

**T**he A.C. Macris teambuilding approach is objective-oriented on several levels. The primary objective is what the team must accomplish during the activity—an objective that could entail creating a gourmet meal, finding their way to a checkpoint during a road rally, or catching a fish on the Mystic River. And to accomplish any of these objectives, the team must achieve a myriad of smaller goals upon which their success is dependent. Teams learn that to achieve their goals, they must rely on the individual strengths and contributions of each teammate and must work together to realize success.



**B**ehind the primary objective of each teambuilding session, A.C. Macris Consultants has designed a program custom-tailored to meet the client’s objectives for the team—objectives like better conflict management, leadership, creativity, and risk management. The intensive design of each teambuilding program insures that these objectives are met while the team engages in a fun and challenging activity. The focus on a common primary objective creates a better sense of cohesiveness within the team, but the team returns home also having achieved important workplace skill objectives.

## OUR DESIGNER APPROACH

**O**ur program provides an experience that cannot be recreated or simulated in any kind of standard teambuilding activity—because there is no substitute for reality. Teams interact within a real environment, learning about a real community and working together to accomplish a real goal. The result? Real strengths and skills that transfer directly to the workplace. The strengths acquired during our teambuilding sessions remain with participants long after the activity is over because they are applicable to everyday workplace challenges. Our program provides participants with an opportunity to develop, test, and strengthen their ability to think strategically to accomplish their goals.

## BENEFITS TO YOUR TEAM

**O**ne of the most important skills our teambuilding activities test is strategic thinking, both for each team member and for the team as a whole. The strategy necessary to complete the challenge activities translates to the same strategy necessary to compete in today's business environment. Through this activity, the team will also develop the attributes that strengthen an organization or group's collaborative working relationships, and that minimize the potential for conflict within the workplace. The teambuilding program allows the team to interact in a natural and comfortable setting with a clearly defined objective.

Please call for information about **REAL TEAMBUILDING**  
860.572.0043 or email at [acmpc@acmacris.com](mailto:acmpc@acmacris.com)



P.O. Box 535 Mystic, CT 06355  
[www.acmacris.com](http://www.acmacris.com)