

Report of experiences

Field Report from the Pharmaceutical Industry

The background

The North American division of an international, exchange-traded pharmaceutical corporation appointed a new CEO. He quickly realized that his influence on the organization was limited. His executives had different leadership styles and numerous departments were not performing efficiently.

Metaplan's assignment

The CEO commissioned Metaplan to develop a new leadership philosophy together with selected executives. Selected executives would then be trained as trainers so they could transfer the workshop outcomes to the other managers.

Our approach

The first step was to give the executives a common understanding of how to set their teams' annual goals. Here, we tailored the application to the executives' own assignments so that all of the managers completed the modules with new annual goals. However, during the feedback phase, many of the executives complained that colleagues in other groups were obstructing their goals. To counter this implementation problem, we developed a module on "cross-functional cooperation" for all the executives. This gave them a fresh insight into their cooperative relationships, which they could then adjust in line with their goals. Subsequent feedback showed the cooperative approach was working. But the strict hierarchy was still an obstacle. So we designed a third module that allowed the executives to develop and apply a new understanding of micro-politics and power. They achieved a better understanding of each other's interests as well as their conflicts, and learned to manage these without losing sight of their tasks.

The results

The CEO's dissatisfaction with the contrasting leadership philosophies gave rise to an executive development program that drew on the concrete challenges facing the organization. The modules gave the executives the ability to prepare goals, design and foster collaboration, and to apply sound micro-political judgment in the pursuit of their goals. In addition to the redrafted annual targets and new modes of cooperation, the program generated a broad consensus vis-à-vis leadership that enabled the organization to effectively master new challenges.

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