

360° Assessments as a Springboard for Executive Team Development

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Overview

- Background
- The Challenge
- The Approach
- Use of Metaphor to “Reframe” the Story
- Outcomes

Background

- A large Federal agency contracted with HumRRO to develop and implement a 360° assessment and feedback system
 - Interview-based 360° assessment and feedback for most senior staff (agency head and direct reports)
 - Survey-based 360° assessment and feedback for senior executives
- HumRRO staff conducted the 360° interviews, prepared feedback reports for each senior leadership team member, and scheduled one-on-one sessions to discuss assessment results
- Office Director asked HumRRO to conduct interview-based 360° process for his leadership team
 - Chief of Staff (COS) – “long tenured”
 - Deputy Director – new to the organization
 - Director -- results available from earlier 360° assessments of senior leadership team

Background (Continued)

- Interviewees had strong and sometimes negative perceptions about the Director and the Deputy Director
 - Director viewed as brilliant but mercurial, doesn't keep promises
 - Deputy was perceived as a high performer by colleagues in former agency, but overly ambitious and arrogant by her new colleagues
 - COS perceived as a good guy, a buffer between the Director and the staff
 - Friction between Deputy and COS was palpable
- Director wanted his team to share the results of the 360° feedback reports to explore team functioning
 - Deputy was reluctant, threatened by the prospect

The Challenge

- How to handle this situation delicately to achieve a constructive outcome?
- Stated differently.....
 - How to help resolve conflict and anxiety among this executive team so that they could
 - Confront issues and repair relationships
 - Identify productive roles and responsibilities
 - Enhance office productivity
 - Restore staff confidence in executive team

Approach

- Family Systems Theory
 - The two original members of the family (Director and COS) had formed a tight bond before the “new family member” (Deputy Director) appeared on the scene
- Reframing the Story
 - Executive team members viewed each other through a lens of beliefs and assumptions about each other’s motivation and agenda
 - Executive team members communicated these beliefs and assumptions to other staff members, in subtle and not-so-subtle ways

Executive Team Coaching

- Met with the executive team at an off-site location
- Established ground rules for the meeting focusing on a conversation that would be
 - Candid, constructive, collaborative
- First item on the agenda was HumRRO's "story" about the executive team, based on what we heard in the 360° interviews

Framing the Story

- Director's leadership team
 - Is passionate and committed
 - Faces constant pressure to deliver results
 - Confronts contentious issues on a regular basis
 - Operates under a crushing workload and schedule
- Given the relentless pressure, Director's leadership team had little time to meld as a team
- With lack of cohesion on this team, staff played one member of the family against the others

Framing the Story (Continued)

- Director Character
 - Brilliant, articulate, could be charming
 - Demanding but willing to seek common ground
 - Took multiple, unanticipated changes in direction
- COS Character
 - “Father/Confessor” and office enforcer
 - Had close working relationship with Director
 - Bridged communications between Director and staff
- Deputy Director
 - Viewed as highly effective in prior jobs....why not here?
 - The new kid on the block was an assertive woman
 - Wasn't sure where she fit in, neither was the staff
 - Lack of clarity between COS and Deputy role



Outcomes

- Open conversation among executive team about “family functioning” in a series of meetings
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities for each member of the team
- Conversation cascaded throughout the office
 - HumRRO briefed Director direct reports on our perceptions of Director executive team functioning (using cartoons) and clarified roles and responsibilities
 - Two-day offsite conducted with entire Director staff
 - Expanded on topics discussed with Director triad
 - Used a variety of techniques to address issues
 - HumRRO provided recommendations and suggested next steps



