

Shifting gears to a more commercially aware organisation

Background

Our client has been a quasi-governmental organisation intent on shifting gears to be more self-funding and commercially oriented, while at the same time increasing its focus and impact in the work it does in many countries around the globe.

Our role

Our initial role was to support the new CEO. This work widened at different points to include some support for the newly appointed Executive Team, the wider leadership team and some specific work for various parts of the organisation. The role included:

- Regular mentoring for the CEO over a couple of years as he prepared for, took on, and executed his new role. The scope was wide ranging and included his own personal leadership style, how he was to lead the establishment of a new strategic focus/ambition across the organisation and how to tackle resourcing implications. It also included how to create the conditions for instigating real cultural shifts, notably how to create a more commercially-focused, innovative, flexible and empowered organisation committed to leveraging a few global products effectively and efficiently.
- Helping the CEO “take stock” of progress, particularly on his own leadership style, and then working through possible next steps with him and his Executive Team subsequent to that “stock taking”.
- Once the Executive Team was formed and progress had been made, working with them to consider how they intended/needed to adopt a leadership approach which would enable them to lead the organisation through the next phase of the change journey. Our role was to help design and facilitate these Executive Team meetings, and act as coach and advisor through the subsequent month as they began to apply their chosen leadership style and test the “guiding principles” for the organisation which they had drafted.
- Working with the design team to design a meeting of the wider leadership group which would result in them shaping and leading the next phase of the change journey.
- Designing and running two week-long programmes on change leadership with some of the newly appointed leaders in central offices. This was to help equip them for their new roles and catalyse a shift in their leadership approach and impact in the organisation, individually and collectively.
- Working with some specific parts of the organisation, helping with resourcing related issues, as well as commercial and project-related work.

Outcomes

Over the period (to date) of our work with this client, a great deal has been accomplished: there is a clear strategy in place which is widely understood and supported across the organisation; plans are in place for doubling revenue in five years; there is greater ownership amongst the wider leadership group for implementing these plans; there is evidence of a more open, engaging, and empowering leadership approach being practiced by the senior leaders.

CEO learnings & reflections:

Different types of leadership styles might be necessary at different phases of a change journey. In the first phase, our approach was more “command and control” – a more “shaping” style. But in order to build real ownership, trust, and empowerment, a more inclusive and “masterful” approach is needed. You can’t build ownership through telling!!!

Changing leadership style has to be overt so that both the leaders and the led can learn together what the new paradigm means and how it will work.