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Developing the 'Inner-Game' of Leaders at an Australian Intelligence Agency

CASE STUDY

Challenge

Joint Defence Facilities Pine Gap (JDFPG) (aka Pine Gap) is a partnership arrangement between Australia and United States to provide quality intelligence to their respective nations. JDFPG has had a long and successful history of providing vital intelligence to meet the needs of their two nations. The Intelligence Agency has a positive culture of integrity and commitment to its mission and is staffed by highly capable people. As part of the national intelligence community, JDFPG faced significant challenges that would grow over the coming years. The main challenge was that JDFPG was operating in an increasing volatile, complex and unpredictable environment influenced by accelerating technological change, extremism with global reach and adversaries adept at masking their activities.

This created an urgency for Pine Gap to develop a culture of innovation and agility to counter terrorist's ambitions and activities; to reduce fragmented and siloed behaviour in their operations, to be more responsive and provide better intelligence to their stakeholders.

Solution

Turning a highly capable organisation into a world class intelligence agency required changes to its structure, strategy, investment in innovative technology, filling capability gaps and realigning people systems to the new strategy. While all of these factors play a key role in change, there is no organisational transformation without a preceding transformation in the consciousness of the leadership. To transform, the level of maturity of the leader's mindset must be more than a match for the complexity of challenges they faced.

So over a period of 2 years, we delivered three tracks to develop the individual and collective capacity of the leaders. These tracks show the magnitude of work required to grow leaders into conscious change leaders.

Track 1: Executive Team Development

We started working with the Executive Team to develop their collective effectiveness to lead the changes in Pine Gap. We ran a series of workshops to help the team:

- Create and commit to the execution of the Change Strategy
- Align to the role and shared accountabilities of the team
- Agree and commit to an approach to working together in support of leading the change, as well as commit to modelling the behaviours expected in the organisation
- Navigate the challenges of culture change and develop approaches to changing it
- Strengthen relationships and foster higher levels of trust

Track 2: Conscious Leadership Development

Individual and collectiveness effectiveness could not emerge unless we explored how the inner game was played. The INSIDE game of leadership is what drives the leader, how they see the world, how they define themselves and how they understand reality, think and act. This is different to a leaders OUTER Game, which is their knowledge and competencies. We conducted a leadership program with the extended leadership team (i.e. the Executive Team and their direct reports) to engage them in their own personal change journey to develop how they think, lead and relate.



We used the Leadership Circle platform, a leading-edge methodology that surfaces how a leader behaves and illuminates their internal assumptions which are the source of those behaviours. This helped the leaders to see very quickly with what was working and what was not with their leadership and gave them a leadership effectiveness score which measured their overall effectiveness.

We conducted workshops focusing on the following outcomes:

- Leaders to have greater self-awareness of strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, emotional patterns, behaviours and impact on others
- Leaders to develop their creative leadership competencies
- To have a deeper understanding of mindset as the key leverage point for successful transformation
- To develop enhanced communications and better interpersonal skills
- To foster deeper levels of trust and authenticity within the leadership cohort

Track 3: Individual Leader Coaching

In support of the above tracks, and to optimise the development of the leader, each leader participated in at least two coaching sessions to debrief their Leadership Circle Profile, while others continued with a six-month coaching program.

Results

1. Joint Defence Facilities Pine Gap has become a centre of excellence for solving complex intelligence problems by using all of the capabilities and expertise at their disposal.
2. The organisation is working more collaboratively to define and solve these complex and challenging intelligence problems
3. Joint Defence Facilities Pine Gap has a world class reputation as a centre for learning and development for intelligence specialists across our community
4. The Leadership team have created a culture of openness, support and high performance, with a movement toward greater collaboration in the organisation. Over time, leaders have seen the importance of operating openly with each other and to bring up the “un-discussables” if there were to create the desired culture. For many leaders, there was a breakthrough in their own awareness and behaviour, enabling them to be more choiceful in how they showed uu

About the Author

Dr Pauline Lee is the founder of Léargas Pty Ltd, is an Organisational Psychologist, Executive Coach and is a practicing Team Coach. She has more than twenty years of experience providing executive coaching and developing senior leadership teams in the Australian Federal Government sector, private sector and large non-profit organizations. Pauline has published on teams and a was a former lecturer on teams at University of Melbourne and University College Dublin. Pauline’s understanding of vertical leadership development and the process of transforming mindset and behavior supports her to help leaders achieve breakthroughs in themselves and their organisations.

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