

# ANTARCTIC CHALLENGE

"Congratulations!" begins the delegate brief "You have been selected as a potential team to cross Antarctica via the South Pole. Please prepare a detailed plan for the trip starting and finishing in London. You may be asked to give a presentation to sponsors to enlist their support".

## WHERE ON EARTH DO YOU START?

### KEY POINTS

#### SKILL FOCUS:

- Strategic planning
- Data collection & interpretation
- Co-operating with others
- Maintaining team morale
- Cost analysis
- Presentation skills (optional)
- Situational leadership

#### NUMBERS:

- Up to 24 participants

#### TARGET AUDIENCE:

- Suitable for all, especially for management or graduate assessments

#### TIMING:

- If the teams use good planning and management skills this exercise will take about 3 hours, but it could take much longer! It also naturally splits into smaller sessions if you want to stage it over time, say on a residential course.

#### PACK CONTENTS:

- Briefing sheets
- Datacards (4 sets)
- Trainer's guide
- Fuel dump planning kit
- Handouts
- Overheads
- Rulers
- Antarctic maps



### SUMMARY

Designed to develop teamwork and planning skills, often on courses related to project planning, **Antarctic Challenge** is also proving popular as a graduate assessment tool. It is an ideal vehicle for observing competencies in action.

Teams will be crossing the ice on skidoos (engine powered sledges) towing another sledge with their equipment on. This means they need fuel dumps to be laid out across Antarctica by a Twin Otter plane. Planning for this is a logistical exercise in itself! Teams also must decide where to set up a Base Camp and they must have enough food at the Base Camp to sustain the team members who will run the expedition from there. They must also remember to provide exit routes for both the crossing and the Base Camp team... no-one must be left behind!

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## HOW IT WORKS

- 1** Teams receive a letter about the challenge. They know they have raised a certain amount of money (£180,000) and that a group of sponsors is willing to put some money up. What they have to do is cost the expedition so that they can work out how much extra they need.
- 2** Teams need to sort themselves out, read the Brief and set some objectives. At this stage they are in the 'forming' stage and will soon move on to 'storming'.
- 3** It is a period of uncertainty as they have no information but they do have a Data Request Form. On this they can ask a limited number of questions and are supplied with answers from a Databank. Typical questions include:
  - What are the transport costs to Antarctica?
  - What sort of equipment will we need?
  - How much food is required?
  - When is the Antarctic summer?
  - Can we have a map?

This last question is pretty crucial! Lively brainstorming sessions ensure all members are involved and committed to the task at this point. You may want to restrict the amount of data teams initially receive by being very strict on the questions or, if time is short you may want to issue the whole Databank in one go. This leads to severe information overload but it is fascinating to see how different teams cope with this.
- 4** Armed with the information they asked for, the heat is on to begin their plan. Hopefully teams asked for a map to see where they're going. The initial brief also tells them they have to meet up with another expedition at some point in order to pass over some supplies. Planning to meet this team is (literally!) a matter of life and death and determines the route to be taken.

Very soon the syndicates are buzzing with excitement (some must really believe they're going!) Flipcharts are useful and the central focus becomes the colourful British Antarctic Survey Map that all teams should by now have asked for. When will they leave London? How? Will they complete the whole trip within the Antarctic summer? When will they meet the other expedition? (a significant date that allows the facilitator to assess progress).

- 5** A 'Decisions Reached' form is given to teams towards the end of the exercise for them to record their key decisions on. A Trainer's Index allows the Trainer to keep track of what data teams are asking for and to identify the numbered cards in the Databank. Once the expedition is planned out and fully costed, presentations can be prepared for a group of sponsors who may benefit from the publicity attached to the expedition. Only by demonstrating that they have a consolidated and committed team, and that their plans are accurate and meet the criteria will sponsorship be awarded.

## RECENT PURCHASERS HAVE INCLUDED . . .

- AXA Sun Life
- Cambridge Managing Consultancy
- Future Publishing
- GKN Westland Helicopters
- Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust
- Marie Curie Cancer Care
- NHS Staff College
- Thames Water
- The Science Museum
- Yorkshire Co-operative

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