



The Great Food Truck Challenge

[for the Love of RetrEATing] MEMBER ARTICLE | BY MONICA PAYNE, DAADOM

Anyone who knows me on a professional level knows that I am team-building GEEK. Our team works together really well for the good of our practice, and I attribute that mainly to relationships being built and fostered on a personal level outside of the workplace. Our doctors' support is also a key factor; they allow me to plan one team-building event per quarter, with one of those being a three to four day annual team retreat.

THE BEST RETREAT OF ALL

Just a few team-building events I've planned for our teams include paint parties, escape rooms, Top Golf, a day at the ranch, murder mystery dinner party, etc. While each of these have been a big success and a lot of fun, my all-time favorite would be "The Great Food Truck Challenge".

Occasionally I will plan the retreat in conjunction with a dental conference and extend it by a couple of days, so the team members are able to obtain needed CE hours. For some reason, my hygienists are the most

hesitant to attend, and this gives them additional incentive. This was the case for one year in particular, where I planned the retreat at the same time as the Gulf Coast Dental Conference...at the BEACH!

During the course of our few days together, we have free time to just hang out and unplug, with team-building activities sprinkled throughout. We have one BIG challenge as the finale, with the smaller activities leading up to this final activity. The final challenge remains a surprise until the end, so they don't know how the decisions they make along the way will affect them in the long run.

Several steps in preparing for "The Great Food Truck Challenge":

1. Our quarterly event prior to the retreat was an evening cooking class at a local Viking Cooking School. The skills they learned in this class would be helpful in obtaining points during the final challenge. They just thought we



were there for fun.

2. Picking teams...this is a biggie! Sometimes I allow this process to be completely random, count off 1-5 and repeat, or draw a number out of a hat. Sometimes, however, I want to make sure I don't have "work buddies" or team members that work closely together day-in and day-out on the same team (ex. all front office or all assistants) so I take control and prearrange the teams (shh...don't tell them). This time preselection was necessary in order to have color coded t-shirts prepared ahead of time for each team.

3. A visit to a local park for lunch one day, where there are several food trucks.

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4. Several games, ice breakers, etc. leading up to the challenge would have an impact on each team's capabilities with which they would compete.

- I had appetizers ready and an icebreaker planned as everyone arrived at the start of the retreat. As teams completed the icebreaker, they were to make a selection from an arrangement of flags on the table. This was the country their team's food truck would represent.
- A series of minute-to-win-it games would allow the winner of each game to pick from a



MEET THE MEMBER

After 21 years in the floral industry, lifetime AADOM member Monica Payne, DAADOM, found her true passion when she made the shift to dentistry in 2012. She is practice administrator for a multi-location practice, Lifetime Dental, PLLC, in the MS delta. In addition to managing dental clinics, she and her doctors started Surety Dental Solutions in 2018. Together, they provide team-building and consulting services as well as dental and medical insurance billing for other dental practices.

selection of cooking utensils; these would be the ONLY utensils allowed for their team to use during the challenge. Remember, they have no idea what the challenge is, so they have no idea how these choices will affect them.

- One last game gave the opportunity to pick an envelope that contained different amounts of money. This is what they would use to budget and use for food, decorations and tableware.

5. Once all games were played and materials were dispersed, each team was given a set of instructions, a team t-shirt, a monogrammed apron, a paper chef's hat, random pieces of cardboard, and a detailed point system.

- They were given an allotted amount of time to complete the challenge. Scheduled to be completed at 6:00 pm, this would also serve as our dinner for the evening.
- As a team, they were responsible to plan a menu that would serve 20 people (small portions), build and decorate a cardboard food truck, shop for food and tableware, and budget money accordingly. This was all themed around the country of the flag they chose previously.
- They were given points for each completed task along with additional points for EXTRAS. Some of the extra points were given if they decorated their chef hats, used skills that they



learned in the cooking class a couple of months prior, budgeted wisely, made up a "jingle" or "commercial", etc. Each team member was also given tokens to vote on their favorite entry according to presentation, taste, and best overall food truck...these were also calculated into the total points.

- At the end, of course we discussed the ups and downs of the process and ways in which each team worked together and overcame obstacles they faced throughout the process.

For fun, we awarded every team member with a "trophy" representing some of our favorite cooking shows...the team with the most points was awarded a wooden charcuterie board etched with "Top Chef", second place was a glass cutting board engraved with "MasterChef Jr", and third place was a wooden spoon stamped with the word "Chopped". ■

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." - Henry Ford