

Thism's Introduction To...

## **Project Alignment**

Project Alignment seeks to improve performance in key projects through a series of facilitated workshops engaging senior management through to operational levels. In these workshops, issues, expectations and aspirations are debated and appropriate actions set in place and consistently reviewed. The process promotes collaborative practice and 'win- win' outcomes as core values.

Specifically, the purpose of a Project Alignment workshop is to align the leadership teams of client and contractor (and/or elements of a joint venture.) This is done to minimise surprises, generate trust, remove misunderstandings and enable continuous improvement. In certain circumstances, it also provides a mechanism to overcome the challenges of working in cross-cultural environments.

The alignment process takes place throughout the project, with workshops being at major operational nodal points, such as the move from home office to site. Additional workshops can be designed specifically for individual groups, such as site construction and engineering Disciplines. Workshop activities can include:

- Overcoming the challenges of cross-cultural environments
- Discussing and understanding project drivers
- Identifying, agreeing and committing to common goals and objectives
- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of all parties and the interfaces between them
- Developing ways of working together in the contract environment
- Managing inevitable conflict
- Identifying and understanding the expectations for success
- Determining the factors critical to project success
- Building trust as a cornerstone for project performance

Facilitated individual team alignments are usually conducted before holding a joint alignment workshop.

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## **Leadership Development**

*'Leadership is learning'* - John F. Kennedy

Today more than ever, true leadership is hard to deliver.

Economic downturn means leaders are having to get greater returns from diminishing resources, to manage unpleasant change, and all the while attempt to present a compelling vision against backgrounds which can change with bewildering regularity.

Those who lead must therefore be able to do two things - provide the 'harder' leadership attributes of clarity of purpose and direction, but also the 'softer' or more personal skills. Recognising this, we work with leadership teams to ensure that their vision is not only aligned to the often tough requirements of key stakeholders, but is also supported by a culture in which people are seen to matter.

We believe that leadership demands continuous learning and reflection, and that progressive and bespoke learning events, properly supported by individual coaching, can assist the development of the mindsets, skills and behaviours required of today's leaders. Often, the result of this can be genuinely transformative.



Only by understanding the self can we understand and lead others. For this reason, we frequently suggest using psychometric tools to help individuals understand their strengths and, of course, areas that might require development. Our tools include:-

- **Personality assessments** – these enable leaders to determine how their own underlying attributes are likely to manifest in terms of behaviours and reactions
- **Multisource or 360-degree feedback** – these offer leaders the benefit of insight into how others see them and how their behaviours impacts upon those they lead. Multi source 360 reviews is now standard practice in an estimated 90% of Fortune 100 companies

Combining these two activities helps promote the first challenge of leadership – being proactive and establishing a personal leadership agenda– and also forms a hugely effective context for performance coaching.

We believe in developing leadership via a progressive understanding of the self and the needs of the organisation, building an ‘action inspired’ agenda grounded in real-life challenges.

## Thism's Introduction To...

### **Solutions Focus**

*'The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook'* - William James

Frequently, analysis of an individual, team or organisation can get bogged down in detail and negativity. But by building on the positive, it is possible to find new openings for success and implement strategic change which will generate positive momentum and add considerable commercial value.

To this end Thism often employs a 'Solutions Focus' approach. This well-founded and global practice reflects a positive and pragmatic approach to change. In not dwelling on problems or their causes, but building on positive forces of what is currently going well, it offers a means of progression at all levels. It works as a powerful tool for harnessing the knowledge of groups in a workshop setting and for helping to set an individual's future action agenda in a one-to-one coaching session.

Solutions Focus offers a means to identify a solution that exists yet often fails to get recognised. Its philosophy is one rooted in appreciative enquiry – in other words, accentuating the positive and eliminating the negative, building a critical mass of positive activity that moves people and projects forward. In practical terms, this means:

- Don't fix what isn't broken
- Stop doing what doesn't work, and do something else
- Discover what is working and do more of it

Traditional consultancy tends to reflect a doctor-patient relationship, where diagnosis reveals a problem to be solved. With Solutions Focus based consulting, however, the focus is not on the problem but on the solution, with Thism and the client working collaboratively in order to achieve strategic goals via the optimisation of existing client strengths.



Thism's Introduction To...

## Performance Coaching

Coaching is the act of facilitating the learning of others.

Its purpose is to maximize the potential of individuals, teams and organisations. This is achieved via 'learning dialogues' which offer a framework in which motivations and challenges can be identified and actions planned to achieve personal and professional goals.

There is an ever-emerging body of evidence that suggests coaching contributes to greater self-awareness, increased confidence, superior goal-setting, improved decision making and more effective use of time<sup>[1]</sup>. Therefore it can be reasonably said to offer, as many experts suggest, a significant return on investment<sup>[2]</sup>.

Coaching delivered by Thism may take the form of a brief or a longer term relationship. We utilise questioning techniques which challenge our clients' behaviours and attitudes, enabling them to identify activities which will generate their personalised *praxis* - - that is, informed committed action - and foster productive outcomes.

Our coaching therefore is always unique, non-judgmental, grounded in the client's experience, solutions-focused, pragmatic and tailored to their specific need. In addition, we are constantly mindful that the process must generate a return on investment, to both individual and their business. In short, then, the Thism coaching experience is about the 6 'P's - people, performance, potential, praxis, productivity and profitability.



These coaches have successfully supported senior teams in a variety of organisations. Mike's experience of Project Management offers a valuable resource for operational solutions, whilst Rod draws on his experiences in the psychology of professional development and sports science. Gabby's skills are more directed to organisational and people issues, a product of her HR background. All utilise a range of psychometric tools to assist the coaching process including, MBTI (Step I and II), Firo B, OPQ, Thomas PPA, Hay EI 360, Linkage LAI 360 and the Strength Deployment Inventory.

Typically an executive coaching assignment commences with a diagnostic activity, followed by our working across leadership teams, preferably on a one-to-one and face-to-face basis, although telephone and e mail support both have a role to play. Often, we aim to generate a 'self-help' coaching culture in which the ultimate goal is for peer/partner coaching to become the norm within the team.

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[1] CIPD Training & Development Survey, 2004

[2] Such as the Manchester Review, 2001, Volume 6, No. 1

## An Overview of Psychometric Tools

All the following are available via Thism.

### **MBTI® (Myers Briggs Type Indicator) - Step I**

A widely used and highly-regarded system for understanding and interpreting personality, deriving most of its theory from Carl Jung's works in psychological type. The format is a self-report questionnaire which provides a greater understanding of self, personal motivations, natural strengths and potential areas of growth. As a tool, it is widely used in coaching, organisation development, teambuilding, management and leadership training and relationship counselling. It enables recipients to appreciate the value of diversity and understand the notion behind the idea, 'I'm not crazy, I'm just not you'.

### **MBTI® (Myers Briggs Type Indicator) Step II**

This offers a more advanced level of interpretation than the above, being a **highly personalised narrative and graphic report** that gives a more detailed perspective on the user's **personality**. As a coaching tool, the results can be applied to four important components of executive development: communication, change management, decision making and conflict management.

### **The Leadership Assessment Instrument™ (LAI)**

Whilst the myth of the born leader persists, the good news is that all have the ability to lead. The best leaders are those who continually assess their performance and seek to develop their skills. The LAI is designed to help such individuals. Developed by Warren Bennis in conjunction with Linkage International, it is a comprehensive tool for identifying characteristics essential to leadership. Based on the demands of today's business environment, and supported by an extensive development guide, it offers 360 degree feedback in five key leadership competencies: focus and drive, trusted influence, conceptual thinking, systems thinking and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, it gives feedback in the following skills: change management, problem solving, coaching/mentoring and negotiation.

### **The Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI)**

This tool helps identify personal strengths in relating to others under two conditions: firstly, when all is going well and, secondly, when we are faced with conflict. The SDI suggests strategic deployment of strengths and provides an inventory for understanding motivations and how we feel and seek to act in different situations. The SDI is a great tool for increasing understanding within teams, particularly with regard to communication and conflict resolution. Based on the 'relationship awareness' theory of Elias H.



Porter, it argues that much of the interpersonal conflict we experience is preventable if we are mindful of the differences that exist between ourselves and that of others. Building a team profile via SDI is not only a key step in team development but also provides an entertaining and focused group learning activity.

### **Thomas Personality Profile Assessment (PPA)**

This self assessment psychometric programme offers valuable insights into how individuals and / or teams, behave in the workplace. Its DISC format provides behavioural feedback in areas of dominance, influence, steadiness and compliance; the resultant profile relates strengths and limitations, propensity to be a self starter, communication styles and personal motivators. It therefore offers a means to reflect on performance and impact providing a valuable tool for coaching and personal development.

PPA gives an accurate picture of the individuals behavioural preferences and enables people to become more aware of their work style. In so doing it can establish an agenda for personal action to benefit self, the team and the organisation. The PPA is simple and quick to administer; it's on line capabilities mean it can be used extensively as a local or global tool.

### **Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI)**

This tool was co designed by Daniel Goleman and Richard Boyatzis, working in conjunction with the Hay Group. It is based upon the premise that the majority of leadership activity does not focus on technical issues but rather those which relate to people. The ECI therefore assesses the emotional and social competencies which have been identified in great leaders, after extensive research. These competencies are not innate talents but rather learned abilities. They are contained in four dimensions of Goleman's EI model; self awareness, self management, social awareness and relationship management.

Administered as a 360 instrument and supported by a coaching /development dialogue, it provides a comprehensive evaluation of leadership within an organisation and benchmarks them against researched norms. In highlighting strengths and limitations it offers leaders a means of understanding their performance and creating action strategies that will bring about improvement. Leadership is not a gift, rather it is a series of skills which can be learned and require practice.