

# Corporate collaboration requires creating emotionally safe workplace

BY TIM FREED

## Shop talk

Team building is crucial to a successful, productive office.

Psychotherapist and business consultant Linnda Durré has worked with countless companies to sort out social issues and promote a positive work environment.

Durré, who is interested in how companies function and employees interact, feels the combination of business and psychotherapy makes sense, so she has spent most of her career mixing the two.

Durré also has spent time as an adjunct professor, columnist and author. Her newest book, *Surviving the Toxic Workplace*, was picked up recently by PBS, which is interested in creating a TV show adaptation. Durré considers this to be her most significant achievement this year.

**The stages of team development:** First, define the goal and the skills people need to achieve the goal. Next, identify who has those skills and how they can work together.

**A typical team-building program consists of:** Teaching how to communicate and how to listen, and that sometimes involves role-playing with people. I also interview each person individually and have them do assessments.

**How often companies approach me seeking team-building skills:** Very often, because that's what's breaking down in companies; they've done it backward.

**How much the average team-building program costs:** It depends on the length of the project and how in-depth it is. It could be anywhere from a few thousand dollars to half a million dollars if it's years and years of helping a company restructure.

**Activities commonly used in team building:** The assessments. You want to establish an emotionally safe environment where people can say, "Hey, that's not my area of expertise." You do the assessment and the assessment is, "Hey, this is what I'm really good at and this is what I'm not good at." I'm working with upper management to pick the best people, have them do a self-assessment, do interviews and put the best team together.

**On whether team-building programs permanently can change how a group works together:** It's like learning how to ride a bicycle: If you instruct people how to do it right, they learn a task forever.

**How creating teams can affect workplace psychology positively:** They serve as the pebble that ripples through the whole company. They serve as role models and powerful change agents.

**How creating teams can affect workplace psychology negatively:** There's a level of exclusivity, snobbery and being special that can be very negative.

**What firms can do to improve that situation:** Get the group together and say, "Look, you're turning into a bunch of snobs here. You're rubbing it in people's faces, they feel alienated and don't like it."

**Factors that can hinder team building:** A lack of trust, honesty, disclosure or clarity of vision and nonalignment with the mission

**Unique situation I had with a client related to team building:** I remember one company where the boss did not want to change. I told him what I was going to do and how I was going to interview people and give him the information, and as soon as he got bad information, he canceled the whole thing.

**Advice for others interested in tying psychotherapy with business development:** Be objective and see that all of this can dovetail beautifully.

**A major blunder I had to clean up:** There was a company behind on its deadlines, and if it didn't meet the next level of accomplishment, it was going to scrap the whole project. We were able to buy some more time, and everybody did what they needed to do and met the extended deadline, so it wasn't scrapped.



PHOTO | JIM CARCHIDI

**Linnda Durré,**  
psychotherapist and business  
consultant, Dreams Come True  
Enterprises LLC

**Birthplace:** New York City

**Education:** Bachelor's in human development, Pacific Oaks College; master's and Ph.D. in psychology, California School of Professional Psychology

**Hobbies:** Reading, filmmaking, songwriting and painting

**Little-known fact:** I was on *Jeopardy*.

**On my to-do list today:** I'm writing a court report. I interviewed another person on the phone for the report. I followed up on some submissions for sponsors for my TV show. And I have another appointment tonight.

**Contact info:** (407) 246-4681, Linnda.Durre@gmail.com, www.survivingthetoxicworkplace.com