Discovering Team Identity at Xynteo

The Team Management Profile became the vehicle for exploring team identity at global leadership think tank Xynteo.

Based in London and Oslo, Xynteo’s mission is to inspire new business concepts, technologies and operating models, stemming from environmentally friendly procedures and green values.

In early 2017, over 60 team members from both offices gathered in Oslo for their ‘Jamboree’, a two-day event designed to align each regional team to the company’s strategic narrative. TMSDI managing director Mark Gilroy facilitated two days of the event starting with a focus on self-understanding before moving into team understanding.

"It was clear from the outset that this was a highly innovative organisation, full of creative individuals," says Mark. "A key theme for them was looking at the use of storytelling to build strategic self-awareness. So I began by looking at maintaining the ‘i’ in ‘tribe’, with an exploration of what it means to be authentic and vulnerable in the modern workplace."

Mark used the traditional African Zulu greeting “Sawubona” to illustrate this point: “It means ‘I see you’ and goes far beyond typical western greetings. It says ‘I see your personality, I see your humanity, dignity and respect’. In a tribal context, where everyone knows one another, it’s a powerful representation of understanding. Vulnerability is about allowing ourselves to be seen - a willingness to let go of who you think you should be, in order to be who you are."

Using an interactive smartphone voting system, Mark invited everyone to contribute three words to capture their identity at work, pulling out consistent patterns as the results came in. “Caring, passionate, honest and curious all came through as key themes, and we had an open discussion about how the company vision might be translated through each of these statements of identity.”

The day moved on to look at the current focus of the business, using the Types of Work Model as a framework to help the group capture their perspectives. “The interactive voting system was useful to help collate the results of such a large group in real time,” says Mark "and a clear picture quickly emerged, with Innovation, Promoting and Developing scoring high, and Inspecting and Maintaining scoring low.” This information was useful to reflect back on later in the day once people had received their Team Management Profile results divided into working team to explore those with similar work preferences.”

In the final session of the day, the group captured their identity at work, pulling out key themes of "caring, passionate, honest and curious all came through as key themes" including how they were going to act on this information over the coming months.

Enabled by understanding their own ‘story’ at work helps to develop their self-awareness and this can have a positive impact on the ‘tribe’ to which they belong. Each person becomes accountable for the contributions they make which helps define both the tribe’s identity and its role in helping achieve the company’s strategic vision.

www.xynteo.com
Transforming Leadership at FX Plus

Pioneering higher education organisation FX Plus has used the Team Management Profile to develop its own leaders.

“Falmouth Exeter Plus (FX Plus) is a pioneering organisation. An ‘exempt charity’ regulated by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, and jointly owned by Falmouth University and the University of Exeter, it provides shared facilities and professional services to both universities on the Falmouth and Penryn campus in Cornwall.

One of just two such organisations in the UK, FX Plus, which was set up about thirteen years ago, is used as a benchmark for others considering adopting a similar approach and is under constant scrutiny. As such, when an interim chief executive (now the managing director) joined in summer 2016, he decided that investment in developing its own leaders was a priority.

Kathryn Miller, People Development Partner, explains: “We wanted to move from a transactional to a transformational leadership approach, and needed a programme that would help leaders to develop the appropriate behaviours. And we were very keen that the new Geared for Growth leadership programme should be open to all managers, right across the organisation. In fact, while it wasn’t mandatory, people were strongly encouraged to participate.”

The programme comprised six modules over six months (December 2016 to June 2017), and around 75 leaders, from executives to supervisors, completed it. Participants were highly receptive - particularly to the Team Management Profile sessions, which they found invaluable in understanding their own and others’ work preferences, and how those preferences might affect their own teams. Many of them requested Team Management Profile workshops for their own teams too, and between September and November 2017, in a spin-off to the Geared for Growth programme, Kathryn ran workshops for ten different teams, often tailored to those teams’ particular orientations - such as customer service.

The insight into their own and others’ preferences which the Profile has given people has been put to good use in their dealings with external ‘customers’ - including students, students’ parents and academics in the two universities. “I think we now have a more constructive dialogue as a result,” says Kathryn.

The programme has now moved on to helping people to achieve their full potential at work.

“Helping people to achieve their full potential at work

In total, almost 200 staff have received their Profile over the past year, and the resulting ‘heat maps’ are illuminating, says Kathryn. Thruster-Organisers and Concluder-Producers are well represented in the organisation (26% and 20% respectively), compared to other areas of the Team Management Wheel.

This gives us an interesting picture of what our organisation is about,” says Kathryn. “We spend a lot of our time delivering what our partners at the universities ask us for, when perhaps we need to be asking ourselves how we could become more proactive in developing our own ideas to the benefit of FX Plus as well as both universities.”

“Emotion is taken out of conversations

An additional benefit of the Profile is that it gives people a common language that allows them to talk about behaviours and preferences “in a professional and objective way, not a personal way,” Kathryn explains. “The emotion is taken out of conversations. For example, people now feel able to talk about how they like being communicated with, what works and what doesn’t work, without worrying that they will upset or annoy someone.”

One of the participants had a split Wheel: their major role was Creator-Innovator, and one of their related roles was Concluder-Producer. “The job they were doing was very much focused on the south side of the Team Management Wheel, but in the workshop they admitted that they would like more opportunity to use their Creator-Innovator preference - and they felt for the first time that they had a safe environment in which to voice this,” says Kathryn. “So we see the Profile as being very much about helping people to achieve their full potential at work by revealing preferences that might have been ‘hidden’ because of the particular role they’ve been doing.”

Organisational heat maps

Ever wondered how many Upholder-Maintainers there are in your organisation? What percentage of people like Innovating and Promoting? What is the balance between those preferring to make decisions based on their beliefs compared to those being more analytical in their approach?

Let TMSDI work this out for you with an organisational heat map. Often referred to as the TMS DNA, this information gives senior managers and leaders valuable information to help them become more organisationally aware.

Based on a minimum sample of 200, a selection of visuals indicate where the strengths of the organisation lie and where potential challenges might arise. It can help inform how key messages could best be communicated to employees; how to approach change management; and pinpoint areas for growth and talent development.

For more information and to receive a sample copy please contact our Operations Manager Kerry Smith ksmith@tmsdi.com
Steering blue-chip leaders on the right course with the Leadership Behaviours Profile

Building the TLS360 Leadership Behaviours Profile into his coaching work has helped Peter Callender to transform the performance of senior managers.

Since the start of 2017, Peter, a change management consultant and executive/team coach, has been using the Leadership Behaviours Profile (LBP) in his coaching work with a number of blue-chip clients.

Developed by Dr Paul Robinson, the Profile is designed to measure current leadership ability and gauge leadership potential. It scores people on eight factors including values and authentic leadership, situational leadership, and emotional & social intelligence. It allows for up to 13 blue-chip clients.

Peter prefers it to other 360-degree profiling tools which he describes as “pretty basic,” explaining: “The beauty of the LBP is that it works at board level, and below, and covers all important leadership attributes such as emotional intelligence.”

For example, a senior manager in a big pharmaceutical company had been under-performing and his boss asked Peter to do an LBP exercise with him to help build the self-awareness he required in order to see where he needed to develop. “He hadn’t been promoted in this organisation and couldn’t understand why,” says Peter. “In previous organisations he had been promoted based on his technical competence. He is now more aware of gaps in his senior leadership suite of capabilities.”

In another example, the chief executive of a government department asked Peter to help him develop the change management and strategic thinking skills in a very senior civil servant who had an impressive track record. “The LBP highlighted these skills gaps which gave the chief executive, and me, licence to help the individual to address them,” says Peter.

He was also called in to help restore the performance of a senior manager in a global professional services organisation. He explains: “She herself recognised that her performance had plateaued, and the LBP proved to be a great tool for identifying where she needed to improve but also what she was really good at. She focused on her strengths, her self-confidence returned, and her performance was transformed. She’s now holding a very senior position because her boss has been posted overseas - in fact, when he called me in, he was probably preparing her to take on this role.”

He describes this approach as ‘the golden triangle of coaching’, explaining: “You get the best results when you have high-trust relationships between all three people. I hand it to the author of this tool because it really does facilitate robust conversations in a safe environment.”

“We typically have a three-way discussion at the start of the debrief, examining the strengths and areas for development, and highlighting two or three areas where the line manager will help the individual to develop,” he explains. “I’ll usually have three coaching sessions over four or five months with the individual, and will preface each session with a conversation with the line manager to get a sense of how things have been going.”

In Peter’s experience, the LBP yields the best results when he, the individual and their line manager discuss the results together and determine the best way forward for the individual.

“We often have a three-way discussion at the start of the debrief, examining the strengths and areas for development, and highlighting two or three areas where the line manager will help the individual to develop,” he explains. “I’d usually have three coaching sessions over four or five months with the individual, and will preface each session with a conversation with the line manager to get a sense of how things have been going.”

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25 years on and TMSDI are still as cool and relevant as always, the Team Management Profile has always worked! My clients always get loads from it...

I love that the clients feel the reports are accurate and helpful. It brings credibility to the sessions/workshops.

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Powerful tool adapted to business needs.

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Fantastic products, fantastic people – every time I’m involved with you guys it is a happy, uplifting experience – thank you so much.
An interview with.....
Dr Tom Kennie, founding director at Ranmore, talks to us about team-based change & higher education

What current trends are you noticing?
Teams and teamworking seem to be the order of the day in the higher education (HE) sector which is my chosen ‘niche’. And it’s not just a UK issue, it’s everywhere.

Let’s take a look at my diary. I’ve recently spent two weeks overseas engaging with three universities: in one case working with a large faculty leadership team; in another with a group of new Heads of School focusing on developing their leadership teams so that they implement a major change agenda; and with another university focusing on how to create a team-based culture which fosters innovation. On my return I’d received two requests to talk to two vice chancellors in the UK both focused on ‘top teamworking’.

Why is teamworking such a prevalent topic?
Probably for the same reasons as in other sectors. The days of heroic individual leaders are long gone. No sustainable strategy can be implemented without true team discipline and teamworking. Add to that the increasing complexity and unpredictability in the external environment, and the need to capitalise on and value your team preferences is vital.

Teamworking has, of course, always been central to higher education and nowadays delivering courses, increasingly online, requires a ‘team of teams’ to be successful.

How do you use the Team Management Profile?
As a long term accredited practitioner, I find it can be of value in multiple ways:

- as a framework to use in a coaching capacity to assist a leader in understanding the implications of their work preferences on their approach to leading others
- as part of a change programme to help teams at different levels communicate more effectively with each other through the lens of a common framework

Increasingly, I am also integrating the Profile with another framework I have developed to help HE leaders articulate the different activities they need their leadership team to focus on:

In essence, we start with the ‘what’ of teamworking. Using this model I invite the leadership team to share their views about which themes need their attention most and then we take stock of how they feel they currently perform in these critical areas.

Having looked at the ‘what’, the natural next step is to give attention to the ‘how’ of team leadership using the Team Management Profile. Discussions can then explore the interplay between the ‘what’ and the ‘how’.

What’s your favourite story of using the Team Management Profile?
Too many to mention but one comes to mind. I received a call from a university HR director asking if I could assist with some team development. The brief was familiar: the team seemed to be fragmenting and finding it challenging to work with their new vice chancellor.

I suggested we use the Profile. The impact in the room when we explored the dynamics in the group by looking at the range on the Four Work Preference Measures using the classic ‘line-up’ exercise was palpable. Suddenly they were able to understand their differences in more depth and start to view differences as being of potential ‘value’ rather than as being ‘difficult’. It was also counter intuitive: on the decision-making scale all nine team members, bar one, were highly analytical. The lone ‘high beliefs’ person was … you guessed it … the vice chancellor. A statistician by academic discipline!

Getting both the team and the vice chancellor to ‘stand in each other’s shoes’ led to several significant shifts in how they both saw the context. As I worked with them over the next six months, they routinely returned to the shared insights from the Profile which enhanced their ability to engage and have increased capabilities to lead their work on strategy development and implementation.

Ranmore specialises in leadership and organisational development in the higher education sector.
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**Window on Work Values**
Feedback on the values that influence an individual’s approach to work. Helps to develop a better understanding of how values influence behaviour.

**Team Performance Profile**
Multi-rater feedback from team members and those they work with exploring team performance in terms of the Types of Work Model. Provides a focus for team planning and review.

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