

A Leadership Change Journey

How to build a strong Leadership Team and impact your climate and culture for the better



What did the client want to achieve and how was the existing climate?

Our client, who is both a leader in their market and a leader in their technology (business management software) came to us initially to create a stronger connection between the members of the UK Board.

The new Managing Director and the HR Director had the foresight to believe the environment could change. They believed if the leadership team were able to work closer together and become a stronger force, as a team, this difference would motivate the employees while improving business and customer results.



The Challenge

The challenge at the beginning of the journey was that the leadership team operated in silo's and had no common purpose with little understanding of each other's roles or objectives. This created more silos. There was little trust with each other or with the business as a whole.

Most of the Directors were being pulled into a transactional level of operating, only interested in topics that were relevant to their business areas, and focusing on projects they felt individually were important to them. They often feared for their roles. They were not working at their optimum, which meant the business results were not maximised, which resulted in inconsistent quarterly results for over 8 years.



The economic and business environment challenges were tough for the whole of the UK. In this organisation the impact of this was severe cost constraints; cost reductions, no travel etc, which effected employee morale.

In the complex organisation structure the team operated in a heavy matrixed environment. Team members felt more aligned with their line of business/sales rather than creating success and being aligned to the UK as a whole/country

There wasn't a history of consistent quarter-on-quarter business success for several years. Communication from the business was limited, which left people feeling underwhelmed and not appreciated.

A vision had been created but not all team members were aligned to that vision.



What did the client achieve over this Journey?

For the UK Board

- They gained a better understanding of each other as well as themselves, which took them from a collective of individuals to trusted colleagues and friends.
- Respect for each other enabled them to focus on the success of the team rather than them as individuals.
- The stronger relationships gained increased the effectiveness of the decision making, their roles and the business.
- The team had a common purpose, which the whole team supported and embraced. This was demonstrated in a united team with a strong set of values.
- Team Members became more aware of their behaviours and their impact as senior leaders. They gained a better awareness and understanding of what they needed to role model to the organisation to create success for themselves, for each other and to create success in the whole of the UK.
- A vision that everyone could connect to and everyone had total buy-in to making it happen.



For the Managing Director

- The MD had a team that worked together who were now collaborating and understanding each other.
- Team members were no longer spending time dealing with isolated (individual) situations that did not support the business growth, which freed up internal time pressures to focus on other areas such as the customer.
- Success – the employees and the whole business recognised that the UK was now successful and had a strong leadership team. People felt successful because the Board were operating and behaving in a positive and successful way with each other and with their people.
- Team Members felt more open and able to discuss issues that affected them and could deal with challenges more quickly and efficiently
- Team members became more aware of the EQ (emotional intelligence) aspects of their own behaviours and their impact on the business results.
- More ownership, accountability and responsibility for their own behaviours and the team's results
- A loyal team focussed on the UK results as well as their own line of business committed to a truly shared vision



For the UK Company and employees

- The company achieved 9 consecutive quarters of double digit growth over the journey, which was unprecedented for the UK and the success lifted the morale of the business.
- There was now clarity and direction, and understanding of what the company need to achieve and how to be successful.
- Fun came back into the culture and employees had a spring in their step, people felt more empowered and believed they had a career. They wanted to be a part of the future.
- There were clear communication paths; the business became transparent and predictable. Employees felt that there was a greater level of openness that started at the top.
- The feedback showed there was a great visibility of the leadership team and employees felt they had an opportunity to feedback to them. Employees could air their views and thoughts openly.
- Employees saw the leadership collaborating and this filtered through into all the teams. This created a natural cascade of the teamwork and the teamwork ethic deeper into the organisation.
- Overall Employee Engagement increased.
- Employee morale improved; the sense of achievement and success spread throughout the company.
- The culture was now one of openness and honesty with more sense of accountability and success.

How did we achieve it?

Time together and the commitment...

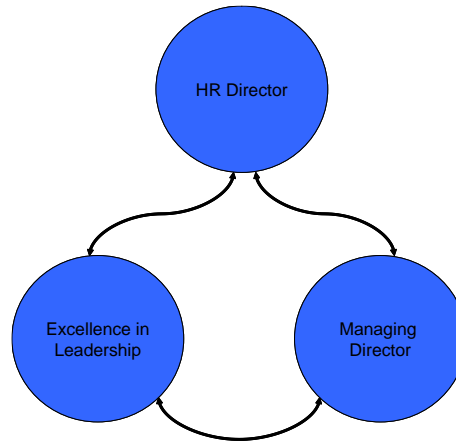
- Excellence In leadership developed and designed a bespoke programme for the board
- The team committed to a journey where they agreed to spend dedicated time together to focus on "How" they operated as a team. Also "How" they were leading the organisation and the impact of them as a Board on the business
- This dedicated time would be in an environment where they could not be disturbed, away from the office and interruptions!
- They devoted 2 consecutive days to focus on this every 6 months with one day session in between to keep them focussed and to keep them on track. This happened for a period of 18 months



Knowing and understanding each other....

- This dedicated time was spent getting the team to know each other better, to learn more about each other. To understand what was important to each person and to them collectively as a team. This focus was as individuals, as a member of the team and in their role as leaders.
- These workshops were created based on the needs of the team using frameworks such as, communication, teaming, to help grow and build collaboration amongst the team
 - We built a format to build the team purpose aligned to the Vision for the business
 - Helping them as leaders understand how individuals respond under the usual pressures of business. Have team members share their traits when they were under pressure

- This level of openness and disclosure as a team allowed the team to grow and trust each other at a deeper level. This allowed the team to share more and have the kind of dialogue needed to effectively run the business.



What they said about it ...

Quotes from the UK Board members:

- "We started the journey as a collective of individuals and developed as trusted colleagues and friends"
- "The team learnt to operate as a team and focus on the team's success as opposed to individual needs"
- "This has increased the ability to make quicker and effective decisions to drive the business forward"
- "A better understanding of how the team see me"
- "It was OK to show weakness and vulnerability"
- "The organisation gained a leadership 'team', new culture and a sense of fun"
- "I see a strong sense of team, people say that, no doubt we all work together. Greater collaboration across silos"

Quotes from employees in the organisation

- "The team has grown in leaps and bounds"
- "We work together and enjoy working together"
- "Respect and trust is very apparent"
- "It used to be numbers only; you were a cog in a machine. It is still about the numbers, but it's the people too"
- "I found everyone very friendly. It's by far the best company I have ever worked for"
- "It feels like there is direction. When I came on board, it was "show me the money"; it was about closing deals"
- "Morale is much higher. Everyone is more upbeat, there is employee engagement"
- "There was a period when there was a lot of flexibility. It's a more empowered environment, more purposeful. That has definitely changed"
- "The sense of being heard and not just sound bites. I guess that's a reflection of how things are being discussed at that level"
- "You are allowed to make mistakes, learn from them and move on"
- "It's a much more open, trusting, more teaming. People are confident to speak out. It's all really good"
- "People feel far more positive. It's a winning culture, it's competitive"
- "I think there is more focus on people actually, eg. helping with development and career path"
- "There is more fun, better communication and more openness from the leadership team"
- "If you believe you matter and you believe in what you do, you will make a difference. If you don't, you won't"
- "We now have a Board of Directors who are approachable and they don't shut people down. They will allow you to ask if you need to. They are a lot more approachable than before"
- "There is an openness – to a level you can be at this company"
- "The Board is driving a culture of openness. The very fact that we are having an interview illustrates that. From what I hear of the previous leadership, it was very different"
- "The culture is a lot more helpful now. There is a lot more on-boarding, coaching"
- "The company is attracting better talent now – a lot more people want to join now"
- "Compared to some years ago, there's a much greater level of trust and delegation down through the management chain. There was mistrust and paranoia previously"
- "There is more risk-taking (asking for forgiveness, not asking for permission)"