

## Defining and developing leadership in a rapidly expanding organization

A rapidly-expanding technology company has outgrown its current leadership structure. What does it need to change to achieve its ambitious plans?

bChannels started as a small consultancy of four people and has grown into a global business of 130 employees, with offices in the UK, the US, Malaysia, and Australia.

The company has enjoyed significant growth and has an ambitious five-year global expansion plan. To meet its targets, it needs to be reliant not just on the owner-managers but the leadership team as a whole – that is, the senior and the executive leadership levels.

bChannels has achieved a scale which needs a framework where future leaders can step up and take responsibility.

To do this properly, bChannels' leaders were aware that they needed to avoid being inward looking. They wanted an external viewpoint to help them to assess their own understanding of leadership, and they wanted input from a development partner – someone with breadth of experience with other companies, access to market research, and full knowledge of best-practice methods in this field. bChannels needed to 'know what they didn't know.'

This is how the conversation started with us. bChannels wanted to talk about a new leadership model.

### Business Challenges

- Defining successful leadership
- Creating new leadership framework that fits growth plans
- Developing future leaders

### Company Profile

bChannels is a specialist in the design and management of indirect routes to the partner market for global technology companies – it researches and supports suppliers on how to find and reach their customers. Established in 2004 in Oxford, the company has expanded quickly and now has a global presence.

# bChannels

## Solution

We started by asking bChannels, 'What does successful leadership look like?' Answering this question would help everyone to identify where the success criteria were being met (and not being met) so that a new definition of good leadership could be made for people to grow into.

The first step was to bring more people into the discussion. Our consultants met with the leadership team, the board and the investors to understand the business and its future plans fully. From these meetings came an eight-point framework of bChannels competencies, which informed a development program and could also be used in performance management and selection. The development program included the MBTI instrument and 360-degree feedback, and modules such as:

- Introduction to leadership
- Leading the self
- Leading others and leading the organization

The bChannels Head of People said, "The bChannels organizational culture has been quite task focused, and we haven't necessarily looked at how we do the things we do. MBTI gives us a language to articulate preference and explain why people do things the way that they do. It also helps us to use 'the other hand', the other preference. This became part of the development activities – learning how to flex. The focal areas were around understanding other perspectives, trying to be outwardly collaborative and less reflective or inward looking, and to be more collaborative for problem-solving. We also learned to understand other people's strengths and when to bring them in to conversations."

Organizational initiative emerged as a key development area, so each leader was invited to create their own plan to submit for discussion.

## Solution

- New framework of leadership competencies
- Leadership development of self
- Leadership development of others/the organization

“ This really resonated with the group. They saw that good leadership is not about having to be a certain type of leader. ”

Head of People,  
bChannels

# bChannels

## Results

The sessions on authentic leadership were especially revealing. “This really resonated with the group. They saw that good leadership is not about having to be a certain type of leader. The best thing to be is the best version of yourself, and the consultant showed that this program is a supportive process for self development – we don’t chase an external ‘ideal’.”

The bChannels Group Finance Director is very positive about the program and optimistic about its impact on the future of the company. “I do a lot of one-to-one work and mentoring for leaders, and there is a clear understanding that they have a much bigger impact on the business’s success than they had previously thought. They now see themselves as leaders and influencers, rather than being in functional roles.”

For him, there were two big points to take away. One was to treat bChannels people like clients. “People are our business. We are a consultancy – we don’t have products – so our approach to clients is that we inspire, we guide and we grow their business, but we had not placed enough emphasis on doing this with our own people. The leadership program helped us to realise this.”

The second point refers to the way the development was handled: research and collaboration were insisted upon, and this led to a tailored program that was specific to the leadership needs of bChannels.

“The consultants really understood the practical needs of our business,” he added. “They were flexible in the way the program was implemented to make sure that it worked for us, but they also gave great insight. They’ve been invaluable in creating trust.”

## Results

- Tailored development program brings client-specific insights and builds trust at all levels
- Awareness of self and others improves management and leadership style
- Creates opportunity to reflect on people – not just tasks

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**Group Finance Director,**  
bChannels



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