

Finding the Key to Unlock Conflict between a New General Manager and his Team

A long-established and traditional manufacturer appointed a new general manager. His brief was to shake up a site that had great potential but lots of issues and was seriously underperforming. His style was tough and challenging, and he was soon in conflict with the senior team that reported to him. With emotions running high, we were invited to help the team find a way to work together effectively, in order to carry out the significant changes needed in the business.

We met each manager individually, to gain an in-depth understanding of their personal style and how they perceived the issues within the team. We then analysed the underlying causes of the conflict and the barriers to effective team



work, using our understanding of personality and motivation.

It became clear that the general manager was very different in personal style and motivation from the team he had inherited and was used to a very different way of doing business. He was impatient and frustrated with the lack of progress in turning the business around and couldn't understand why the team lacked his sense of urgency and focus. The rest of the team viewed their new boss as an autocrat who didn't listen, didn't care about people and was demotivating the workforce. Put simply, the two sides did not understand 'what made each other tick' and their increasing frustration had led to a breakdown in communication that was undermining the change process.

To put this right we ran several workshops with the senior team to enable them to:

- Understand how their differences in personal style and motivation were causing conflict and identify methods of addressing these issues.
- Produce a plan for collaborating more effectively across functional boundaries in order to speed up the required changes in the business.

This was so successful that we ran a further workshop with their direct reports to build cross-functional team working at that level too.



There were many benefits from these workshops. Here are just a few:

- All team members understood themselves and each other far more accurately and agreed how to leverage each team member's strengths and compensate for their blindspots.
- The general manager understood why his approach hadn't been producing the rapid results he needed, and what he should do differently to move things forward and get people on board.
- Other team members realised that their new boss wasn't an ogre and his tough approach 'wasn't personal'; he just had a very different personal style. Afterwards they were more motivated to work with him, rather than wasting effort defending themselves.
- The senior team worked together to lead a change programme that started to turn things around in the first year and increased profits significantly in the second.