

Gaining collaboration from diversity with the MBTI framework

A public sector organization needs a wider range of skills and experience to encourage a more entrepreneurial approach to the way it is run. How does it create the cultural change needed to make this happen?

The National Church Institutions (NCI) of the Church of England consists of seven distinct organizations, including the Archbishops' Council, the Church Commissioners for England and the Church of England Pensions Board. Each NCI has its own leadership team and culture. This sometimes causes tensions, and there are cultural barriers to overcome – notably where newcomers to the business are not from a church background.

The 'worldly' side of the business includes lawyers and property managers, wielding a huge portfolio of buildings, land, equities, stocks and shares. The 'spiritual' side involves clerics and academics, many of whom have no prior experience of people management or business leadership issues.

Although there is a hierarchy within each NCI, corporate management structures have traditionally never been used, with a line structure that has evolved over time to include many different roles with different remits. As a result, academics are frequently posted to positions of senior leadership with no grounding in people, leadership or teamworking skills.

Our consultants were called in to help drive the necessary cultural change through a leadership development program. On justifying

Business Challenges

- Leadership development
- Communication
- Conflict handling
- Coaching
- Managing change

Company Profile

In the UK, the Church of England (CoE) is a highly devolved institution. The National Church Institutions (NCIs) undertake work for the Church of England, administering core functions that are most effectively handled at national level. The purpose of the NCIs is to support the mission and ministries of the Church.

National Church Institutions

the choice, HR Director Su Morgan commented: “It was one of the things that [they] specialized in, with its work in behavioural areas. Our issue wasn’t just about competence – it was a cultural change that we needed. The sessions would involve independently minded intellectuals who might initially be resistant, and who would be quick to challenge. The consultants were well able to handle that.”

With resources short, a wider range of skills and experience was vital to the NCIs. Like any organization, it needs to make money. As Morgan points out: “There is an inherent tension when trying to make as much money as possible in an ethical environment. But for the Church of England to survive, it must be economically viable and growing. Much of the money still comes from people giving donations in church on Sundays, and fewer people attending church means fewer donations. There has to be a more entrepreneurial approach.”

Solution

We designed a four-day leadership development program, part of which included the MBTI® and TKI™ instruments, and 360-degree feedback.

The first day focused on raising the awareness of each leader about their leadership strengths and challenges, through MBTI and 360 feedbacks. There were 10–12 participants in each group, representing the diversity of the organization, for maximum effect. It was useful having these different perspectives: mutual but potentially conflicting interests found common ground, and diverse groups recognized how they could be of use to each other.

The sessions looked at personality styles, decision-making and managing change. They also focused on leadership behaviour under pressure, and how this impacts on decision-making. It was demonstrated that always avoiding conflict – a common approach in the pastoral care that defines much of the CoE’s work – is not just a cultural response but arises when people lack the skills and confidence needed to take an alternative approach. The TKI instrument helped to fill those gaps by redefining what conflict actually means, and providing a mechanism for using conflict constructively to achieve more positive outcomes.

Solution

- Leadership development program
- MBTI and TKI training
- Coaching skills

“ The TKI session was very, very interesting. It showed people how to avoid trigger-points. There had been a culture in the organization of avoiding conflict, but the sessions revealed how this is not always the best approach. It taught people how they might deal with conflict by managing it.”

Su Morgan,

Director of Human Resources for the Archbishop’s Council of the Church of England. National Church Institutions

National Church Institutions

In addition, the final day focused on how to ‘unlock the potential’ of individuals within the organization, using our own model to introduce the leaders to a range of coaching skills.

Results

The sessions have given the NCIs a context in which to talk about organizational challenges. They also allowed the disparate strands of the organization to meet, interact and understand each other.

The work done so far has been a step toward looking into the future and identifying development needs. The Church is letting opinion, roles and expertise overlap and broaden.

As a follow-up, people are receiving further training as coaches. Leaders are involved in an ongoing leadership development program, and the institution is considering development activities. A junior level of management has been established to champion leadership skills and promote the culture of positive change.

“We are now able to do and deliver things more, not just think about them,” says Su Morgan. “There is some recognition that a glossy academic treatise on a subject is not enough. We need to go out and actually deliver the changes.”

The revolution does not come overnight, though, and there is still work to be done; but a genuine change in management is underway at some levels, and development is no longer a taboo issue.

“We are no longer locked in the old isolationist structures,” she says. “We are bringing in a greater variety of viewpoints and working in a less compartmentalized way.”

The NCIs now look at how projects should be managed, setting up forums where issues can be discussed and developed. Coaching, learning and development have become central issues in moving forward positively, constructively and effectively.

Results

- Increased self-awareness
- Increased understanding of differing needs and perspectives
- Greater understanding of the importance of leadership and communication skills
- Learning effective conflict-handling strategies
- Improved ability to coach individuals and develop the organization



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