# feeling the pulse

## our perspective

Building strong relationships between team members is essential for effective teamwork. It is upon this foundation that a team develops a shared purpose to which each member is truly committed, and it is this focus that unites them to overcome the challenges they face. How the team operates and learns to leverage the individual strengths is their formula for success and with practice becomes the fabric that binds the team together.

> *"The way a team plays as a whole determines it's success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together the club won't be worth a dime"* Babe Ruth

In October 2009 Devote was asked by the Pulse Team within GlaxoSmithKline to design and deliver a two-day Team Retreat in order to take stock of all that had been achieved and to plan for the future. The Team Retreat came at a critical point in the team's life cycle as it was due to double in size due to the increasing demand for the programme and in turn the team's delivery.

The Pulse Programme was a new initiative sponsored by Andrew Witty (CEO) to send volunteers from within the organisation and embed them within partner NGOs for a period of up to 6-months.

## 1 taking the temperature

Devote's preparation work initially began by holding in-depth 1:1 interviews with the three founding members of the Pulse Programme. This small but highly effective team were the pioneers behind the programme and as such had taken it from concept through to delivery with the first in-take of volunteers successfully embedded within NGO partners.

The interviews served two purposes; firstly to understand each team member's expectations for The Retreat and secondly to understand their perspective on the Team's evolution and the necessary changes that were to be implemented.

## 2 feeling the pulse

Based upon the initial interviews and briefing provided, Devote designed a two-phase Team Retreat. The first phase was designed purely for the founding members. It provided them with an opportunity to pause, reflect and reconnect with their ambition for the programme. Together they completed a series of exercises that helped them to review their delivery, learn from the experience and agree how they would move forward in light of their expanding remits and the addition of new team members. They were able to acknowledge the rate at which they had been operating and agree some principles about how the delivery could be maintained in a more sustainable way.

## 3 catching the fever

The second phase of the Team Retreat involved the new recruits. This marked the first time the newly formed team had come together. The design of this phase of the workshop aimed to provide an opportunity for the team to get to know one another, learn about the Pulse Programme and be inspired by the role that they could play.

In order to accelerate the Team's development, Devote used a profiling tool (Team Management Systems). It provided an effective structure through which the team members could learn about one another and develop a common language to help frame their ways of working.

## 4 sharing the remedy

Part of the design of the Team Retreat was to create an environment that would encourage participation and involvement and in doing so fast track the new members integration into the team. Given this brief the venue for the Team Retreat was thoughtfully selected and a self-catering cottage was used.

The space provided a unique setting within which the team could work away from distractions. It also created the ideal environment for the team to relax together in the evenings and have some fun preparing their evening meals, which reinforced the sense of teamwork.

## the results

The output of the workshop helped to define roles and responsibilities within the team and fundamentally shaped the leadership and reporting structure that was put in place in order to adapt to the expanding demands of the business and in turn the needs of the team. The feedback received included the following from one of the Pulse Programme Directors:

"I know I speak on behalf of the total team that your support, energy and facilitation of our session last week was an enriching experience and I know we have stepped forward already on our path to being a greater success."