EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Leadership: The Ability to Manage Culture and Change

by Doug Ross

Improving the effectiveness of your organisation by creating new perspectives to help team members meet new challenges is the key to allowing you to manage organisational change in business direction, strategy, and culture.

It's up to an organisation's leadership to influence cultural norms, to support new strategies with new corporate cultures and climates, and to clearly identify performance influences which can support or act as barriers to the required change.

When you recognise symptoms such as unproductive meetings, unclear communication, unclear accountability, and 'it's not my job' attitudes emerging you may want to explore how experiential team and leadership learning can support your change process.

Active Learning Techniques Support Organisational Change

What do 'adventure based' activities like high ropes courses have to do with improving productivity in the real world of work? Do organisations really learn applicable lessons about leadership, communications, empowerment or teamwork by going through exercises that were originally designed to help individuals overcome fears and learn to trust? The answer is an emphatic but conditional "yes". The condition is a complex one, but its rationale is good old common sense.

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Workplace Relevant Initiatives

Experiential initiatives ALONE are not enough. A day of these exercises will certainly be fun, will probably result in some self-revelation and improved fellow feeling among members of a team. At best it will reveal some insights into what is not happening at work that should be happening. But without concrete and specific transference to the workplace, without the development of an action plan and follow-up steps in place, the end result of an experiential program is likely to be disappointment. The wave of euphoria and optimism is soon quashed by the reality that nothing has changed.

Experiential initiatives are extremely valuable tools as part of an integrated approach to corporate training. They have three main functions:

1. To generate awareness of issues that need to be addressed in a uniquely powerful way.
2. To stimulate discussion and problem solving of issues identified using exercises that simulates real issues at work.
3. To foster commitment to behavioural, strategy and communications changes as required.

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