



It's a long way from telecommunications if you wanna rock 'n' roll, but a group from Optus found a shortcut.

Thanks to Sydney corporate team-building company Song Division, the Optus team recorded an original "hit" in the same studio where Oz rockers AC/DC would lay down tracks. And cameras rolled while they were transformed into "rock stars".

It was a total creative process, the Optus folk writing both lyrics and music, then recording their song with the help of professional musicians.

"The feedback was incredible," says Optus general manager for (appropriately enough) voice consumer marketing, Phil Offer, who received a pile of text messages from excited members of the team he sent off to shore up their corporate cohesion.

More than karaoke and more than imitation, Song Division's services inspire participants to believe in their own creativity, says events manager Caz Prescott.

"Creativity in the workplace may sound fluffy to some, but to global giants like GE it is the backbone of innovation, and innovation is the key to success in today's economy."

Brendan Sheridan, director of experiential company Corporate Adrenalin, says people gain a real sense of achievement by recording their own music and lyrics with musicians from bands they love, like The Divinyls. He engaged Song

Division for a reward session for 500 bankers from around Australia. "This blew them away – they were crowd-surfing to their own song!"

Songwriter/producer Andy Sharpe launched Song Division about three years ago and has since impressed such blue-chip clients as ING, Commonwealth Bank and Virgin Mobile. Sharpe, who holds an MBA and has had more than nine years' experience at IBM, says the company is a marriage of his passion for music and his love of business.

Not only the business world benefits from such creativity – children from the Spastic Centre have had two Song Division sessions. Manager Peter Horsley says that in one session, "Song Division achieved what normally takes us six months".

And the experience is not limited to Sydney – Song Division uses recording studios all around Australia and even in New York, where a branch opened a year ago. As well, Song Division has a portable recording studio, which means the magic can take place in an office or a conference room in Fiji.

"We've been called in as a change-management tool following mergers and acquisitions, and as an energiser at corporate kick-offs," says Prescott. "Groups can number five to 5000, and every session is tailored for our clients, from a stretch Hummer right through to a framed gold record."

● *Song Division, www.songdivision.com*

Another way to the top

Scaling a mountain is a sure way to build teamwork, and now scaling Everest is within the reach of any corporate group.

Using Reach for the Summit, an interactive, video-based mountain climb program, participants can be involved in an expedition with Rex Pemberton as he becomes the youngest Australian to reach the summit of the world's highest peak. The program, developed by Peak Teams, includes a keynote address by Pemberton as he shares the challenges.

Involvement in the program can help business groups strengthen their teamwork and leadership, align goals and improve communication, be inspired and motivated, fast track team spirit, trust and unity, and gain insights into individual and team behaviours.

Seagate Technologies in the US has been using the program for two years. "The response has been very positive, the participants immediately applying what they have learnt on an individual basis and team level," says president Bill Watkins.

Participants form teams and put themselves in the position of real climbers, making decisions about challenging scenarios that come to life on the big screen. The objective is to virtually scale Everest while managing a budget, a tight timeframe and constant pressure. Success depends on a team's ability to adapt to change, manage risks and solve increasingly complex problems.

Suitable for groups from 10 to 750 people, the program can be run from 1.5 hours to several days, and has even been run over a year. Diagnostic questionnaires can be used to collect quantitative data about key areas of team performance.



In a Reach for the Summit session, the interactive video includes decisions the groups must make.

Mountaineering is used as a metaphor, as the same challenges of leadership, communication, teamwork and decision-making that take place in life-or-death situations on the mountain also take place in business every day.

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