

Team Development for the Board

The Board of an f.m.c.g. company was implementing significant change in their organisation and rethinking what leadership meant in a process-driven matrix organisation. They arranged for Richard Smith Associates to work with them on leadership issues and to include in their workshop some work on "team development".

The Analysis

Prior to the planned Board workshop all members had completed a proprietary 360° personal development questionnaire and an inventory describing the Board as a team. A facilitator had met with each Board member to feed back the results of the personal questionnaire.

During the feedback interviews it became clear that there was a measure of reserve - even some suspicion - within the team, some of it centred on the (relatively new) team leader, whose style was markedly different to that of his predecessor.

All members of the team were highly committed to their Company, but still had quite separate departmental perspectives.

Some cultural misunderstandings existed between different nationalities on the Board.

The Solution

As part of the planned leadership workshop, a number of team development activities were used:

First the team was engaged in a non-threatening, non-work-related task to begin a process of reflection on what constitutes effective teamwork.

A practical template for team problem-solving was introduced and discussed.

The issues raised by team members through the team inventory were discussed and various team members gave examples of the real problems which lay behind the inventory scores.

The facilitator collected agreed action points on a flipchart; these were subsequently word-processed and circulated to all team members.

A discussion took place to define leadership values and behaviours appropriate to the organisation's needs.

During the workshop, a feedback process took place, enabling team members to talk openly of the things they appreciated about each other, and about areas of difficulty.

The Outcomes

Relationships and collaboration within the Board improved, as misunderstandings and suspicions had been voiced and addressed.

The Board began the practice of reviewing each of its meetings for 15 minutes at the end, to improve its discussion and decision process and to check the decisions for consistency with the values they had agreed during the workshop.

In a three-month follow-up Board members reported much greater satisfaction with the process of Board meetings, and that the meetings were getting shorter.