

TEAMWORK

FROM DESIGN TO DELIVERY

BY SHANA RING, ELAINE BROE, AND LAURIE HILLIS

Customized Learning

Leadership Development has an impressive record of long-term custom program partnerships with companies from across Canada, and beyond. Based on consultation with your organization, and in response to your particular needs and objectives, Leadership Development's expertise and unique methodologies are strategically integrated with your business context to maximize the learning value for each and every participant, to breathe life into your organizational strategies and realize your desired outcomes.

This article explores one of those relationships: a long-standing partnership with SaskPower, and includes the perspectives of the organization, The Banff Centre, and the lead faculty on the program.

To discuss Leadership Development's customized programming work in more depth, please contact Elaine Broe, custom program manager, at 403.762.6121 or by e-mail at elaine_broe@banffcentre.ca



“Leadership is all about vision, motivation, creativity, confidence, and commitment. It’s about demonstrating and inspiring a certain spirit within ourselves and a team.”

The art and science of working as a team member is crucial in today’s complex, matrixed, virtual work world. The term teamwork has multiple definitions, ranging from a collection of individual subject matter experts, to a team achieving the extraordinary. Envision the movie Apollo 13 and the teamwork required to repair the CO2 filter to allow safe passage home.

Although teams exist in many forms, there are common organizing principles. One well known principle originated from the classic work of Bruce Tuckman, who determined that teams evolve through five distinct phases to achieve maximum effectiveness – forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Leadership Development incorporates a similar team model when partnering with clients to design unique customized programs, and in their classroom where learners create a community.

SaskPower, a valued long-term client, has integrated teamwork into the design of their Leading for Success program. President and CEO Pat Youwza says, “leadership is all about vision, motivation, creativity, confidence, and commitment. It’s about demonstrating and inspiring a certain spirit within ourselves and a team.” During the design phase, Shana Ring, SaskPower supervisor, Leadership and Learning found, “Our partnership with The Banff Centre was a true example of teamwork, working together to meet the needs of SaskPower’s clients – the current and future leaders. Our relationship with Leadership Development has evolved over the years based on a solid foundation of trust and mutual respect.”

The five phases of Tuckman’s teamwork principles help to understand that relationship, and demonstrate the commonalities between client partnership and classroom experiences.

Forming

In the initial stages of partnering, Leadership Development strives to develop a relationship built on trust, as they seek to fully understand client needs. Program scoping requires key stakeholder input through an extensive needs assessment process. The appreciative nature of this inquiry makes this stage enjoyable for all stakeholders.

In the classroom, similar behaviours occur when participants articulate their program expectations, develop norms for their learning group, and try to “fit in” with others. It is crucial

to develop a safe learning climate to try out new learning.

A key component of the Leading for Success program is the leadership challenge case study. Teams work together on a real-life business challenge submitted by SaskPower leaders. Learners have the opportunity to practice and apply their new skills, and work as an action-learning team to develop recommendations. Combining classroom and post-program time, teams formulate recommendations back to the business. Ring feels that, “this feedback loop is a vital part of the program, providing participants with an opportunity to learn about the organization, and develop an understanding of the key business issues SaskPower is facing.”

Storming

When client partnership issues arise, whether it’s related to budgets or changing needs, conflict can arise and must be resolved.

Similarly, conflict occurs during programs as learners share experiences, and work to solve challenges in their teams. Conflict is healthy; it provides clarity and creative solutions. Norms developed earlier help members work through the storming phase.

The Leading for Success program provides learners with the opportunity to understand themselves and others through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®). This insightful tool allows them to leverage their strengths, and appreciate differences. The leadership challenge team component provides an ideal learning laboratory for navigating the storming phase.

Norming

The norming stage occurs as trust in the partnership continues to grow and program deliverables are met. Healthy communication patterns emerge between the client and Leadership Development, which results in effective teamwork. Norming is the calm after a storm, as mutual respect develops.

In the classroom, the learning community starts to support each other and challenge assumptions. In SaskPower’s teams, learners feel success when they clearly scope their leadership challenge. New teams must build a sense of self-efficacy by achieving an early positive “win” to reinforce that collaboration is worth the effort.

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Performing

The fourth stage is the ultimate goal for client partnering and classroom learning where a high level of trust exists. Ring says “that Leadership Development’s commitment to SaskPower has contributed to the outstanding success the program has received. We are constantly working together to identify opportunities to enhance the program – critical in our ever changing environment.” In a perfect world, this stage would be the first and only phase of teamwork, but to develop trust in one another, the preceding stages are required.

Adjourning

In 1977, Tuckman added a fifth stage to recognize there is a time to stop, acknowledge team achievements, and move on. When a program has achieved its objectives, clients experience closure of the design, and enter a program evaluation/evolution phase. This step allows Leadership Development and the client to focus on high gain programs and workshops to support the ongoing program integration. The success of the initial Leading for Success program and SaskPower’s commitment to developing their leaders to the next level, led to the delivery of a Phase II program.

Similarly, the adjourning phase occurs in learning communities on the last day when people say goodbye. Learners return to work and integrate their learnings about themselves, leadership, and teamwork. A sense of celebration occurs until team development stages arise in the next learning opportunity.

Tuckman’s dynamic model helps provide meaningful structure, whether “team” defines the evolution of a client partnership, or the program participants within the learning community itself. Though Leadership Development and SaskPower aren’t flying to the moon together just yet, the collaborative nature of their teamwork has given them the ability to reach for the stars.

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