

Case Study

Client Profile

A medium-sized company

Employee Feedback to Executive Leadership Team Establishes Strategic Direction

Business Issue

The executive leadership team of a medium-sized company set out to establish a clear strategic direction based on direct feedback from employees. As key resources in a highly changing and dynamic industry, these employees were expressing the need to know where their company was headed and how it intended to get there. The leadership team also understood that, for business reasons, it was in the best interests of the company to establish and deploy a clear strategic direction.

The Solution

In initiating this important task, the president of the company met over the course of about six weeks with his direct reports and the Partnership Continuum facilitator. There were about 12 people from such diverse functional operational areas as engineering, operations, information systems, customer care, human resources, communications, finance, marketing, and sales.

The team agreed from the outset that the rapidly changing nature of its industry created confusion in the day-to-day operations of its company. They needed a commonality of purpose, a navigational star that could guide their daily aspirations and actions.

The leadership team understood that it was in the midst of a fierce war for talent in the industry, and employees were demanding a compelling purpose for bringing their skills to bear on the marketplace.

The team determined to establish a shared commitment to making the company a global player by delivering a superior customer experience.

Methodology. That navigational star, the team determined, was a shared commitment to making the company a global player by delivering a superior customer experience. While this may seem like a conclusion the team might have reached through common sense, the process they went through to get there was anything but common.

The team underwent a rapid conceptual shift as it worked through the Partnering Intelligence material. As they worked through the win/win exercises, team members began to see their respective roles in terms of the customer or end user.

While on a cognitive level, most executives would readily acknowledge that they are in business to satisfy the customer, often their daily behaviors indicate they are more interested in the viability and success of their own careers. They are wrapped up in positioning themselves in the corporate structure.

Trust. As members of the team addressed their trust issues, they experienced a "gut shift" toward the importance of the customer that was qualitatively different than a purely cerebral acknowledgment of the customer's importance.

Win/Win. They realized on an emotional level that the only way to truly achieve win/win is by partnering on behalf of the customer. They understood win/win with a capital W, seeing how it was possible to win for themselves personally, win for their departments, win for their customers, and win for their companies all at the same time.

Aligning Task and Relationship. Like most executives, up until this point the leaders only understood the "task" or cognitive aspects of partnering; now they understood the "relationship" or emotional aspects as well. The result was a fresh excitement about their personal and professional futures and a radical shift in how they viewed their business and customers.

The team's experience was grounded in the bifurcated model of task and relationship that lies at the core of Partnering Intelligence. As people work together, their brains must be aligned with a task and their hearts must be aligned with each other. Only when both conditions are met do partnerships reach their potential and yield maximum results.

Results

After aligning task and relationship, the team worked enthusiastically to create a vision statement, mission, and strategic direction. They called this their "strategic framework" because the term was broad enough to imply the importance of both the material and ethereal realms of success.

After solidifying this framework in the absence of time-consuming conflict that so often accompanies corporate initiatives, the executive team quickly transitioned into deploying, communicating, and enacting the compelling strategic direction they had developed.

In turn, several of the function leaders who played a role in developing this strategic framework replicated this process, using partnering concepts and tools to establish new task- and relationship-based directions in their respective organizations.

In the twenty-first century, businesses that develop, sustain and profit from partnerships faster and better will attain organizational success. At the core of any successful business are people. After all, businesses don't partner; people do. Developing the partnering intelligence of your people is what we do.

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