

Dysfunctional Executive Team

By Douglas Gerber

CHALLENGE

This professional services firm is a global leader in its field and a strong player in Greater China. The consultants on this team are highly educated and come from strong backgrounds with a plethora of experience. The state of team was characterized by a group of highly competent consultants operating in silos with little transparency and a dearth of office or Greater China team identity.

There was a fundamental lack of trust and transparency. "Self survival" has tended to be the unconscious behavioral trait. Many consultants were disillusioned and feel in the dark as to their own career progress and status. There was an expressed concern that if they didn't address these issues, Greater China could suffer a crash. In this busy growth context consultants didn't take the time to work together as a team, but rather as individuals pursuing their own business growth agendas. The mix of personalities at that time contributed to the sense of individualism where consultants didn't spend much time together either at work or socially.

SOLUTION

The first stage was to clearly diagnose the situation. This was done through extensive interviews with all consultants. Aspects of culture and behavior were highlighted. It became clear that there was a dearth of team building efforts over the years, and in fact, the issues were never properly addressed. After this process the results were presented and discussed with consultants to validate and achieve a clear consensus of the current state of affairs of the team, and the causes.

At this stage a key milestone was to achieve a broad willingness to change and move forward. Subsequently FocusOne facilitated a two-day workshop. All the issues were surfaced. The team engaged in FocusOne's proprietary "Rear View Feedback" in which they all shared with each other about contributions to the team in a safe, structured environment. They came up with clear "Values" which they will operate with moving forward. They came up with a "Mantra" which embodies the Values. Finally, operating teams were set up to handle the issues. The group celebrated its successes during the two days.

OUTCOME

The Values were cascaded throughout the organization and it became clear at all levels what they stood for. The working groups created meaningful and actionable results. Most importantly a new culture was created in which the team moved from a group of silo operatives to taking advantage of team synergy. The consultants clearly are living the espoused values and “walking their talk”. Team members are helping one another and being supportive. Importantly, the team possesses a strong identity and members are proud to be part of the team. The backbiting is gone and issues are confronted upfront with transparency. Now that the team dynamics have fundamentally shifted to the positive, they are looking at how to move it to the next level.

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