

Reflection 16. Go Extreme

The importance of building a middle management team of multiskilled professionals was noted in another lesson blog 10. Build a Dream Team. However, how this capacity is built and embedded wasn't discussed. I'll take you through the process, identifying the skills required, embedding skills, and going extreme.

Identifying skills required: In a rapidly changing environment there must be a focus on developing a wide range of skills. The first step would be to identify the skills required and conduct a skills gap survey. So what skills are required. My own list of priorities would include:

- Market research, product development and pilot testing: To design and develop new solutions.
- Data analytics: To better understand customers and build data into our products and services.
- Branding, marketing, and sales: To market through multiple channels and build our brand.
- Costing and pricing: To follow the money, through products and channels.
- Business process re-engineering: To ensure our processes are efficient and effective.
- Customer service and service delivery: To ensure our services are well delivered.
- ESG: Environment, Social and Governance: To ensure we are sustainable in the long term.

Much of this training is for middle management staff, who spend time practicing these skills, and for skills for which the provider has an ongoing need.

In addition to the skills required for teams of staff there are specific skills required for individual staff members, which can be purchased and/or developed which include cybersecurity, risk management and compliance, channels, partnerships.

An additional set of knowledge, often based on exposure is required for senior management, executive committees, and boards of directors.

Embedding a skill: This is a process which has been tried and tested, so I can speak with knowledge. Wherever possible have staff trained in applied skills, where the training course is run with practical examples, and then after the training course staff are embedded into a series of assignments and projects using these skills.

During the *MicroSave* project we trained middle management teams in a skill, and then worked alongside them embedding the skills. So, for example, training staff in product development and pilot testing then working with them on a new product or service.

Go extreme: Go extreme, is where the benefits begin to multiply. This occurs when staff members, now trained and with experience in a new skill then apply the skill more widely across the organisation. So, staff members trained and now experienced in business process re-engineering, use their skills to perform business process re-engineering across the organisation. When a team trained in strategic alignment, work through their institution to align all staff to the new goals. When a team trained in market research moves from researching a new product, then turns to researching service delivery or customer perceptions.

So go extreme is ensuring that the new skills are fully applied within the institution. This is one of the fundamental differences between the level of engagement of Equity Building Society and other action research partners during the *MicroSave* project from 2001 to 2008. Equity went extreme in their application of new skills and knowledge.

Dream team: So, to the dream team, once the dream team is in place. It needs to go extreme. Skills must be applied across the institution, the team uses their skills and knowledge to provide better more specific products and services, to be more effective and more efficient, to build better brands, to market and communicate better.

First Principles Consulting can help you think through the capacity required for your staff and can build and embed many of these capacities in your institution.

If this reflection speaks to you... speak to me so that we can inspire change, together.

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