

• ELVERFELDT COACHING •

Intercultural integration and team building in top-tier management

Summary:

By working through the different mentalities and personalities in a group of international top managers, a common direction for the organisation on the basis of joint values was found.

Basic Situation:

Following on from a major restructuring away from a brand orientated approach to a regional approach, the four national general managers of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland and their two German chairmen decided to make use of international synergies for the multinational corporation.

However, there were considerable differences between the four national managers and the two chairmen in mentality, expectations and their ideas as to how to approach the common strategy and goals. To make matters even more difficult, there was a significant age gap between the two German chairmen. The older chairman, Dr Bauer (name changed), clearly favoured far more conservative attitudes and processes than the much younger Mr Müller (name changed).

The four national general managers naturally noticed the effects of these differences. The managers carefully observed at the monthly meetings whose ideas were always accepted and who had problems. The meetings were characterised by everybody apportioning blame and issuing commands. Instead of everyone working towards a common goal, each individual preferred to concentrate on his own country. When it came to having to make critical decisions, the managers remained passive and waited for a decision from management.

Objectives:

1. The promotion of co-operation and team building at top management level
2. Agreeing on the fundamentals of a common understanding of the future corporate culture as a basis for defining and implementing strategic goals (Creation of a common understanding of goals and values)
3. Development of an EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) platform
4. Further development of the managers as entrepreneurs; coaching in the field of management

Approach:

Step 1: Performing interviews with each participant to specify detailed goals and to establish each individual's assessment of the overall situation by the chairmen and the national managers.

Step 2: Regular workshops with the chairmen and the national managers after the monthly meetings, to present in a first stage the results of the interviews and to take first steps to achieve the common goals and to address immediate needs.

Furthermore, one-to-one coaching sessions were also conducted.

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Over a period of twelve months (in an eight week cycle), the following results were achieved through workshops, meeting sit-ins and individual coaching

Results: (after a year)

- The established basis of trust and increasingly candid discussion of conflicts reduced tension
- Clear commitment of all participants to the future corporate cultural and strategic goals
- Common understanding of values and goals, clarity as to own management targets and enhanced management skills
- Agreement on a common approach to EFQM

Personal feedback of the participants: "We all now have a greater understanding of the personal and national differences that were not so obvious to us before. Now we really work as a team in one direction and don't waste time any more with superfluous 'games' and conflicts. We can now trust each other and the meetings are a lot more relaxed and efficient. Even the initially very critical Dr Bauer believes that this investment is the best one made in a long time, as the financial results have also benefited positively. It had also proved very important to discuss topics outside of business."

Other Motives for System and Team Coaching:

- Improved co-operation for improved goal achievement
- Reduction of tension, power struggles and deviations in goals and interests
- Dismantling resistance to organisational changes, mergers and restructuring
- Support for the development and implementation of structures, processes and organisation
- Support in definition: order specification, planning and implementation of change, organisation and development projects