
Retreats

A retreat is a group outing for the purpose of taking time away from daily routine and distractions for contemplation.

ADVANTAGES of a Retreat

1. Without daily distractions, a group can have concentrated, quality time analyzing group issues.
2. A retreat usually fosters informality and sets a forum for open discussion.
3. It helps build a cohesive group and team spirit through shared experiences.
4. Leaders and members are rejuvenated and motivated as a result of a retreat because of both the experience of “getting away from it all” and the stimulation from discussion and activities.

PLANNING a Retreat

To ensure your retreat is a positive experience, careful planning is crucial. The following are items to consider when preparing for a retreat.

1. Goals

Why are you going on retreat? Participants should know why they are there and what the group hopes to accomplish.

Typical retreat goals are:

- team building
- training
- problem solving
- evaluating
- orienting

2. Expenses

Determine a retreat budget. Is your group treasury paying all expenses or are members expected to contribute? If individual members must pay a portion of the expenses, will some members not be able to attend? Possible expenses are:

- transportation
- food/drink
- lodging
- recreation
- materials (copying, paper, games, equipment, etc.)

3. Location

The whole purpose of a retreat is to get away from distractions and normal routine. It is important to choose a place that will provide privacy, be comfortable, and will be conducive to group interaction. Cost may be a dictating factor, so you need to be open to different options. Lodging can be expensive, and transportation can be difficult and expensive if members do not have cars. A secluded, quiet meeting room in town, or someone’s home can work just as well as a wooded retreat cabin miles away.

Retreat Planning (cont'd)

4. Length and Timing.

How much time is necessary and available to accomplish the retreat goals -- one day, a weekend? Also, consider what time of year is best. Football weekends, midterm week and near final exams are typically not good times. If people feel stressed about taking time away because it is a busy time of year, their minds and hearts will not be in the retreat.

5. Workshops/Exercises/Activities

What types of activities will meet your retreat goals? Who can best facilitate the sessions? What qualifications are necessary of your speakers/facilitators/trainers? If the presenters are from outside of your group, the location of your retreat may dictate who is available to assist you. A person will not want to travel a long distance to do only a 45-minute program.

6. Agenda

Plan the agenda ahead of time. Give everyone a copy of the schedule/agenda.

7. Assign Tasks

Delegate to individuals or set up committees to do the various retreat tasks.

Possible tasks/committees are:

- transportation
- food and beverage
- recreation
- developing the retreat program
- set-up
- clean-up

A good retreat requires advance planning. Remember, a retreat should be rejuvenating and motivating. Don't spoil it with last minute running around or trying to fit too much in a short period of time.