

# Leadership team coaching Case Study

## Background and objectives

This leadership team had been in its current form for 6 months when we began this work. The team was operating well, however, there were underlying tensions which had the potential to negatively impact the team's performance. The team members had a wide range of experience with some having held leadership positions for some time and others recently promoted into the team.

The objectives of the team workshops and coaching were to increase the trust levels and interdependence in the team, establish what healthy and productive conflict looked like for this team and strengthen the team to be able lead well and decisively through a complex season for the business.

## Motivational Maps

The work with this team began with creating a Motivational Map for each team member, reviewing these results in 1:1 feedback sessions and then facilitating a team workshop to look at the Team Motivational Map report.

On the whole all team members were highly motivated and energised by the work they were doing. One exception was a recently promoted team member who had a high Expert motivator meaning she needed to feel that she had the expertise and knowledge to do her job well. In contrast, she felt she was very much 'learning on the job' and this was proving stressful and as a result her satisfaction score was very low. This was causing tension with colleagues where she felt she wasn't meeting their expectations, which created defensiveness and frustration on both sides. On the basis of these results there was a realignment of responsibilities and a mentor was put in place to enable this team member to learn and grow in the skills her new position required.

The team workshop highlighted that the MD was a high Spirit, lower Director whereas another team member, which significant leadership experience had a much higher Director. The Spirit motivator looks for freedom and autonomy and the Director looks to control people and resources. These results demonstrated what was being felt anecdotally within the team, that the member with the high Director had a propensity to take over and try to manage the team. Talking through these results allowed the MD and team member to discuss and agree on boundaries around managing the team which improved dynamics within the team significantly.

The leadership team had a very high change index meaning that they were very comfortable with change and a weighting towards growth motivators over relationship motivators. This means that the team will be risk friendly and change oriented but may not always take the time to ensure that the wider business is on board and review changes to check that changes have been implemented correctly. This knowledge prompted the team to review its communication strategies with the wider business and the change implementation strategy to allow for increased communication and time for changes to take effect. This resulted in improved buy in from the wider business when changes were made and increases levels of trust within the organisation.

## Cohesive Team workshops

The team then undertook the Cohesive Team workshops looking at Building Trust, Mastering Conflict, Achieving Commitment, Embracing Accountability, and Focussing on Results.

The five workshops, which were held at fortnightly intervals, gave the team the opportunity to step back from the day to day running of the business and work on being a team.

It became apparent that trust had been eroded somewhat in the team due to expectations of colleagues not being met and differing approaches to conflict and accountability. Taking time to explore the conflict continuum helped to identify that some team members were very comfortable with conflict and would seek it out to gain clarity around an idea or concept whereas others could find prolonged conflict intimidating and counter productive in sharing their ideas and feeling supported by their colleagues.

The team also gained clarity around the distinction between productive conflict around ideas and accountability which centres on performance and contribution to the team. There had been discussions around competence which the team had thought were productive conflict but had been perceived as accountability and a critique of performance.

These workshops resulted in the team agreeing on and implementing new understandings about how to engage well in conflict, how to allow for any individual to pause and move out of a feeling place and how to identify whether something to be debated was an idea or concept or a performance issue. As a result, all team members were able to contribute more fully in team discussions and debates.

## **Outcomes**

The Motivational Map work and the Cohesive Team workshops proved to be very effective vehicles for open and honest communication within the team. There was increased understanding of colleagues within the team and the underlying tensions had been understood in the context of the Motivational Maps and the team workshops and had been discussed fully and resolved.

This resulted in increased levels of trust within the team, clearer boundaries around who was responsible for what, an increased commitment to the team and the vision of the team to lead the organisation in a way that was results focussed and where each employee felt empowered and equipped to embrace the challenges the business was facing.

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