

The Gentoo Executive Team Values Journey: A Short Case Study

Context

Gentoo is a large North East based social enterprise with a vision to improve the Art of Living. Their work is focused around three key areas to maximise their impact: people, planet and property.

The Group invests the income from its property activities along with the talent and energy of their team into finding solutions for some of society's most pressing concerns. Ultimately they aim to enable people to realise their true potential and achieve their aspirations.

Nationally, Gentoo campaigns and influences strategies that may affect their colleagues and customers. Locally, they are one of the biggest employers and landlords in Sunderland.

Challenge

To move closer towards their vision, Gentoo is committed to fully living their five Group values. Widely promoted throughout the company, the Gentoo values are: "Believe nothing is impossible", "Re-imagine the future", "Cultivate a learning curiosity", "Live authentic relationships" and "Give us all you've got".

The Executive Director for Vision & Culture partnered with Global Business Leaders to support the Group Executive Team to help them authentically and consistently lead from the front by role-modelling the Group values – both individually and collectively.

Approach

At the beginning of this assignment we used a Barrett Values Centre team values assessment to measure how well the Executive Team were living the Group values at that time. This was a critical measure because staff and managers look to their senior leaders to role model their organisations values. During the 9-month implementation programme that followed we held 1-2-1 coaching sessions with each Executive Team member to help them explore the connection between their personal values and the Group values. We also worked with the whole team to facilitate them to reach agreement on how they would role model and hold each other accountable for living the Group values. In addition, we explored their Strengths-based Leadership preferences, and reviewed the team functionality using the Lencioni 5 Team Dysfunctions model. After completing this initial programme we conducted another team values assessment to measure progress.

Impact

The initial Executive Team values assessment revealed a shared desire for a higher level of alignment around the Group values within the team. When measured again post-implementation programme, the team assessment showed a marked improvement in the way team members experience working together, a shift towards greater alignment around the Group values and a desire within the team to work on integrating some specific values – and this provides us with direction for the next step on the journey.

In addition, as a direct result of this work, the Executive Team realised that Gentoo Group needed an additional core value that would more fully integrate essential business processes and procedures, ensuring that staff working in key business service support areas felt fully included and appreciated. To that end, Gentoo Group has recently introduced and launched a sixth core value, “Optimising success through compliance”.

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