



Ascent Experience

## 'We have a MOUNTAIN to CLIMB'

*The Sales Team from a major UK Food company answered the call to adventure and found that high octane, high adrenaline experiences aren't necessary for building true relationships.*

*"Once I switched my expectation from high octane to 'this is something different' and decided to go with it, I got a lot out of it. And actually some of the more spiritual stuff does stick with you longer and deeper." – James Robinson*



*The Team*

Left to right: Chad Leebruggen, Simon Bradley, James Robinson, Anna Roberts, David Pickup, and Keith Waring



## Expectations

**Dave:** Basically we've got a very tough business situation in our company. We've had four very difficult years. The last 18 months have been a lot better, but we've still got a lot of work to do to turn the business around, and I think the sales function which we are all part of is one of the critical functions to actually get some business growth going. I think the success and our ability to do that will largely be determined by how well the six senior guys work together as a team. We are quite a new team. Two of the guys have been here a long time; two of the people are very new, and I'm pretty new as well. We don't really know each other very well as people. What I really want to get out of the two days is a really close bond formed between individuals so we understand each other better and we know what makes each other tick, and that we work effectively together going forward.

**Chad:** My expectations were mainly revolving around the physical exertion of it wondering how strenuous it would be climbing up mountains. I did look at the website before hand so I saw things about self-discovery and about it not being a pressurized environment forcing people into trains of thought.

**James:** I read the website. There's quite a sort of spiritual depth to the website. I got a sense that people find out a lot about themselves through the experience, so that's sort of what I was expecting. I'm looking forward to getting some time away; some time to think. I keep promising myself that I am going to improve my work/life balance and then I keep not doing anything about it. I really want to get some steel out of this to actually change some things and use the chance to talk to some people. Often it's my own guilt and perception of what others might think. My expectation is I want to use this as a chance to talk to some people and explain what I'm going to do.



## *Steps in the dark*

**Chad:** It was interesting. Your question about what is the mountain saying to you is not something I naturally relate with; that type of rhetoric or feelings is not something that I am very big on, but I kept an open mind and allowed myself to do something I wouldn't normally do. We did actually find a lot out about each other. We had some very personal insights and I now know a fair bit more about my colleagues than I did before.

**Anna:** It was good fun. It was something different, something I've never done beforehand. I was slightly nervous to start with, but actually once I got into it, I am a very trusting person so I was just blindly following Clay and quite comfortable that he wasn't going to let me fall or fall off a cliff.

**Keith:** It was dark, humid, and hot.

**Dave:** My initial feeling was 'are we going to get lost?' 'Is someone going to twist their ankle?' So I think, at first, I had very practical concerns and worries about some of the obstacles ahead as we walked into the dark. After a few moments, it was pretty clear to me that the obstacles were more imaginary than real and that it was pretty ok to walk and follow each other. I was very pleased at the way people supported each other. When you asked the question about what is the mountain saying to you, it was quite interesting to see some people talk in depth about their feelings and some of their concerns and hopes. I think that really helped to generate a new depth of conversation.

**James:** It's such a simple thing to do, but you never really do. It's analogous with taking steps on a new challenge, and thinking when you're feeling that uncertainty in your gut - the uncertain that says: 'did I make the right choice here?' 'Is it all going to go well?' 'Can I see a way through this?' Actually, you can conquer your fear. Fear is just one little conversation that you're having with yourself. It's good to just work through that experience because then when you

are in the real world and you have the same emotion you can remember actually that there is a way of dealing with it.

## Lessons

**James:** It's about pulling together here and encouraging each other. It's about using the time to understand each other better, what we're like under pressure and what it feels like when you're working hard on something. When you're in the mire and you're up against it, it's hard work. But you know there is an end and you will achieve your goal. The parallel works with any big project back at the office. We've generally gotten to know each other better. We care more about each other as people right now, which is great from where we were.

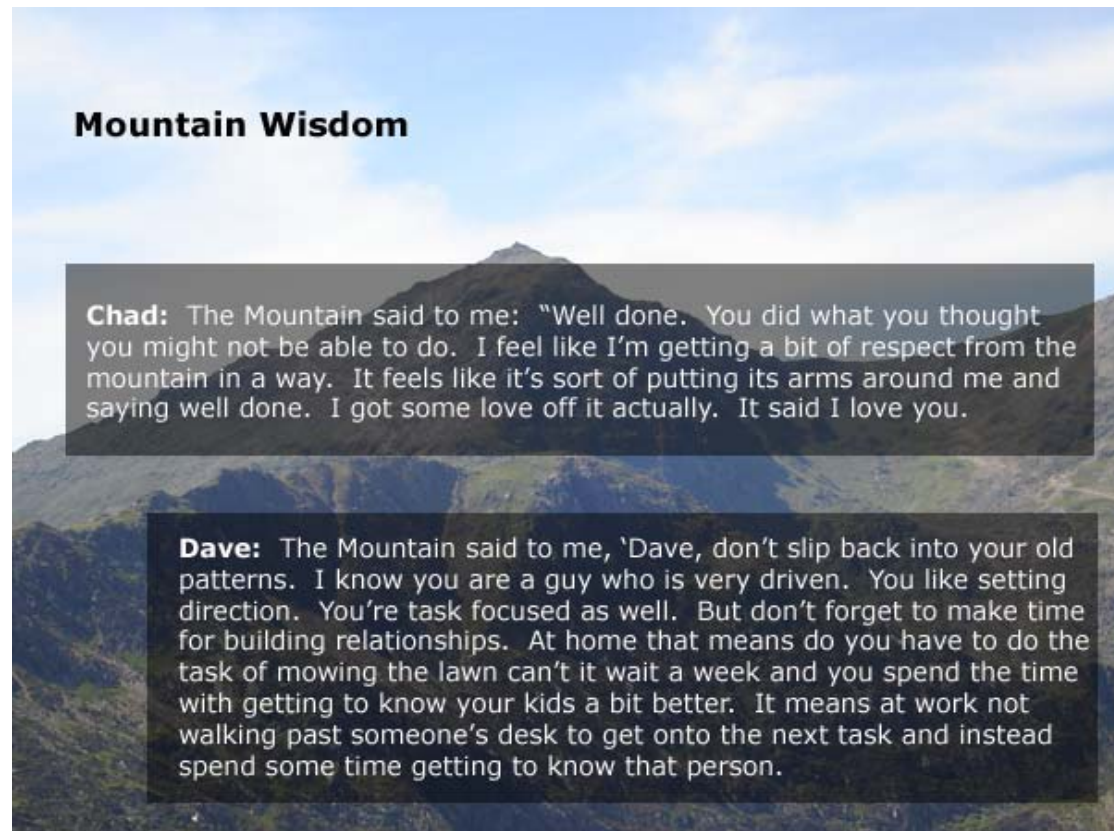
**Simon:** I think in a lot of respects it confirms a lot of the things I already knew. I know what I need to do within the team. I'm going to really focus on those and bring them to the forefront again. I feel quite comfortable in myself that I'm clear on what I need to do when I get back to the office.

**Chad:** I have gained a greater awareness that the team dynamics needs to change and my input within the team needs to change. It is for me to understand myself better within the team. Why I do certain things? Why I don't? My personal one was to gain commitment to the types of things I want to do; to the types of things I want to change. And maybe be less concerned over the things I don't actually want to change but think I do. I understand my team members more. I made commitments to behave differently and interact differently. On the personal side, I'm further forward than I was before. I'm clear on the things I want and the things I don't want.

**Dave:** I've had two primary things I've been working on. One is the team agenda and the other one is my own kind of personal dilemma about how I spend more time with my family. It's really bizarre. I think on the second one I feel more centred and in control than I did before I came on. I'm not quite sure why or how. It just kind of happened during the two days. I feel like I know what I need to do more than I did before I came here which is terrific. From a team perspective, there's definitely a stronger bond between individuals. People dealing with each other better; People feeling more comfortable with each other. That's really good to see.

We have to make sure we don't lose that when we get back to the office.

**Keith:** I think, talking to everybody else, you can see that we are all quite keen to have a bit more personal contact and talk about the way we should develop the business rather than all just getting on with the task oriented side of things.



**Simon:** It told me that getting to the top of the mountain was probably not the most important thing for me. What I learnt along the way about myself and my colleagues was more important.

**James:** I see the mountain as a big old lumbering mate. I feel quite close to it. Choices. It's all about me – I have to make those choices and do what's right for me.

