



CASE STUDY

TEAM DYNAMICS AND COMMUNICATION

Leading and Managing Through Restructuring

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COO of a mid-sized privately held corporation initiated a significant restructuring effort to reduce costs, to eliminate extra layers of management, and to streamline operations. The COO sought an independent 3rd party to assess the situation, develop a strategy to address the concerns of the team, and to facilitate a series of team building and training sessions to move the IT team from conflict to high performance.



CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

These organizational changes resulted in expanded leadership responsibilities for several key individuals within the IT department. It also highlighted weaknesses that had existed in the department for years in the areas of communication, process management, vendor management, and accountability. Morale was low, tensions were high, and key projects were increasingly at risk of not being completed on time. Several important project meetings devolved into arguments and shouting matches rather than productive working sessions.

SUMMARY OF THE SOLUTION

The COO contracted directly with Ms. Falk to address these issues. She conducted a series of one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders within the IT department to uncover the root causes of the breakdowns within the team.

After analyzing the input, she provided a report to the COO of the key themes that emerged from the interviews, a full page of ideas that the interviewees offered for how to move the team forward, and a proposal for team and individual coaching to address the needs of the team. Ms. Falk worked directly with the COO to design the first in a series of all-day workshops for the team.

Activities included reviewing and acknowledging the current state; developing a vision for the desired state and creating a high level “road map” for how to get from the current state to the desired state. Ms. Falk also led the group through a variety of interactive exercises to help them learn more about one another and how to better communicate with one another.

The team was provided with job aids to use after the session and all participants committed to specific team and individual development action items prior to leaving the session. Following the first team workshop, Ms. Falk commenced one-on-one coaching for three senior leaders that is continuing today.

“When Dianne becomes your coach, she joins “Team You” and helps you cut through the noise so you can reach your own solutions. Put simply: Dianne listens. Sounds simple but rest assured, it is a revelatory experience. Every word, pause, and moment – she’s present, insightful, and ready to work with you, for you, and about you.”



RESULTS

In just three months, the team reports that they are working together with much less tension, enhanced communication, and a new focus on collaboration rather than on working in silos. The second facilitated session for the team included a 90-day progress review to acknowledge the team's progress and to point out continued areas of opportunity. It also included a case study review where Ms. Falk walked the team through four key projects that they worked on together in the past 90 days.

For each project, the participants were asked to share their assessment of what did/did not go well (from their point of view) and to practice refraining from reacting to one another before actively listening and engaging in productive discussion. While the group identified opportunities for improvement on all four projects, they were also able to celebrate the fact that all four projects were completed on or ahead of time with much less stress and conflict than they had experienced in the past year.

As a result of this session, the CIO noted a variety of accomplishments that he wasn't previously aware of and the head of the project management office indicated that she felt much more connected to her colleagues and more "in the loop" on their ideas and concerns than ever before. Ms. Falk is continuing to coach three senior leaders in the IT Department to support them as they continue to build the team and drive the strategic changes that will enable their continued success.



MEET DIANNE FALK

Dianne brings over two decades of executive experience to her work, sharing lessons learned while delivering large-scale complex programs, overseeing post-merger integration activities, leading high-performing teams, and managing day-to-day operations.

"Dianne was fantastic! Extremely articulate, engaging, informative, fun, bright, and intuitive."