

Leadership formation

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That individual assembles the right team around them who are capable and committed to face the challenge together.

2. LEADERSHIP FORMATION

It's awful lonely as the single driving force holding the flickering flame of ambition. Successful organisations ensure that others are recruited into the ownership of the life-blood of ambition.

In the earliest days of an organisation's life or rebirth, this will not necessarily be a leadership team but could be other individuals who are showing an interest in the ongoing performance of the organisation. Over time, these individuals will either form into a team with all sharing ownership of the ongoing success of the organisation or will move onto to pastures new. The intense energy around the emerging belief system will mean that those who don't believe in its future will leave, being replaced by people who do believe.

We have observed that organisations that see themselves as ongoing enterprises pay attention to, and invest in, the way their leadership teams form and maintain their collective belief and energy. They ensure that it is a given to have high performers in leadership positions and focus on the behaviours necessary to make them leaders. They prepare them to engage others and to encourage behaviours for success, not just focusing on performance. And they invest in leaders becoming a team; it is not a given that they will work together effectively from day one.

The most successful organisations are those that are really strong at building teams in the truest sense - a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable^[2]. To achieve this takes time and commitment. In addition to alignment and commitment to each other, the team needs to find and explore ways of working and behaviour that supports the growing ambition and common performance goals. If not worked on and nurtured, the result is that many of the common dysfunctions of a team^[3] arise and they drag down its performance and ultimately that of the business.

'My first task was to identify those in the senior leadership that wanted to be part of the journey. It was a necessary up-front investment in ensuring that we could work together to transform the business'

'Creating a space where we could honestly and openly discuss how we wanted to progress the business was fundamental. Getting everyone's views on the table meant that our decision making was more accurate'

or

'Teams are all very well, but I needed top class individuals to be able to make things happen. We needed pace and so it was hire and fire until I got the right people'

Besides creating a high performing leadership team, it is also critical to develop leaders and this is more than a leadership development programme. It will be through a series of activities: exposure to significant opportunities or threats, interaction with key stakeholders, informal discussions in team meetings, mentoring with key players, exposure to other organisations and so on. Nor is leadership development kept until promotion to the highest echelons is on the cards. It is an ongoing commitment to the development of all within a defined framework of capabilities and behaviours.

'Technically he could probably do the CEO's job, but we really need someone who gets the culture and the need for reinvestment in the future'

'He was our top performing sales guy, but he had to go because of his attitude to others in the business. It was all about him and nothing about the business'

or

'I guess it was always a risk in promoting him, but he was our top performer and he would have resigned if he hadn't got the top job. We couldn't afford the risk of him joining a competitor'