

RETREAT GUIDE

RETREAT PLANNING: How to create a retreat plan

Jess Schloed | Retreat Central

Planning a retreat? Here is your chance to be a hero! The more you plan in advance, the more organized you will be, and the overall outcome will be higher quality.

Most companies and organizations will not simply hand over money for you to host a retreat – even if they asked you to plan it. Your company will want to know rough budget estimates and details about your event. Even if you are in charge of your own budget, it is still helpful to take the step of preparing a basic plan to organize and save your thoughts. So let's get started!

How to Prepare a Basic Plan

Your plan should include at least four things: a summary, a goal, the audience, and the budget.

1. Summarize the Event: Your summary is a basic snapshot of your retreat in three sentences or fewer. With no additional information, anyone that reads your plan should be able to understand what the event is from a high-level perspective. It is appropriate to include a basic goal in this summary. For example:

- This leadership retreat will bring together the leaders of (fill in the blank) company/church/school for program and budget planning for the next year.

2. Determine a Timeline: When is this retreat? Are you planning it in the winter or in the spring? Include the target time frame of the event, the promotion period,



and any other important milestones. Make sure you understand the timing of your participants. How much lead time do they need? Tip: start from the end (the retreat date) and work backwards. For example:

- Retreat planning: Jan.-May
- Website page created: March 1
- Promotion: March-June
- Retreat Date: mid-June

3. Decide the Retreat Goal: All retreats should have at least one simple goal. Are you planning a retreat on behalf of a business, university, or other organization? If so, consider the mission of the organization and create a goal that aligns with this mission. Goals can be high-level, or they can be very specific. Set enough goals that someone reading your plan can start to picture your retreat. For example:

- 3 days
- 20+ participants
- Overnight accommodations at a camp retreat center
- Team-building activities
- Completed program plans and

budget for next year

- Enhance leadership skills
- Promote togetherness and a sense of community

4. Define Your Audience: First, ask yourself these questions: Who are you inviting to your retreat? Are they males and females? Adults only, or are children invited? Next, dig a little deeper into your audience. What do your attendees care about? What are they interested in? This does not dictate who is allowed to come. Rather, it outlines the group for which the retreat is intended. Doing this small brainstorm and jotting down a few notes will help you later as you plan activities and promote the event. For example:

- Males and females
- Age range
- Church staff, leaders, lay people, doctors, CEOs, administrative professionals, team leaders, other
- Many have children
- Volunteers
- Live in _____ city/state/neighborhood

5. Propose a Budget: Money is a big factor for most retreats. Research and compile estimates for the larger cost categories. The costs should be realistic – not too high, and not too low. If they are too high, you might not get approved. Too low? You might be stuck with a penny-saver budget. Your venue will be one of your larger expenses. A four-star retreat center will require a much higher budget than a camp retreat center. Be sure to include an estimate for overnight accommodations and meeting space. Other large budget items to consider include: travel and transportation; food and beverage; and marketing and promotion.

Also, be sure to subtract the estimated cost per person in your budget to show how costs will be offset. If the goal of the retreat is to raise money, include estimated earnings from fundraising activities, which could be a silent auction, offering, etc. Your retreat plan should be able to fit on 1-2 pages.

Now that you have finished creating your retreat plan, you have a nice guide to use moving forward. The items that you have already identified should help you get budget approval, provide direction on event promotion, help you choose a retreat theme, and overall, organize your thoughts. Having your plan ready also helps the retreat center - the staff can better support the goals of the retreat. Often they have ideas about ways to use the facility that you never would have known.



A Place for you..whatever the season!

LAKE DONIPHAN

Lake Doniphan Conference & Retreat Center is situated on 300 wooded, rolling acres surrounding two scenic lakes, just outside of Excelsior Springs, Mo. We're only a short, traffic-free drive from downtown Kansas City or the Kansas City International Airport. Whether it's a camp, reunion, retreat, group, family, individual, men, women, adult or youth event...Lake Doniphan is a beautiful place to be year-round! We also welcome non-profit and corporate entities looking for more affordable off-site business conferences or retreats.

Our 300 acres offers lots of opportunities to relax, walk, explore, boat (kayaks, canoes, paddleboats and rowboats) or fish at our two lakes. We also have outdoor basketball and volleyball courts, a GaGa Ball Pit, a nine hole disc-golf course on site and we are located next to an 18-hole public golf course. We have several campfire sites around the property along with fireplaces inside the lodges for winter season use.

We offer a total bed count of 250, with a variety of meeting room options available, with the largest supporting up to 300 guests. Our facility can accommodate up to 15 breakout rooms in seating configurations ranging from 25 to 200 guest capacities. Our Main and Mini Lodges, where our primary sleeping and meeting rooms are, all have access to free Wi-Fi.

Guests appreciate Lake Doniphan's peaceful setting for its calming effect and the chance to stop and breathe deeply, letting go of the normal stress factors in their lives. There is something healing and restoring about the woods and the

lakes that infiltrates even the busiest of people, if given a chance. Too many of us forget this, unless we deliberately schedule time apart such as for a personal or group retreat.

Groups may reserve the entire conference center if they wish, but because of the layout of the Lake Doniphan grounds, groups do not need to interact, other than to smile if they walk past each other. There are three lodges so groups can be housed in separate buildings. One guest recently commented, "It is wonderful to see the respect with which groups treat each other, regardless of their distinctly different beliefs or purpose to be here. Everyone here has always been respectful and honored other's times for worship, meditative walks around the lake, or even an enthusiastic pickup game of basketball?" We believe it is because so many of our guests are repeat users with Lake Doniphan holding a special place in their hearts.

Founded in 1944 as a Christian youth camp, groups now visiting Lake Doniphan include people of many faiths, non-profits and business alike just looking to get away from the normal routine. Event coordinators will appreciate our all-inclusive rates which include lodging, meals, meeting space, use of the grounds and many activities. If you're interested in booking a December or January event be sure to ask about our winter retreat discount.

To reach Jim Wheaton, executive director, and see if you or your group might benefit from a retreat at Lake Doniphan call (816) 630-1523 or visit their website at www.lakedoniphan.com. We invite you to visit us soon!



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FOREST PARK

Forest Park Conference and Retreat Center, is located near Topeka. Is your business, office, church, activity group, friends or family looking for a great place to hold a special event, training day, meeting, concert or retreat? We are open year round, weekdays and weekends. We offer handicap-accessible meeting areas of various sizes, both indoor and out, for groups of 3 to 260.

We are nestled in a wooded valley of old growth forest and provide a peaceful and secluded setting on 40 acres for learning, renewal, rest, relaxation and recreation. Experienced staff are available to

help meet your programming needs. Forest Park's mission is to serve God's people through Christian hospitality in a nature setting.

Please call or email us for more information or to schedule a tour. We would love the opportunity to serve you.



HOLLIS CENTER

Get away without the time and cost of leaving town. Located just south of the Kansas Speedway and 20 minutes west of downtown Kansas City, Hollis has 153 wooded secluded acres that invite your discovery! Explore more than 5 miles of hiking trails, disc golf course, picnic and camping areas, as well as our event and overnight facilities, which are used year-round. The Hollis

Lodge, Hideaway, Meadow Cottage & Welcome Center can be reserved for your group event, or personal retreat.

Hollis is a place to pause, take a breath, reflect and renew your spirit, before rejoining the rigors and trials of daily life. Finding time to get away is hard, choosing where to go shouldn't be.

Retreat. Reflection. Renewal. Hollis Renewal Center. "A place to be surprised by God."



TIMBER LAKES

Randall Lipson, resident manager at Timber Lakes Camp & Retreat Center just NE of Williamsburg, KS; says that even when times are tough, people still need to get away from everyday life and its stresses. Timber Lakes vision is that "everybody needs beauty as well as bread. Places to play in and pray in, where God may heal body, mind, and soul."

Timber Lakes sits on 265-acres conveniently located just North of I-35 about 1 hour SW of KC, 30 min. S of Lawrence, and 1 hour SE of Topeka. It offers fishing ponds, streams and rock cliffs. Deer, turkey and other wildlife are most certainly to be seen as one strolls along miles of hiking trails, winding through tall trees and deep ravines.

"We have 300 beds in a variety of configurations," Lipson said. "From motel style rooms with linens provided, to dorm style rooms...we are proud of our high quality facility where children, youth, adults, singles and families can enjoy the wonders of nature while re-establishing their relationships with God and one another."

"It is not the practical activities that are the strength of Timber Lakes

– its entire strength lies in the fact that here you can seek the truths of God, to soak in them before Him."



KEENE ROAD

This nearly 'century old', charming 17-room Country Estate, where the beauty and wonder of the Kansas Flint Hills blend with 21st Century charm, provides a unique setting. Retreat from the chaos of daily life and indulge in a quiet, calm setting to focus on the important business at hand. The colonial estate appeals also as a traditional, classic setting for weddings and other important family gatherings.

Facilities include a modern catering kitchen; dining and meeting rooms for up to 85 guests, and outdoor accommodations for 200+ guests; gazebo for wedding ceremonies; large outdoor grill; fire pit; large patio for dancing; wishing well; pond and nature trail.



CAMP WOOD

In 1915 forty acres of land was donated to the YMCA for the creation of a camp where young men and women could come to learn leadership and character. Since the first summer in 1916 Camp Wood YMCA has continued to grow in physical size (868 acres and over 30

■ Please see RETREATS next page

RETREAT DIRECTORY

Forest Park Conference & Retreat Center

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info@forestparkretreat.com
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Timber Lakes Camp & Retreat

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Williamsburg, KS 66095
Randall Lipson
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timberlakescamp.retreat@gmail.com
www.timberlakescamp.org

Keene Road Country Estate & Conference Center

31152 Keene-Eskridge Rd
Maple Hill, KS 66507
One mile south of I-70, Exit 342 South
Shelley Andrews
785-272-3086
www.vrbo.com/429285

Hollis Renewal Center

11414 Kansas Avenue
Kansas City, KS 66611
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holliscenter@kc.rr.com
www.holliscenter.org

Lake Doniphan Conference & Retreat Center

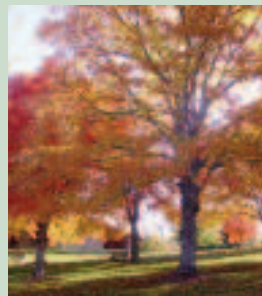
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Camp Wood YMCA

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www.campwood.org

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WHEN SHOULD YOU PLAN AN OFF-SITE RETREAT?

by **Mary Abbajay**

The offsite retreat. Some people love them. Some people hate them. And it's easy to see why.

If done well, retreats can be a powerful way to help organizations bring about positive change. If done poorly, retreats can be a waste of time and can actually make things worse. Holding an effective retreat is hard work, but organizations can get a leg up if they follow some basic rules.

MORE THAN JUST A MEETING

A retreat is an offsite gathering of a group of similarly engaged people – co-workers, team members, managers, board members – with the purpose of digging deeply into issues. The gathering is often held offsite so that the group can focus and not be distracted by the goings on in an office or by their day-to-day life. Retreats are an opportunity to bring people together to have conversations that they don't normally have.

WHEN RETREATS CAN HELP

There are lots of reasons organizations hold retreats. Sometimes they are held to solve a problem, sometimes to explore a new strategy, sometimes to evaluate,

sometimes to train; it depends on the objective and the company's need. Leaders should seriously consider using a retreat when they want the support, input and creativity of their organizational members or partners. A well-designed and well-facilitated retreat can be very effective in:

- Helping change a strategic direction
- Dealing with sources of conflict and confusion.
- Generating creative solutions for entrenched problems.
- Getting people on the same page and pulling in the same direction.
- Improving working relationships and increase trust.
- Creating a common framework and point of reference.
- Fostering a collective vision
- Generating honest and enlightening conversations.
- Helping people feel heard in issues that are important to them.

That said, here are seven excellent reasons for holding an offsite retreat:

1. Explore serious organizational concerns or obstacles. Retreats can be a great avenue to explore causes and potential solutions for thorny organizational issues.
2. Retreats are a great opportunity to

tap into the collective wisdom and creativity of a group.

3. Tackle tough decisions. No matter how strong the leader, tough decisions will require the support of members. Involving members in the decision-making can result in large-scale support.

4. Create a collective vision of success for the organization, department, team or group. Day-to-day organizational life doesn't hold much time for big-picture thinking between members and groups. Often, tensions arise as players have different goals and priorities. Retreats are a great way to align design different parts of an organization with a common vision.

5. Explore and foster change. Whether you need a change in culture or a change in processes, retreats are an effective way to explore and promote new ways of doing things. This can be especially important for leaders who are considering change. Getting input and involvement early in the process will greatly increase the odds of success.

6. To improve organizational relationships and align members' behaviors, attitudes and perceptions. Organizations are complex social structures. Sometimes relationships, behaviors and attitudes go awry. A well-designed retreat can go a long way to explore and improve relationships, behaviors, attitudes and perceptions.

7. Evaluate or correct your course. Sometimes the most effective thing an organization can do is to simply take a

breath and a 1000-foot view of how things are working. We call this the temperature check. What's working well? What could be improved? Providing people with an opportunity to play a role in deciding what needs to change (or not) is an excellent way to build support and commitment for organizational goals and priorities.

WHEN RETREATS WON'T HELP

There are, of course, lots of bad reasons for holding a retreat. Even though well intentioned, your reason may not be sound. Here are seven bad reasons for holding a retreat:

1. Tradition. Many people think that annual retreats are a good idea just because they've always done one. They think just the act of bringing people together is a good idea. But having a retreat without a serious purpose is a bad idea. A retreat is not a party or a picnic. People don't generally appreciate having their time wasted. Pointless retreats will breed cynicism faster than you can imagine.

2. Making an individual problem a group problem. Oftentimes leaders have a few non-team players and they decide a retreat is the best way to deal with these issues. Resist that urge. While an offsite can be a great way to surface and negotiate differences, the issues raised in a retreat should be germane and actionable to everyone in the room, not just a select few.

3. Talking at participants instead of with them. Retreats are not a one-way conversation. Retreats are not the appro-

priate venue for lengthy presentations or agenda pushing. While it is important to keep people well informed, day-long presentations do not constitute a retreat. People associate retreats with participation and change.

4. Retreat as reward. Many organizational leaders want to use a retreats as a way to reward hard work. This is a mistake. People rarely see retreats as rewards. Because they are likely to have even more work as the result of a day (or two) out of the office. If you want to reward employees give them a bonus or a day off.

5. Improving morale. A retreat in and of itself is not going to improve morale. While using a retreat to explore morale issues, do not confuse the diagnosis with the treatment. In fact, holding a retreat can actually worsen morale if action isn't taken from ideas or concerns raised in the retreat.

6. The covert agenda. This means not putting real choice on the table. People view retreats as an opportunity to provide real input on real change. Leaders will sometimes use a retreat as a way to "get buy-in" on an issue in which they have already decided. But it is dangerous to involve participants in a retreat on an issue that is already decided. Do not use a retreat to push a covert agenda or give people a false sense of participation.

7. No intention (or ability) to follow through or act on participants' suggestions. When you ask people for their input, you raise expectations that it will be implemented. Do not disappoint them.

SUCCESSFUL RETREAT PLANNING

Now that you know why (and why not) to hold a retreat and what you can expect to get out of it, you have to take the time to design and execute one. A good retreat can improve communication, energize and motivate, improve engagement and or improve skill sets. A bad retreat can make matters worse. Good retreats require weeks, if not months, of solid planning in order to be effective.

Following the suggestions in this Retreat Planning Guide can help you find success, whatever your organization and whatever the size.

—Mary Abbajay is a partner in the Careerstone Group, a consulting company that specializes in leveraging generational diversity to support organizational success. Reach her at mary@careerstonegroup.com

RETREATS

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buildings), in campers (serving over 5,000 campers and guests annually), and most importantly impact. No matter how they come to camp (whether as a church, scout group, summer camper, or public or private schools), every camper and guest benefits from Camp Wood YMCA's mission to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. Through our mission and an adherence to our motto of "I'm Third" (putting God first, others second, and yourself third) Camp Wood has served and impacted thousands of lives. Having just celebrated our 100th summer, and having over 500 alumni here for a celebration there were thousands of stories shared of how Camp Wood positively changed countless lives. As we move into the next century of service to others we at camp look forward to continuing to enrich the lives of campers and guests in our communities.



Come...now is the time to worship!

You Need Time Out...

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| ...for Renewal | ...for Family |
| ...for Reflection | ...for Friends |
| ...for Fun | ...to Hear God |



785-242-3422

Timber Lakes Camp & Retreat

1375 Rock Creek Rd.
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www.timberlakescamp.org
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www.campwood.org

