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Reportaje / Eventos

HERALD TRIBUNE [medios]

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One hour left before this historical treasure hunt is over, and Team No. 1 from the cell phone giant Ericsson turns into a maze of ivy-covered convents, somewhere between the Cathedral of Toledo and the medieval city walls.

"What are we doing here?" says a junior employee, putting away her camera.

"Where are we going?" says another.

"The further we go, the fewer street names you see," quips the department manager, Felix Cruz, 36, halting at a blind alley. The team huddles around the map for the umpteenth time.

Their dilemma < how to extricate themselves from this tangle of narrow, cobblestone streets and reach an ancient synagogue as quickly as possible < is not the stuff of boardroom meetings. It might not even make the gossip circle around the water cooler. But this is a business retreat, and the idea is not to tax your brains but bond with your colleagues, while enjoying a few tourism perks along the way.

Gone are days when an incentive trip meant playing a round of golf with the boss at a fancy hotel. The corporate getaway is now an elaborate affair, often requiring costumes, daring feats or, in the case of this month's event for the Spanish division of Ericsson, a keen sense of direction and an encyclopaedic knowledge of Spanish culture.

KIVICOM, one of Spain's largest event planners, appeals to Ernest Hemmingway fans with mock bullfights called capeas. The firm teaches people more comfortable behind a desk to wave a red cape before a young bull with shaved horns. Sales staff, especially Americans, tend to be the most daring, but chief executives are often the first to don the black torero hat, the marketing director, Fernando Le Monnier, said. "Like it or not, the boss has to be an example and motivate the rest."