

Embracing the Challenge of Fully Energizing Your Leadership Team

In facing the current economic situation many organizations are putting together plans to adjust their strategies and actions in order to best position themselves for surviving today while capturing opportunities tomorrow. Meanwhile, many of the management challenges and issues such as team collaboration and effectiveness become more visible, especially among senior executives and leaders. Knowing how to really work as a team and more so unite the whole organization is critical.

MGP recently partnered with a multinational company in the specialty chemical industry with a wide application in consumer and industrial products. With the current economic downturn, their business has experienced a significant decrease of revenue and margin; less than 50% of their targeted amount. Meanwhile, global headquarters has been putting a lot of pressure on the AP region, particularly around China, to bring success through this period. Among all the external issues, the core team also experienced some frustration internally. For example, people seemed more focused on their own business, and thus some of collaborative actions were lacking their due attention and follow up. Moreover, some individual tension surfaced as team members began to communicate their frustration with each other directly to the CEO.

In facing these issues, a 3-day meeting was planned to address the performance gap while engaging each other for an open and constructive conversation regarding the key issues. The Asia Pacific leadership team was composed of executives from business unit and function heads covering China, India, Korea, Japan, Singapore, and Malaysia among other countries and regions. The plan was to design the first day as a workshop in addressing some leadership style and team dynamic issues, with the following two days focusing on the business action plans.

To support the workshop, MGP conducted a team analysis around the Hogan profile of the entire leadership team. Individual feedback was delivered prior to the workshop. During the workshop, the team analysis results brought out a very engaging discussion around the key problems, as the following characteristics were very clearly indicated:

- Highly driven and risk taking as a team members, willing to take challenges but who can be tough minded, and thus not easily convinced by others;
- Tend to drive their own agenda particularly when under stress,
- Collectively very creative and fast moving, thus may not spend sufficient time bringing people on board before moving forward; this may cause some tension between HQ and the region, especially in a matrix structure;
- A team composed of members who were extremely data driven, except the CEO. They discovered why messages were being lost in the communication.

The team was encouraged to reflect on their team challenges, which was illustrated by the data and confirmed through team exercises that were facilitated before the data was presented. The team gained a much better understanding regarding how to best utilize their team strengths while identifying a more effective approach in engaging each other when different agendas and opinions are in consideration. As a result, they agreed upon certain behaviors that should be modified when dealing with similar scenarios.

To make the whole workshop more actionable, each executive was also encouraged to share some of the take away of their own leadership highlights, and others were welcomed to share feedback and comments. Although there was initially some concern around whether people would feel comfortable in sharing their profiles, these concerns were overcome through an agenda specifically designed to maximize comfort, leaving personal sharing for the very end. Everyone felt it was a very rewarding experience to have a safe platform that enabled them to open up to others and also learn some feedback from the rest of the team. Overall the workshop was very well received and set a great tone for the following two day business meeting. Most importantly, many of them now feel they are really working together as a team instead of just by themselves.