The keys to unlocking Executive Effectiveness

Although intelligence and functional excellence are prerequisites for members of an Executive Team, they alone do not guarantee that the team will be successful. Focused effort is required to turn a collection of individuals into a high performing team.

Drawing on the best science and research on team functioning, here at Waldencroft we have developed the *Integrative Model of Team Effectiveness* which combines four interrelated areas that teams need to attend to on an ongoing basis in order to become and remain highly effective. These are:

- Purpose and Task
- Composition and Structure
- Norms and Values
- Trust and Affiliation

Purpose and task

High performing Executive Teams have a shared understanding of the team's unique purpose and a set of clearly articulated joint tasks that advance it.

A compelling purpose answers the question of what the main job of the leadership team is and what collective actions are crucial enough to be treated as the main job of the leaders; not a side job when their individual roles are done.

In the most successful teams, the purpose articulates the unique contribution the team collectively makes to achieve the strategy and it includes the ways the team members will act as role models for the organisation's desired culture and values.

By helping teams to think about their purpose as more closely related to higher-order organisational goals, the focus shifts from team-level success to organisation-level success. In so doing teams naturally begin to attend to the interdependencies that they have with other teams and how to better collaborate towards their strategic intent.

Composition & Structure

The size, skills and other attributes of the team members, the diversity of the membership and how power is distributed all have an impact on the team's success. A team composed of the right people with the right skills for the job at hand who are able to collaborate towards their shared goals will always out-perform one that is too large or has the wrong people in it.

Ideally, a good team design happens upfront. However, as external conditions shift, as teams evolve and as their membership and purpose changes, a team needs to periodically attend to the issue of its composition to ensure it remains fit for purpose

The team's structure relates to how the team go about their work; both in team meetings and when the team members are not together. It also relates to how the team are recognised and rewarded for their collective efforts.

Being deliberate about the ideal composition for you Executive Team so that it is aligned to your strategic priorities and ensuring it is structured in such a way that the team attends to the right things when they meet maximises success.

Norms & Values

The norms adopted within a team create the group dynamic, that is 'what it feels like to be in this team' both by team members and observed by others out-with with team. They relate to the often unspoken codes of conduct that determine what is and isn't allowed within the team. The norms that a team adopt often become habitual: automatic, repeatable and unquestioned over time.

When thoughtfully and deliberately cultivated, a team's norms can have a significant bearing on its ability to achieve its purpose and can make the difference between making it rewarding or depleting to be in. Good team norms are established and refined through conscious decisions and hard collaborative work. If allowed to develop without deliberate consideration, norms can be ineffectual and create poor relational dynamics and an ineffective team.

The norms that a team adopt are often based on the values that the team members collectively hold. By uncovering these values and exploring their usefulness to the team, we can create shifts in both what the team members believe (their values) and the ways these manifest in their behaviours (their norms).

Trust & Affiliation

Challenging relational dynamics can have a negative impact on an otherwise competent team's performance. And let's face it, it's no fun to be in a team characterised by competition, lack of trust and people working to their own agendas. Team disfunction preceeds lacklustre business performance, so in teams with poor relational dynamics, no one wins.

Our approach builds understanding and empathy between and amongst team members and opens the group up to the possibility of relating to each other in more authentic, engaging and ultimately productive, ways. Creating deep trust is the cornerstone of healthy relational dynamics and our approach ensures that team members are increasingly trusting of each other. We have worked with team's who experienced their performance increase exponentially once foundational dynamics such as trust and understanding increased.

With this increase in trust is an associated increase in how affiliated team members are to the team and to each other. High levels of affiliation result in higher levels of performance as collaboration increases. This is when we see the team become greater than the sum of its parts.