



Mastering matrix leadership capabilities



Challenge

Developing medicines and vaccines to treat and prevent disease is an endeavour often fraught with difficulties. When successful, however, the impact is profound, benefiting countless individuals & society. For one multinational pharmaceutical company that success requires expertise, teamwork & collaboration across an exceptionally complex matrixed organisation.

Traditional leadership development programmes just weren't relevant to this audience. Those working in matrix teams need to influence without any authority over others, they need to leverage the diversity of skills, experience and preferences within large, complex and continually evolving cross-functional teams, where no-one reports into the same person. But collectively, these teams need to bring a life-changing medicine to patients as fast as possible.

Global capability catalysts People Untapped have risen to the challenge to develop a specific leadership programme for mid/senior level leaders within one area of the organisation where working effectively in matrix teams is fundamental to achieving objectives and delivering outcomes for patients. Thriving in highly complex, diverse, global, cross-functional teams contributes to this success so People Untapped have focused on helping them improve their matrix leadership skills, empowering them to drive the business forward.

With teams scattered all over the world, working collaboratively across global sites, working against tight deadlines for drug development and mostly working virtually, the programme also needed to be delivered in a virtual environment, but one that was super engaging, inspiring and practical.

Approach

The first step was to define the critical capabilities for leadership within complex matrix teams, connected to the organisation's existing expectations of managers and cultural intent, and then to design an impactful, global programme to develop and enhance these capabilities.

The team at People Untapped designed the programme using a variety of technologies to allow the learning to be fully blended, inclusive and most importantly, to build in attributes to enable the learning to really stick. This commitment to learning effectiveness (not just ticking a box of training attendance, but genuinely and measurably improving leadership capabilities forever) was a golden thread throughout the design and subsequent delivery of the programme.

Every delegate also had a Team Management Profile (TMP) as a core part of the programme, providing a common framework, language and development tool for their growth. The TMP was chosen because of its accessible and straightforward, business-orientated language and the fact that it purely focuses on people's work preferences and doesn't review personality preferences outside the work environment.

In particular, it was central to the modules focused on the capability "build inclusive & aligned teams". Specifically:

- Building self-awareness of preference at work to enable delegates to understand their own leadership approach and how that impacts the type of work they do, and how they do it.
- Enabling delegates to appreciate difference, and how to be more inclusive within the diverse cross-functional teams in which they work, inviting



different perspectives rather than shutting down those with a different viewpoint.

- Providing a common understanding of how to better connect and communicate with colleagues with different preferences.
- Connecting delegates in a live classroom module enabling them to have rich and lively discussions on how to leverage the learning from the individual TMP reports in their matrix teams.

Outcome

Since the middle of 2021, People Untapped has delivered well over 120 cohorts of the programme, reaching over 1600 delegates (and counting) – and building a new language and framework that reaches across teams and networks.

The programme has developed a reputation which means that waiting lists are full and teams have a common purpose, language and elevated expectations of one another's leadership.

By learning together in diverse cohorts, peer relationships have been strengthened and leadership capabilities are being seen as important in the same way that deep scientific expertise is highly valued.

The programme has in-built measures of learning effectiveness, with some overall statistics showing the leadership capabilities shifting as a direct result of the programme as reported by both delegates and their stakeholders.

Weekly live polling has also been used to measure application of learning, including how to apply and sustain the learnings from TMP reports.

For example, within just one week of attending a workshop on building inclusive & aligned teams, 29% of participants reported having applied their understanding of working preferences to improve team performance and 24% reported having proactively invited diverse thinking within their matrix teams.



Team Management Wheel



It got me thinking about the structure of my team and what is needed to make a successful team – I then redefined our objectives, goals and asked for feedback on our activity tracker.



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