

Abbey Road Studios added the wow factor to help build better team relations at ComVort. Rochelle Long reports



"It feels like you've achieved the impossible and makes you realise the power of teamwork," said Hall

Come together

Performing and recording a song at the world-renowned Abbey Road Studios – made famous by The Beatles' album of the same name – is an experience usually reserved for top international artists. When Jonathon Hall, a partner at London-based advertising agency The Ad Store, was asked to host the annual conference of ComVort – a global network of owner-managed advertising agencies – he brought in Hainesnet. They had pitched the concept of the ultimate team building add-on event at Abbey Road Studios to fit in with the conference's 'musical' theme. The team building event, part of a four-day annual conference based at the Copthorne Tara London Kensington, was to help engender a feeling of team co-operation across the 55 different agencies operating in 33 countries.

Hall says: "To be able to play at Abbey Road was an opportunity simply too good to miss. Abbey Road is a global icon – the UK's number one recording studio and the spiritual

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Philip Haines
Hainesnet

Client: ComVort
Event: Team building experience
Venue: Abbey Road Studios, London
Participants: 100 delegates from 55 advertising agencies across 33 countries

home of so many legendary bands."

Kerin Purcell, head of brand and marketing at Abbey Road Studios, adds: "It's a very special and unique experience to be recording a song in the most famous recording studios in the world, working with the best engineers on the best equipment."

Hainesnet works in partnership with production company Stiff Promotions to offer the 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience, tailored to each client's individual requirements. Delegates were asked in advance for a list of their skills and musical preferences to ensure enough instruments were on hand, and then split into small groups

on arrival for tuition with professional musicians or singing coaches. Parts were carefully arranged to cater for all abilities, so that even those who have never sung or played an instrument before can take part in the final performance.

Hainesnet director Philip Haines says: "When they arrived we showed them a five-minute video of life at Abbey Road and they were all completely enthused. A lot of those people not as musically inclined opted for the rock choir, while of course some people just take to it like a duck to water. You always get a few people who want to be a featured vocalist.

"Because of the size of the group we divided them up into three different groups, which each learnt a song: Snow Patrol's 'Run', The White Stripes' 'Seven Nation Army' and of course 'Hey Jude', which was kind of an obvious one given our location – and it allows everyone to get involved."

Following the tuition, the groups broke for refreshments before a final rehearsal, then the performance and recording of the song, with

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each delegate receiving a CD of the performance to take home.

Come the final event, Haines says: “We contemplated bringing in extra people for the evening because the studios can comfortably hold up to 300 and we thought the group might be rattling around a little, but they were a great audience, cheering each other on and everyone was pumped up for the whole thing.”

Hall adds: “Music is the perfect metaphor for getting the team building message across. You start the day as a group of individuals, many of whom you’ve never met before, and by the end you’re on stage performing together as a cohesive band. It feels like you’ve achieved the impossible and makes you realise the power of teamwork. In our case the experience led to a group of ComVort members deciding to explore how we can work more closely together in the future, pitching for business as a group rather than individually.”

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Small groups were given professional tuition

ComVort’s day at Abbey Road Studios was a runaway success, delivering its business objectives and a sensational highlight to the network’s conference.

Post-event, Hall says he received “a whole surge of emails from people saying how amazing it was”. The final word goes to a delegate from Amsterdam, who wrote: “This was the best conference we’ve had since becoming a member... and Abbey Road, well that was fantastic, a dream. Nothing can ever top that.” ■