

Case Study

business studies

Outdooration October 2007 | Elbe Sandstone Mountains, Germany

Course: **3-Day Environmental Outdoor Education**

Theme: **Are Business and Nature Connected?**

Client: **Department for Sport Economy (SPECO) | Fontys University**

Participants: **250 1st year students, 3rd year tutors and lecturers**

Outdoor Activities: **Mountainbiking, Adventure Trail, Rock Climbing, Abseiling, Teambuilding Games**

In 2007, the Dutch Fontys University chose EasyDay to facilitate the development and implementation of an interactive outdoor project for sport management students. The task at hand was twofold; to develop the program with third-year students at an interactive workshop, and to facilitate the program for some 250 first-year students.

The program had to offer opportunities for freshers to bond with each other and their faculty in an academically relevant, intellectually stimulating and emotionally exciting way.

The Workshop

In the first phase 12 highly motivated third-year students and two lecturers attended a two-day workshop facilitated by EasyDay to design the actual event and to get a feel for the location. The workshop combined theory sessions with adventure excursions. Abseiling, rock climbing and an adventure trail surrounded by the extraordinary beauty of the Saxon Switzerland National Park inspired creativity and helped shape the upcoming event.

The following program aims were identified:

- Enhance the faculty's image as ecologically responsible and forward thinking
- Gain an understanding of how marketing and management can contribute to ecological sustainability and a socially fair future
- Fun and recreation
- Technical introduction to outdoor activities
- Develop teamwork skills and social bonding

The Event

Over three days small groups of up to ten students rotated through a series of outdoor activities. The outdoor experiences were interwoven with theory sessions, group work and experiential exercises. Each group was tutored throughout the event by a specific guide giving and collecting feedback to allow for educational continuity.

Biking and Hiking

A challenging mountain bike trip introduced students to the geographical area and gave them a feel for its people and ecology.

The groups stopped at an exposed ridge, the start of the adventure trail. Relaxing at the foot of the cliff, tutors asked students about what they had seen on the way, engaging them in animated discussion about how consumption, production and limited resources relate. The via ferrata that followed forced everyone to sharpen their concentration on body and rock. A short silent 'solo' experience after the climb created space for reflection. Resting in the sun, the groups finally considered the tricky question: What is nature?

Rock Climbing and Exploring

Rock climbing on warm sandstone cliffs, a breathtaking 40-metre abseil and an hour's hike through the colourful autumn forest, framed day two. Rock climbing, an activity where the mind playfully enters a deep state of concentration, was used to introduce the concept of 'flow experience' - a state of total absorption and optimal levels of functioning. Interwoven discussions explored concepts ranging from the evolution of the unique landscape and the necessity of responsible business management to the philosophy of climbing and its links to business ethics.

Team Building

A series of eight problem-solving exercises, tried and tested during several outdoor management training programs, challenged students' creativity and boosted their team skills. In between the outdoor activities there was time for social interaction, physical rest and lots of laughter.

Evening Program

In the evenings tutors met their groups for review sessions helping to build personal connections between guides and participants. English musician Jed Milroy playfully combined his live concert with environmental philosophy. Bonfires, a movie night on climate change, a farewell celebration and a football and volleyball tournament all helped create a warm and lively



atmosphere.

Outcome

Learning about the ecology of business and experiencing oneself as a part of our ecosystem resulted in profound personal development. Despite the challenging number of 250 participants, the overall atmosphere, course evaluation and feedback from lecturers showed that the event was a success. With Outdooration '07 Fontys University pioneered a powerful approach to education for sustainable development and set high standards in the academic sector.

“During the exciting outdoor activities I noticed the shift towards a different way of learning. I learned about myself, about my role with fellow students and I saw the impact I have on the environment more clearly. Through the EasyDay course I became aware of my place and power within the Earth’s ecosystem, of which we are all part. This experience helped me to change my behaviour to becoming more sustainable. Therefore, I thank my University for working with EasyDay.”

Student Participant

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