



Get Together. Get Away. *Get a Clue.*

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Dr. Clue: Solving the Puzzles of Teamwork

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Dr. Clue Central

Welcome again to the Dr. Clue Teambuilding Newsletter!

Our final 2007 quarter of Dr. Clue treasure hunts coincided with my own, personal *big* event: "Dave and Jen's Big Fat Clue-ful Wedding". Yes, we actually pulled it off -- San Francisco's first *Treasure Hunt Wedding*: 150 guests; four treasure hunts; a clue embedded in the wedding program; a rebus (picture puzzle) in everyone's nametag. And, to top it all off (literally), each table at the reception received icing and cake toppers for decorating their very own cake. It all went beautifully (if you don't count Jen's stepsister taking a fall and breaking her wrist while off playing tourist in Chinatown, which wasn't even part of the treasure hunt)! Truly, it was one of the happiest, most fun days of my life. For a great recap of the whole shindig, read my brother Brian's fantastic blog (which is also a syndicated column) called "This Normal Life," which chronicles his family's life and adventures living in Jerusalem. His entertaining entry about our wedding can be found here: <http://www.thisnormallife.com/blog/archives/2007/10>

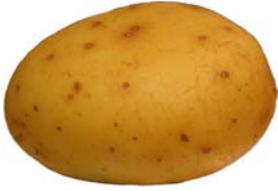
To read an article about us in the San Francisco Chronicle, click on the image below.



In this month's issue, you'll discover the educational benefits of potatoes with our latest icebreaker; create puzzling (yet memorable) team rituals in our feature article; and take a trip around the world in this month's puzzle challenge. Enjoy!

Dave Blum
Editor, the Dr. Clue Teambuilding Newsletter

Teambuilding Icebreaker Magic Potato



One of my favorite organizations is [NASAGA](#), the North American Simulation and Gaming Association. Every year its membership of teachers and trainers meets at an annual conference to exchange ideas about how games and simulations can bring alive classroom lessons and training workshops. I've been going to NASAGA conferences for 8 years now, and found each one a treasure trove of innovative presentation techniques, game design tips, icebreakers, jolts, etc. Having been in the training business for a decade or so, I thought I'd seen it all until – during a workshop at last year's NASAGA conference in Vancouver – Ken Bellemare proved that the mind is stronger than the potato.

Set up: Everyone in our class was handed a potato and a straw -- not one of those flimsy stirring straws, mind you, that dissolves in your coffee. These were good, strong restaurant straws and hard, red Russett potatoes. Ken instructed us to place the potato in the crook between our thumb and forefinger. Then, on the count of three, we were to summon up our mental and spiritual energy, let out a mighty "Yaw!" and thrust the straw through the potato. I'm a pretty open and optimistic fellow, but I'll admit I was a bit skeptical about that little piece of cylindrical plastic making its way through a tough, starchy tuber like a potato. Well, what the heck, I thought – if I fail, I'm sure at least a few others in class will do likewise. Surely in advanced karate classes, not everyone manages to break his board, right? So I lined up my straw, visualized it going all the way through the potato like a knife through butter, and uttered my most full-throated "Yaw!" And by golly – the straw went right on through my potato. Remarkable!

Debrief: Were you initially distrustful that the straw would pierce the potato? What were your feelings before you tried the activity? What did you feel afterwards, once the straw actually went through the potato? And if you failed, initially, how did you feel and what adjustments did you make on your second try? How does this activity parallel the way people behave at work when confronted with seemingly insurmountable challenges? What attitude change(s) might you bring back to the office?

The Point: We are often faced with challenges in our life that seem impossibly hard and impenetrable – like a potato. Sometimes all it takes to "break through" is a simple, ordinary tool, and a whole lot of belief.

Thanks for this one to trainer and magician [Ken Bellemare](#).

Dr. Clue is the premier designer of corporate teambuilding treasure hunts, worldwide. We begin with the cool museum or neighborhood of your choice, convenient to your office or conference locale. We then bring the area alive by scouting out its hidden treasures; its statues, plaques, murals, and monuments. To reach each secret location, you and your team will need to solve our challenging, Da Vinci Code-like set of puzzles, codes and ciphers. Along the trail, we'll coach you on the steps successful business teams take in working towards high-performance levels.

To read more about our hunt packages, [click here](#). To see a list of our over 87 current treasure hunt locations, including New York, London, Chicago, Paris, New Orleans, Barcelona, Denver, Geneva, Las Vegas, Madrid, Vienna and San Francisco, [click here](#).

Feature Article

Puzzling Traditions

By Dave Blum

Traditions and rituals, it seems to me, are the glue of relationships. The more rituals you create with people, the more firmly linked you all tend to become, no matter whether we're talking about work teams, lovers, friends, or family. So a department brings in pizza to the office every Friday; a retired couple goes to the same hotel every year at the same time (and stays in the same room); old high school friends get together on Thanksgiving to play football (my buddies called our annual game the "Turkey Bowl"). As time goes by, these traditions not only provide people with something to look forward to, they also build up a store of collective memories – an oral history, a catalogue of events to be referenced at every reiteration of the ritual. And once a tradition gets started, it can be very difficult to stop it. Somehow, it just takes on a life of its own.

My wife Jen and I, like any couple, have our little rituals -- some quotidian, others a bit more idiosyncratic. Every Sunday morning, for example, we go to brunch at Bambino's, the Italian place down the street that gives you free scones with your meal. Later that day, we do the Sunday crossword puzzle (by [Merl Reagle](#), our favorite crossword constructor). And every year, on the anniversary of our first date, we write treasure hunt clues for each other. Yes, we are both treasure hunt geeks! I'm not sure how the tradition first started; certainly my business has something to do with it. In addition, Jen and I actually met on a treasure hunt (the annual [BATH – Bay Area Treasure Hunt](#) – staged by Dr. Clue puzzle writer Alexandra Dixon). Whatever the reason, our clue-writing tradition is now a joyous but very much required event. In our house, you have to deliver the goods— an elegant little treasure hunt once a year – or you go straight to the doghouse.

Traditions and rituals, personal or organizational, have rules by which all participants must abide.

The first rule of Dave & Jen's anniversary treasure hunt tradition: No one may talk about it in advance. That's right, the treasure hunt clues have to just appear at some point during the anniversary, without any build up. To paraphrase the movie [Fight Club](#), "The first rule of our anniversary hunt is that we do not talk about our anniversary hunt." I suppose this was originally meant to cut down on expectations and to give the other person an out if they were too busy that year to come up with something. Yeah, as if! No matter how busy we are, we both always create our treasure hunt.

The second rule of our anniversary tradition: The puzzles and clues must incorporate information about the relationship. So a clue might incorporate pictures of all the places where we like to hang out. Or it might involve a trivia quiz of all our favorite books. This year, for example, I wrote a quiz consisting of characters from our favorite sci-fi TV and movie characters. The point is to draw on your knowledge of your partner as well as from the hobbies/experience/traditions that you share as a couple.

The final rule of our treasure hunt ritual: At least one of the puzzles we write for each other must be completely new – a puzzle type our partner has never seen before. This is the toughest unspoken rule – at least for me. From my perspective, Jen is a fountain of new clue ideas...a virtual clue generator. Me, I have to work a bit harder, scouring puzzle and games books for weeks in advance, looking for something unique and different to borrow or adapt. Because you see, Jen is a darn good puzzler. I want my clues both to delight and challenge her. They've gotta strike that right balance: not too easy, not too hard.

A treasure hunt, of course, may not be the right annual "tradition" to implement at your organization (although then again, it might just be)! Here are a few tips for creating company rituals that really bond people together:

1) Make it "remark-able": A ritual needs to be something that people start talking and "remarking" about, long before the event and well afterwards. The tradition, therefore, has to be unique, fun, and perhaps a bit "out there," what master marketer [Seth Godin](#) calls "purple cow". For example, over a period of seven years, my friends and I would come over and watch *horror* movies on Christmas Eve and Christmas movies on Halloween. Bizarre—yes! But absolutely memorable. Surely no one else, anywhere, was doing *that*, which made us feel rather origina – a bit *twisted*, yes -- but original. Whatever tradition you adopt, make sure it makes people smile just thinking about it.

2) Keep it meaningful: Rituals often mark a *recurring* event that holds special meaning for people: a holiday, an anniversary, the founding day of a company, etc. They can also be crazy, spontaneous occasions that simply arise – i.e. the anniversary of the day your CEO proposed to his wife in the boardroom or the annual celebration of the day your CFO shaved his head. The important thing is that someone in the office be on the look out for opportunities to say, "We really *must* commemorate this

occasion with a tradition!" Every group, of course, has a different character, a different aesthetic. For some, a meaningful ritual is working at the Food Bank over the holidays, or building low-cost housing via Habitats for Humanity. For other groups, dressing up every Friday like the CEO, in some version of his favorite preppy sweater, suits their particular culture of playful teasing. Assess your group and then look for opportunities to create traditions that most everyone will buy into.

3) Raise the bar: The traditions that really last tend to involve some level of increasing *challenge*. So you staged a big, company-wide volleyball tournament last year, using beach balls. Why not use tiny, red, rubber dodge balls this year, or perhaps ping pong balls? Last year you all had a department-wide pot-luck lunch. Why not make it company-wide this year, with an international flavor, and perhaps hold it on the rooftop? Whatever your tradition, try to up the ante a little each year, stimulating people's creativity so that they start *preparing* for the event in advance, building the anticipation.

For Jen and I, our anniversary this year rose to new heights, including a photocopy picture of us, cut into a jigsaw pieces; a tricky cypher involving the barcodes on our favorite energy snack bars; and a world map puzzle referring to places Jen and I have visited together over the last four years.

What will next year's anniversary treasure hunt tradition be like? Gimme a break; we just got married in October and staged a huge treasure hunt in the park for 150 of our friends and family. Talk about raising the bar! 😊

**What does a teambuilding treasure hunt look, feel and sound like?
Watch our [2-minute video](#) to find out.**

Puzzle

In last issue's puzzle, you received a wedding-related movie trivia puzzle. When you pulled the numbered letters out each answer, you got the secret message: "I'm one third of an elite fighting team backed up by an anonymous millionaire," from the movie Charlie's Angels.

DR. CLUE HONOR ROLL

The lucky winners of the drawing – with the correct answer – were:

- **Sharon Lim**
- **Pat DeLaune**
- **Abraham Drucker**

Congratulations to all of you!

Today's Puzzle Challenge:

"If it's Tuesday it must be..."

Identify each of the international cities (non-North America) where Dr. Clue currently runs treasure hunts. Each row, below, contains the letters to make up one of these cities, plus two added "rogue letters". (For example, "Align Bud" would be "Dublin" + an extra "G" and an "A".) Put the rogue letters into the columns to the right and read down to reveal the secret message.

Dr. Clue International Cities

Aha Dub I



Vegan Ear



Naive Pen



Several Jump



Yoga Noble



Ran Rips



Valve Yeti



Down Loon



A Dry Mind



A Cereal Bone



What's the message? " _____ "

As always, we'll put the names of all clue solvers in a hat and draw three for a choice of [Dr. Clue-brand items](#) (caps and Etch-a-sketches)! Email your answers to drclue@drclue.com to take part in the drawing. Our three winners will appear in next issue's Dr. Clue Honor Roll.

Wondering how a typical treasure hunt CLUE works? We've got TWO sample clues up on our website! [Click here](#) to give them a try.

Dr. Clue's News

Some highlights from the last few months include:

USA

--**Northeast:** Edge Biosystems and RMIC in Old Town, Alexandria; Bristol-Myers Squibb along the Boston Freedom Trail; Kiehls on Wall Street, NYC; Ann's Choice, Downtown Philadelphia

--**South:** Duracell, Georgia Aquarium; McKesson at the Texas State Fair; Badgermeter in Charleston, SC; Blockbuster at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, SC; Just Kidz, Universal Studios Orlando

--**Midwest:** Regence BlueCross BlueShield at Snowbird, UT; the Federal Reserve Bank in the Chicago Loop; DoubleClick at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science

--**Southern California:** Bank of America, Santa Monica Pier; Monarch Healthcare, Laguna Beach; PRG on the Third Street Promenade, Santa Monica

--**Northern California:** Bio Marin and Autodesk in North Beach, SF; The Financial Women's Association of SF & Kaiser Permanente in the San Francisco Financial District; Autodesk in Golden Gate Park, SF; Cisco in Downtown San Jose; BEA Systems at the San Jose Tech Museum; Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati in Downtown Palo Alto; SAP at Stanford University Campus; Reneson Hotels & Bio Marin in Napa City

In early 2008, look for **new hunts in:

- ❖ Downtown Charlotte, NC
- ❖ The Charlotte Discovery Place Museum, Charlotte, NC
- ❖ The New York Museum of Modern Art
- ❖ Hartford, CT
- ❖ Santa Rosa, CA

Our clients, from Oracle to Yahoo, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, Apple, and Wells Fargo, agree that Dr. Clue is cutting-edge teambuilding with a twist.

"If you liked The DaVinci Code, this would be the teambuilding for you!"

-Lincoln Smith, Siebel Systems

"For my money, David Blum, the hunt designer/facilitator, is the best in the country at combining the intrigue of a treasure hunt with the team development needs of our clients."

-Pete Grazier, President, Teambuilding Inc.

Reader Contributions

Please let us know how we can improve this newsletter!! We welcome puzzles, icebreakers, real-life teambuilding success stories—anything you'd like to contribute.

Dr. Clue's **E-BOOK**, "**Solving the Puzzles of Teamwork**," is available for download...and it's free! A compilation of past newsletter articles, it offers great essays about teamwork, roles & relationships, communication, motivation, leadership, and much more. Download it right to your screen by [clicking here](#) and choosing the e-book option. Enjoy!

**And remember: If you liked this newsletter, please forward it to a friend or a colleague.
Information is meant to be shared!**

Watch for the next edition of the Dr. Clue Teambuilding Newsletter in February/March 2008.

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Dr. Clue: Solving the Puzzles of Teamwork.

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