



# Executive Senior Team Development

## Why Top Teams are different!

The place for individual leadership in any organization remains crucial to business success but the role of the 'top team' has become even more important in the last decade for a number of reasons. The 1990s saw the demise of the 'celebrity CEO' as more and more organizations were faced with increasingly diverse and complex challenges of corporate stewardship. These challenges, along with some spectacular individual failures in global organizations, accelerated the move towards the team-based approach to corporate leadership. Yet, whilst all of the evidence suggests that the leadership role of the 'executive team' has become even more central to an organization's success, its development has, until recently, been largely ignored. Where interventions have taken place they have often been associated with the 'traditional' team development activities and have not fully considered the unique circumstances of the executive or board-level team. Typically, members of such teams would be heads of their own functions or departments but would also be involved actively in the strategic, operational and institutional leadership of the division or organization.

At Discovery we focus on the specific development needs of a top team and the environment in which it operates. We design our programs individually by considering:

- **Common purpose** – as a starting point top teams need to gain consensus about their role in the organisation. We use a number of frameworks to challenge teams about their focus and the way in which they balance internal and external demands
- **Shared Goals and Accountability** – few top teams measure their performance; mostly linking team performance to corporate performance. We encourage teams to look closely at key deliverables and performance measures and we also use our 'Top Team Audit' to allow them to benchmark themselves against the key characteristics of a high performing team.
- **Team Membership**– we challenge teams about their composition. At senior levels the top team is often determined by the organisational chart rather than the deliverables. The senior team needs to be agile and our approach requires teams to answer difficult questions about who should be contributing to the outputs.
- **Personal Styles and Interpersonal relationships** – by the nature of top-team make-up, members are often challenging, competitive and results focused. Silo mentality and rewards based on the function can also create tension. This can create conflict and we use a variety of diagnostics to allow people to understand each others working styles, manage disagreement and use it as a platform for growth.
- **Processes** – top teams are notorious for having poor meeting management and communication processes. We use a number of tools to help senior teams overcome the problems in this area and ensure they maintain channels of communication across the organisation and gain feedback about their visibility and the leadership role.

The considerations above are designed into a customised programme that can involve short workshops, 1:1 coaching as well as using diagnostic tools and 360 feed-back where appropriate. Throughout our work with clients and top teams, our central theme and focus is on the leadership role of individuals and the team itself. Our approach embraces best-practice and uses experienced facilitators who challenge the top team to consider:

- Why are we here – what is our purpose
- What do we deliver – our outputs
- How do we measure our success
- Who should be in this team
- How should we manage our processes
- What does our leadership role demand of us as a team and individuals

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