
TOP TEAM DEVELOPMENT IN A NEW STRATEGIC BUSINESS UNIT

The Situation

Our client is a Strategic Business Unit formed in 2007 to take advantage of opportunities in the UK Logistics industry. It was based on a joint venture which had been running successfully but latterly needed the resources of a permanent subsidiary structure.

A board of directors was appointed drawing in senior management from the two JV partner companies. A Managing Director was recruited externally. His brief was quickly to integrate the new organisation and expand the business. He asked us to work with him and his top team to enable them to provide the unified leadership that the new business required.

The Challenge

The new MD had a clear picture of the type of top team he needed. It required a level of top team effectiveness well beyond what we typically encounter and the norm for top teams to be found in research studies. There was also significant pressure with the official launch date of the business impending and high expectations of delivery in a very short time by the business.

Our Approach

We are often asked to work with boards of directors, senior executive teams, etc. The initial request is usually for “team development”. Our first step is to work with the team or at least the MD or CEO to identify what they actually need by way of a “team”.

We often use a continuum to outline:

- a) the types of viable team;
- b) the needs each one meets
- c) the requirements for developing a team to that point.

At its simplest the choices are described as:

Network of Individuals	Working Group	Full Team
Benefits	Benefits	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ensures essential information gets to all group members <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provides a link for sharing intelligence and ideas <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helps people to “feel part of something” <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helps consistency of understanding about key issues 	<p style="text-align: center;">As Networked Group plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enables a range of skills, etc. to combine in tackling complex issues on an as needed basis <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provides a focal point for the group’s efforts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Makes more efficient use of time and resources in decision making, planning and so on 	<p style="text-align: center;">As Working Group, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A high level of mutual accountability and support which provides exceptional joint results. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accelerated and profound learning about key business issues and how to resolve them <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robust and enduring relationships and trust among team members.

Any of these could constitute an effective top team depending on the circumstances. However, they all need work and the more sophisticated the team model the bigger the commitment.

This team felt that it was vital for the success of the new business to create a **full team**. This is quite a challenge at board level! However, as recent research shows this type of top team is becoming a necessity in many organisations. (“*Senior Leadership Teams – What it Takes to Make Them Great*”. See **Resources** section for full reference.)

We worked with the team intermittently and at crucial turning points as they developed a genuine, high performing full team. The business impact of the team and sustained outstanding results they achieved validated their ambitious choice of team.

Developing Top Teams

The case described above is relatively rare but will become more common. Nonetheless we always counsel top teams in particular

- 1) to be clear about the type of team working they really need;
- 2) to be realistic about the time and effort needed to form different levels of team;
- 3) to focus on the tasks, activities and behaviours required to achieve their target team level.