

SDi and Culture Scan: Case Study Summary

Purpose of Project

The Special Educational Needs (SEN) department of a very large comprehensive school in a relatively prosperous part of South-East England was finding itself challenged to meet its remit serving 230 children on the Special Needs Register. Under resource pressure from the Head Teacher and faced with morale issues and internal tensions, the Head of SEN asked for assistance in understanding the dynamics of relationships within his department, and planning a re-organisation.

Method

Following an initial discussion with the SENCO, the "Community Scan" version of the Spiral Dynamics Values Test assessment portfolio was used. Each department member was required to fill in an online questionnaire, an exercise taking them about half an hour, at their own convenience.

The Community Scan profile provides a number of highly effective analyses of the individual department members. It also allows a collated view which gives a picture of the group as a whole.

Aspects revealed by **individual assessments** include:-

- What are the person's value systems priorities (What terms do they think in?)
- What is the level of their contentment / readiness for change / stress
- How closely does their profile blend in the group as a whole
- How closely does their current work structure and flow fit with their desired format (assisting improved understanding of how to motivate them)
- Are they over-stretched / under-challenged?
- What capacities are indicated for them to lead or support change
- What kind of change do they prefer (from minor adjustments to radical shifts)
- Where do they show up on a scale between highly analytical thinkers and intuitive gut-feel decision-makers.

Taken together, these factors reveal where people are not well-aligned, perhaps to the jobs they are doing, or to the management style they are working under. It will often indicate whether supervisors are well-fitted to leadership roles, and whether there are others with no position, who show indications of leadership thinking.

It is not always the individual who causes a difficulty. They may be in the right role, but needing a different style of leadership or an alternative way to achieve their satisfaction in the role. Some scores may indicate where an individual is under non-work stress and could benefit from support. They may also indicate where employees are likely to leave in the near future.

Group scores indicate other aspects of the dynamics which are helpful to know:-

- How cohesive / fragmented is the group
- How wide are the values systems variations (some variation is essential)
- The overall group profile can indicate what the natural direction of emergence is for the group
- They may reveal gaps in the overall profile of the group – elements that would improve the balance
- They may indicate where leadership styles need to be more flexible, or where the right combinations of leaders and “led” are not in place.

All of these elements were assessed in the analysis of scores for this group of 20 which comprised teachers, supervisors, learning assistants and administrators, plus the SENCO and Head teacher.

Outcomes

Discussions with the SENCO elicited these basic questions

- How much can he push change?
- Which people can he afford to lose?
- Which people can cope with change?
- Would like to know what support he has?

He provided a thumbnail assessment of each of the people, against which the survey results could be used to give feedback. In many cases he showed himself to be a good instinctive assessor of his people – particularly of a couple who were prime material to take greater responsibility and leadership. But the survey revealed information that helped him to plan the change, and to know who would need particular help. One of his chosen leaders for instance, was indicated as struggling with major structural change. As a result he was able to ensure this part of the work did not fall to her.

Similar findings indicate two members of staff who were much less comfortable where they were than was being revealed in their daily performance. One of these needed to leave the department altogether (which they did voluntarily) and another was moved into a more well-fitted role. A third profile showed an individual who was skilled at “coping” but who in fact was not making sure her own needs were met, and was under significant undetected stress. A supportive intervention was made possible.

One success of the survey was to indicate how to construct a well-balanced and supportive administrative team with a blend of skills. In particular it provided indication as to which of two superficially similar staff would make the better supervisor and also showed that the other would be likely to accept the junior role – avoiding a difficult situation if the positions had been reversed.

The profile of the head teacher brought few surprises. But matching his profile with that of the SENCO enabled an improved communication strategy, and

showed the latter how to “manage upwards” with greater success – indicating which buttons he would have to push in order to get the necessary support.

The result of these and other findings was that a successful restructure was put in place, fully supported by the Head teacher. In addition, the SENCO, who was anticipating his own need to leave some months ahead, was able to see the new structure into being, ensure that it was working and to recognise and groom his successor, whom the scan results had shown to be an ideal candidate. A good and largely compatible team was shifted into synergy and excellence. The SENCO subsequently indicated great satisfaction with the outcome of the project, which had delivered considerable support in a very cost-effective and non-disruptive way.

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