

BY: SAL SILVESTER

GEOCACHING: THE HIGH-TECH TEAM BUILDER

The Department of Defense built the first Global Positioning System (GPS) in the 1970's. Consisting of 24 satellites that orbit the earth at about 11,000 miles, the system was originally designed to pinpoint the position of soldiers, weapons, and enemy targets. The Department of Defense never imagined that the advent of the GPS would spawn the booming sport of Geocaching (pronounced "gee o caching").

Geocaching is the latest high-tech adventure where individuals use a GPS device to search for hidden caches around the globe. Cache coordinates, clues, and descriptions are posted on a variety of web sites. After finding a cache, the Geocacher typically takes an item from the cache and replaces it with a reward of their own.

Geocaching is generally considered an individual sport. However, 5.12 Solutions saw tremendous potential for this sport to be used as an experiential tool for building teams and leaders. In the spring of 2004, 5.12 Solutions became one of the first Colorado based training companies to integrate Geocaching within its suite of team building and leadership development programs. Simply put, teams, instead of individuals, work together to find hidden caches using a GPS device, compass, map, and each other. Armed with two-way radios and other resources, teams are often required to coordinate with each other and complete problem solving initiatives.

So, why did 5.12 Solutions decide to convert Geocaching into a team builder?

"The Geocaching format gives people a hands-on opportunity to explore the dynamics that make teams and leaders successful in the work place", says Sal Silvester, founder of Boulder based 5.12 Solutions. It provides an experience for people to communicate, collaborate, and coach each other. It also enables teams to explore how team processes, such as problem solving, decision making, and conflict resolution, can be applied to the work place.

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Burl Amsbury, VP of Product Development at Performance Health Technologies, agrees. His company was the first to experience this high-tech treasure hunt with 5.12 Solutions. According to Mr. Amsbury, "Geocaching is a great metaphor for business: The prize you're after may be clear, but the route to get there is not. Planning helps, but in the execution phase, deviations from the plan become necessary, different personalities bring different points of view and information to the decisions, and communications by radio can be garbled. The people from 5.12 Solutions do a fantastic job of following up the experiential lessons by facilitating constructive discussions of pinpoint relevance to the group attending."

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About 5.12 Solutions

5.12 Solutions (five-twelve) is the corporate training and professional development company that inspires people to make timely and meaningful change. With a uniquely fresh approach to adult learning, 5.12 Solutions helps people develop the soft skills they need to be successful through instructor-led training, team building workshops, online learning, and public seminars.

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